PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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House of Commons

Monday 7 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be Read a Second time on Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

District Health Authorities (Capital Allocations)

1. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy for the capital allocations to district health authorities to be assessed separately from the regional requirements of the total capital allocation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): It is already my policy to do so.

Mr. Raffan: As my hon. Friend is aware, under the regional review of December 1986 the capital resource assumptions for Clwyd health authority were reduced by approximately £10 million over 10 years. Does he agree that investment in the capital programmes of health authorities such as Clwyd — particularly increased investment—would enable them greatly to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their hospitals, thus enabling them to provide a better service at less cost? Will he therefore make more money, not less, available to Clwyd so that schemes such as that for a Hollywell community hospital can be brought forward?

Mr. Grist: To some extent, my hon. Friend makes an obvious point. The other point is that health authorities should try to use their allocations as effectively as possible. I notice that in the current year Clwyd's capital allocation rose by 14 per cent. That is the sort of funding that enables the authority to give good service to its people.

Mr. Wigley: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that hospital closures are scheduled in Gwynedd—such as those in Porthmedog and Llangefni—where new capital programmes had been promised but are not going ahead, yet the closures that were to make way for the capital programme are taking place? Is not that ridiculous, and cannot more capital be found to ensure that new hospitals are built instead of others being closed?

Mr. Grist: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I cannot comment on the proposals that will be coming forward from the health authority, because of the quasi-judicial

position of my right hon. Friend. Over recent years Gwynedd health authority has been the best funded, both in capital and current terms.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my hon. Friend aware that adequate capital allocation will enable money-saving schemes, such as the concentration of services at Glan Clwyd hospital, to take place, whereas under Labour there were savage cuts in the capital allocations, which probably resulted in increased expenditure on current account?

Mr. Grist: Indeed, that is what the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said. He is one of the few who remember that. I certainly remember the fall in expenditure. In one year alone, real expenditure on capital on the Health Service in Wales fell by 33 per cent.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise, too, that there are individual black spots, such as the Royal Gwent hospital at Newport, which has a massive waiting list that includes one of my constituents, Mr. Mark Williams of Rogiet? He is 77 years of age and has been waiting for the past 12 months for an operation on both his knees. Now he has been told that he must wait for a further 21 months. Yet at the same time the Minister goes around the country saying that by next April people will not have to wait longer than 12 months to get into hospital. Why does he go around making those false claims?

Mr. Grist: It is worth pointing out that the Gwent health authority has been funded since 1984-85 for capital by an increase of 145 per cent. It is up to the authority how it operates its finances. For instance, I hope the hon. Gentleman will agree that there are many ways in which it could raise funds, but it has so far obdurately refused to to so.

Hospitals and Health Services

2. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that no final decision will be made on future hospital and health service provision in South Glamorgan and other Welsh health authority areas, pending the outcome of the consultative processes currently in progress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It is already the policy of my right hon. Friend not to make a final decision on proposals for future Health Service provision that are referred to him until the relevant consultation process is complete.

Mr. Michael: The Minister will be aware of the excellence of the Royal Hamadryad hospital in my constituency, and of the fact that it appears on the consultative document very close to the beginning of the 10-year period, as does the children's ENT hospital in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the position of those hospitals will not be prejudiced and that no decisions in line with the policy that he has outlined will be taken until the consultative process is over? Will he reassure people who are worried that it comes so close to the beginning of the consultative process that that is the case?

Will the hon. Gentleman also confirm that no decision has been taken about the district hospital in the docks area which at the moment is blighting the only area of factory land available in the city?

Mr. Grist: I can certainly confirm that no decision will be taken until the conclusion of the consultative process. That is what I have said before. I note what the hon. Gentleman said about hospitals in his constituency and in other constituencies.

Sir Raymond Gower: Will my hon. Friend take account of the fact that the Sully hospital building is among the best hospital buildings in the South Glamorgan area? Apparently the health authority has no further use for that hospital in the National Health Service. Will he look closely at this matter, because this is a splendid building which is admirably sited and has plenty of land? Surely it is highly desirable.

Mr. Grist: I can only repeat to my hon. Friend exactly what I have said up to this point, but I can add that his support over many years for Sully hospital has been widely noted.

Mr. Livsey: With regard to Health Service provision, will the Minister seek to ease the financial situation facing low-paid ancillary workers in the National Health Service? Will he also look at the financial position of medical laboratory scientific officers, who are making a substantial contribution to the well-being of the National Health Service? In my constituency some Health Service ancillary workers are paid £60 a week. That is less than half the £135 per week that is the European Community poverty level wage.

Mr. Grist: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. These matters are generally decided at national level. Some people might wish that it were otherwise, but that is the position and all that I can do is to take note of what the hon. Gentleman says has said.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Can my hon. Friend confirm that as part of the consultation procedures he will discuss with the health authorities in Wales the present poor record of putting services out to tender, compared with the position in the English regions?

Mr. Grist: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. We are looking for a greatly improved procedure in the coming year and we have been promised that by health authority chairmen.

Mr. Alan Williams: Has the Minister seen the representations made today to the Government by the three royal colleges of medicine that acute hospital services have almost reached breaking point? Is he also aware of an article in the *British Medical Journal* of 21 November by Russell Hopkin, the unit general manager at University hospital, Cardiff, saying that we face a similar crisis in Wales? In this context of an impending breakdown crisis, is it not incredible that there is a standing Welsh Office instruction to Welsh health authorities to try to save an extra 0·5 per cent. every year on spending in this very area of acute services?

Mr. Grist: It takes the biscuit to have the right hon. Gentleman lecture us. He was a Minister in the Government who saw spending on hospitals fall.

Hon. Members: Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Grist: The right hon. Gentleman saw pay cut by over 20 per cent., and saw the pay of consultants cut.

When he left government he left the Health Service in uproar, and that is why we have been in government for the last nine years.

Redundancies

3. **Mr. Coleman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many redundancies have been notified to his Department, to take place in *(a)* Neath, *(b)* west Glamorgan and *(c)* Wales during the last four weeks.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): The numbers of confirmed redundancies in Neath, west Glamorgan, and Wales during the calendar month of October — the latest available — were 32, 74 and 239 respectively.

Mr. Coleman: Does that answer not show that the euphoria of Conservative Members is somewhat premature? Are not the redundancies that are taking place full-time jobs, whereas any gains that we hear about are part-time jobs? Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether the redundancies that are taking place will appear in the unemployment statistics or will they disappear as a result of the Government's sleight of hand in these matters?

Mr. Walker: I know of the hon. Gentleman's interest in these matters and I am delighted to inform him that redundancies in Wales for the first nine months of this year were the lowest for many years. They were two thirds down on last year, and massively down on 1977, 1978 and 1979.

Water Quality

4. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the two European Economic Community directives on water quality to be complied with in full in Wales, including the ending of all derogations currently granted by the Commission.

Mr. Grist: In respect of directive 80/778/EEC on water for human consumption, the Welsh water authority has in hand a programme of remedial works. As a result, the need for the 17 derogations and 22 delays, advised to the Commission under articles 9 and 20 respectively, should be removed by 1992 at the latest. In respect of directive 76/160/EEC on quality of bathing waters, the Welsh water authority programme of remedial works is scheduled for completion in the next 15 years, as I indicated in my answer to the hon. Gentleman on 26 October.

Mr. Griffiths: Will the Minister comment on the article that appeared in *The Observer* yesterday saying that there was to be a crash programme on the quality of drinking water, and will he say how that will affect the current programme of the Welsh water authority? Secondly, will he comment on the answer given to an oral question that I asked in the European Parliament last month, a copy of which I gave him today, which said that the Commission was concerned about the poor quality of bathing water in the United Kingdom, that it was pursuing a number of cases in the European Court of Justice against the British Government, and that it would not be satisfied with a 15-year delay? That being so, it is likely that the investment programme will have to be speeded up considerably.

Mr. Grist: I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the answer that he was given in Europe, which he very kindly gave me at the start of Question Time. I cannot comment on it, except to say that the Welsh water authority is aware of the position. The programme on drinking water is, as I said, very well advanced.

Mr. Ray Powell: Is the Minister aware that we are all concerned about the quality of water? Did he listen to Radio One today to hear about the pollution of the Llynfi and Ogmore rivers in my constituency, where many salmon, sewin and trout have been washed up on to the banks of the river and children are picking up the fish and taking them home? What will the Minister do to ensure that everyone in my constituency and in other areas such as Bridgend and Porthcawl are informed that there is pollution in the Rivers Llynfi and Ogmore, going down to the sea at Porthcawl? What action will he take to ensure that this does not happen again?

Mr. Grist: This is an extremely serious matter, and I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman has raised it. My officials are in contact with the Welsh water authority, which is responsible for doing exactly what the hon. Gentleman requires. The message about the pollution was flashed up on television stations last night immediately the position was known.

Sir Raymond Gower: When my hon. Friend looks at the matter, will he consider the fact that, whereas the European Commission appeared rightly to have given a good deal of emphasis to the effects of sewage deposits in the sea, possibly not enough emphasis was put on the massive pollution caused by great rivers such as the Rhine, which deposits much refuse in the North sea?

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend may be right, but that does not come within the remit of the Welsh Office.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that if the Government take tourism seriously they must do more to clean up beaches in Wales? The present position is absolutely disgraceful. How does the hon. Gentleman see privatisation having any beneficial effect?

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that it is proposed to spend £200 million within 15 years, and some £70 million will be spent on the 47 original waters listed; so a great deal of money will be expended on the cause he espouses.

Mr. Forth: Has my hon. Friend the Minister made any estimate, or told the water-consuming public, of the potential cost of these measures? Is he satisfied that the measures are realistic and reasonable? Has he satisfied himself, following the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower), about how far other members of the Community will take equal or more rapid steps towards meeting the same standards?

Mr. Grist: I am not in a position to answer that rather wide-ranging supplementary question. We endeavour to make people aware of the costs of works done on their behalf, not least through Question Time.

British Coal

5. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what matters he discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have spoken recently to the deputy chairman of British Coal and the director of the south Wales coalfield on a range of matters affecting the coal industry in Wales.

Mrs. Clwyd: What measures does the Secretary of State intend to take to protect south Wales pits and the supplies from them to the Central Electricity Generating Board and British Steel markets in the event of both organisations being privatised?

Mr. Walker: The announcement of the privatisation of British Steel is good news for the coal industry in Wales. There is no doubt that the two steelworks in question in south Wales are the strongest and most modern in the region, and with all the advantages of commercial freedom in future they are the most likely to be the beneficiaries of substantial investment. I think that this is good news for the coal industry. It will be good news if the negotiations on six-day production succeed and there is investment at Margam.

Mr. Barry Jones: Is the Secretary of State aware of the proposals by the Opencast Executive in my constituency that are creating disquiet and unease among residents, especially those at Cheapside, Liverpool road? Will the right hon. Gentleman or another Welsh Office Minister visit the area to meet the residents and hear their worries? Does the right hon. Gentleman know that good agricultural land is at risk and that residents fear for nearby amenities?

Mr. Walker: In former capacities I have become well aware that there is anxiety wherever opencast mining takes place. It must be recognised that opencast mining is an important part of the Welsh coal industry as a whole and makes an exceedingly important contribution to its success.

Mr. Raffan: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate British Coal on the new £50 million surface drift mine at Point of Ayr in my constituency, which will enable output to increase by 30 per cent. to 600,000 tonnes a year? In only five weeks the new mine has resulted in an increase in output per man shift from 2·8 tonnes to 3·8 tonnes.

Mr. Walker: Yes. There are many other examples of substantially increased productivity. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should reflect that since March 1985, £100 million has been invested in the Welsh coal industry.

Unemployment

6. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has carried out any research into the effects of unemployment upon the health of the people of the Principality.

Mr. Grist: No, Sir.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that many in the Principality believe that he and his Government bear a direct and heavy responsibility for increased ill health as a result of unemployment and the increased number of suicides during the years that the Conservative Administration have been in power? Does the Minister recall that Mr. Mark Robinson, who occupied his position prior to the 1987 general election, said on 20 January 1986 that he did not believe that there was any link between unemployment and ill health? Does the Minister agree with that?

Mr. Grist: There is no known causal connection between the two. Figures show quite clearly, however, that in the area of our society that is most prone to unemployment—socio-economic group five—there is the heaviest toll of ill health. That applies, however, whether individuals are employed or not. There is a serious problem in making the connection that the hon. Gentleman seeks to make. The aim and drift of our policies—for example, the valleys initiative, the reform of primary health care and the community nursing review—are directed at trying to correct the imbalance which we inherited, and which has existed for a long time in health services in some of the more deprived areas of Wales.

Mr. Butler: Has life expectancy increased since 1979 in Wales?

Mr. Grist: We certainly have many more old people. I must admit that my hon. Friend has taken me by surprise statistically.

Mr. Roy Hughes: The relationship may be difficult to assess, but will the Minister consider the position at Merthyr Tydfil, for example, where one in five of the population have been in hospital during the past three months? There have been 7,000 admissions over the past year and 10,000 people have been treated as out-patients. Only 10 days ago Hoover advertised 16 temporary vacancies and 150 queued overnight in the street for application forms. Does that not illustrate a catalogue of neglect on the part of the Government?

Mr. Grist: The very fact that Hoover has survived and prospered shows quite the reverse. The quality of the health services available to the people of Merthyr, including the Prince Charles hospital and all its facilities—the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) knows that I visited it the other day and saw for myself that it is a marvellous hospital—shows how much we care for Merthyr and other parts of south Wales.

Common Agricultural Policy

7. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the effects of proposed changes in the European Community common agricultural policy on Welsh farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received numerous representations from all parts of the industry in Wales about the proposed reforms of the common agricultural policy. These have centred on the milk and sheep sectors. Negotiations are continuing.

Dr. Thomas: Will the Secretary of State now take advantage of my question to tell the House that he will defend the level of income for the sheep sector in Wales? Can he assure us that, as a result of sheep stabilisers or long-term changes in the variable or basic premium, there will be no drop in the income of sheep farmers?

Mr. Walker: I agree that in some low-income forms of agriculture—hill sheep farming and beef are examples—incomes must be maintained by one method or another.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, now that the guide prices have been announced for 1988, the sheepmeat regime will continue during that year? Will he also recognise that if the stabilisers which may or may not come out of the European Community put pressure on the lowland arable farmers and encourage them to move into sheep farming, that may have disastrous economic and social consequences for the Welsh uplands? What action will the right hon. Gentleman take to protect our upland communities?

Mr. Walker: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is in negotiations at present, in which he has made it very clear that he is interested, not in maintaining the sheepmeat regime just for next year, but in maintaining the principles of the regime continuously. It would be crazy for the Government to start contemplating what would be done if we were not successful in the negotiations. Our object is to be successful.

Japan (Ministerial Visit)

8. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the anticipated outcome of his visit to Japan.

Mr. Peter Walker: I met leading industrialists, bankers and politicians in order to establish with them the attractiveness of Wales as the location for Japanese outward investment into western Europe.

I am pleased that in the last month three further Japanese companies have decided to locate their industries in the Principality.

Mr. Jones: May I suggest to my right hon. Friend that the new factories and jobs that were decided on during his visit were a very worthwhile, positive contribution to the future of Wales, as was all the effort put into securing further investment, which I am sure will come? Was that not infinitely superior to the sterile arguments that my right hon. Friend would have had to listen to from the Opposition Benches if he had cancelled his visit?

Mr. Walker: Yes. I am almost tempted to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to extend our Question Time a little.

The total figures for Japanese interests in Wales are very impressive. I am delighted to say that among the people whom I met there were some who had originally invested heavily in Wales, and that most of them are deciding to increase their investments massively over the years ahead. I also managed to speak to some 200 or 250 leading Japanese industrialists who have an interest in the longer term in considering Wales as their location in western Europe. As I have always said, I believe that our success is due to the combination of the trade unions, local authorities and the Welsh Office having done everything possible to encourage Japanese firms.

Mr. Anderson: The Secretary of State will know that it has been quite difficult to attract Japanese firms to locate further west than Bridgend. Has he given any thought to the problem?

Mr. Walker: We are trying to attract Japanese firms to all parts of the Principality by the way in which we pursue our policies—through the Welsh Development Agency, with factory allocations, and by pointing out the various services that are available.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is extremely difficult to establish a causal link between his visits to Japan and the arrival of factories? One of the three Japanese investments was announced before he went to Japan.

Mr. Walker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I was delighted to point out that that investment had been announced just before my visit. I joined others on the Friday before the visit in saying how pleased I was that it was happening. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will rejoice equally strongly over all the investment that will come from firms in the future, and that he will congratulate the Government on pursuing policies that will encourage them.

Health Care

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to avoid a deterioration in health care in Wales arising from the financial difficulties faced by many Welsh health authorities.

Mr. Grist: District health authorities have management responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of health care within the resources available to them. They have been funded well in excess of inflation. Between 1978-79 and 1987-88 their recurrent revenue provision grew by 32 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Flynn The Minister is again missing out the fact that, in order to stand still, health authorities need to be funded way above the rate of inflation to cope with the demands of our aging population and the more expensive needs of the medical services. The announcement that was made last week in a parliamentary answer shows that the funding is below that level. It copes with inflation, but it does not cope with the other needs. It is not the helping hand that health authorities need. It is another slap in the face and a certain prescription for a deepening crisis within the National Health Service. Will the Minister now admit that his Government's policy is to allow the NHS to decay and to allow services to become debased in order to force people into the private sector.

Mr. Grist: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can have listened to the answer to the question, which showed that funding is well ahead of inflation. That is very different from the position before the hon. Gentleman came to this House. Under his party this country had to suffer. The hon. Gentleman referred to a reduction in Health Service funding. How can that service have been reduced when there are 13 per cent. more nursing staff, 13·3 per cent. more medical and dental staff, over 17 per cent. more consultants and over 10 per cent. more registrars? We are treating 84,000 more in-patients a year than were treated when the hon. Gentleman's party was in office. I cannot believe that that represents a failure in any service.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman's answers are based on largely phoney figures, going back over the whole period. Do they mean that he and his right hon. Friend will take no notice of the representations of the presidents of the royal colleges, whose most important representations were referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams)? Surely the proper answer by anybody who represents, or is responsible for, the Welsh Health Service should be to say today, "We will

enter into immediate consultations with our British opposite numbers and ensure that something is done to meet the representations that are now coming not only from the Labour party but from the heads of the royal colleges and the great hospitals of our country."

Mr. Grist: When the right hon. Gentleman was a senior member of the Labour Government, the Health Service stumbled to its knees. Does he really call it a fake figure, when nurses' pay fell by over 21 per cent. when he was a Minister? Is that the way to run the National Health Service?

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My hon. Friend has tried to give the real facts about the increase in staff in the National Health Service, but the Opposition do not want to listen. Will he repeat those facts? Will he also tell me how many additional patients have been treated by the Health Service under this Government who would not have been treated had we returned to the funding levels that existed under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Grist: I shall repeat, because of the uproar last time, that the number of in-patients has increased by up to 84,000—an increase of 24 per cent. The number of out-patients has increased by 76,000. That is not a declining service; that is an improved service, as the people of Wales are well aware.

Health Services

10. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of health services in Wales are provided by *(a)* private medicine and *(b)* the National Health Service.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, there are in Wales 54 authorised pay beds in NHS hospitals and 212 beds in private hospitals; jointly these are equivalent to 1·23 per cent. of the NHS provision of 21,613 beds.

Mr. Williams: Will the Minister comment on Health Service developments in Carmarthen? It was announced in October that there was to be a private 50-bed hospital, costing £15 million—the first private hospital in Dyfed. The very next week the East Dyfed health authority announced that, because of financial constraints, it would have to shed 3 per cent. of its staff during the current financial year. Does that not reflect what is happening in our Health Service: that the Government are giving every encouragement and every incentive to private medicine but that the National Health Service is declining, by natural wastage?

Mr. Grist: The fact that somebody wants to open a private hospital in a particular area of the country does not say anything about National Health Service provision of health care. East Dyfed is receiving over £20 million for building the Llanelli hospital. There has been no lack of funds from central Government for the building of that hospital.

Mr. Williams: When Welsh health authorities are facing a serious financial crisis, when our hospitals fear a breakdown in services, when the Minister has already had to renege on his July commitment about hospital waiting lists, and when, on Friday, the Secretary of State issued a spending announcement showing that there are no plans even to meet fully the basic standstill needs of the Health Service, which the Minister knows full well include not only 4½ per cent. for inflation but the 2 per cent. extra that is needed to meet the cost of the aging population and technological change, how on earth can the Welsh Office issue a press release such as that entitled "Additional Resources for Health and Personal Social Services", which is utterly smug, misleading, indifferent and inept?

Mr. Grist: That was a long, prepared supplementary question. I should like to give just one alternative figure. The right hon. Gentleman was a Minister in the previous Labour Government. When he left office, expenditure per family on the Health Service was £15·84 per week. It is now £21·14 per week. That shows the growth. The right hon. Gentleman was a senior Minister in a Government who cut spending and the pay of nurses and practitioners. That is a disgraceful record, but he has the cheek to come here and declaim against us.

Rating Reform

11. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the average cost of the poll tax per family, as compared with rates bills, in local authorities in the valley areas of Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Peter Walker: The average rate bill per household in Mid Glamorgan in the current year is £220. Future payments under the community charge will depend upon decisions to be made about grant and needs assessment levels, as well as the expenditure of the local authorities at the time.

Mr. Rowlands: Is it not a fact that, even by the most conservative estimates, the average tenant and home-owner in a community such as I represent will face a significant increase in the poll tax as compared with the rates bill? By what possible justification can there be equity or fairness in increasing the cost of services, rates or the poll tax to the people who are the poorer home-owners in the community?

Mr. Walker: In Wales less than 20 per cent. of all local Government expenditure will be met by the poll tax. Added to which, if the hon. Gentleman had listened to my answer to his question, the poll tax will depend on what happens about needs assessment levels.

Health Authorities

12. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning staff shortages in Welsh health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about staff shortages in Welsh health authorities. This is an issue which is currently being addressed at both departmental and health authority levels.

Mr. Bennett: When my hon. Friend discusses this matter with the health authorities, will he bear in mind the problems of Pembrokeshire health authority and the fact that we are short of staff because of the wages that are paid? Does he agree that there may well be a case for bringing the market into the wages of staff in the Health Service and paying more in areas where it is difficult to recruit staff?

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend may indeed have something in what he says. My right hon. Friend and I discussed the issue with the district health authority chairman on 23 November. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that last year the Department established a manpower steering group to develop a comprehensive manpower strategy for the National Health Service in Wales. The group is giving attention to recruitment difficulties and my Department has requested the district health authorities to prepare a 10-year manpower resources plan to forestall future difficulties.

Transport Links

13. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the standards of transport links between north and south Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): Recent years have seen a steady improvement in standards and more is being and will be done. A substantial number of schemes for improving the A470, A487 and A483 road links are either in progress or planned.

Mr. Jones: Does the Minister agree that one of the most important criteria in economic performance and development is good transport links? Does he also agree that there is an urgent need for a good, modern and efficient road linking north and south Wales? In view of the importance of roads in Wales to facilitate links with the Irish Republic and mainland Europe, will the Minister consider making an approach to the EEC for joint funding with the Irish Republic for road improvements in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: Naturally, we understand the importance of road links, which is why we have improved 128 miles of motorway trunk roads at a cost of £700 million since 1979. With regard to the north-south link, the hon. Gentleman must remember that certain improvements have been carried out. There is the Brecon bypass and the Dolgellau bypass, and the Abercynon-Pentrebach section has also been dualled. However, we must examine carefully the economic and traffic justification for any further work.

Pupils (Expenditure)

14. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent per pupil in secondary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79, at constant prices

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Provisional figures for 1986-87 show a unit cost figure of £1,320 for each secondary school pupil in Wales, compared with £1,033 in 1978-79 at constant prices.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend say whether capital allocations to schools in Wales have increased over the same period?

Mr. Roberts: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that there has indeed been a substantial increase in capital allocations. The system was introduced in 1981-82 and from then to the current year there has been an increase of 50 per cent. The capital allocation for this year amounts to £43 million, and for next year a capital allocation of £47·5 million has been announced by my right hon. Friend, which is a further increase of 9·1 per cent.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy (Housing)

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what information he has as to how many beneficed clergy or priests in charge of parishes are currently housed *(a)* completely outside their parishes, *(b)* more than one mile from their churches and *(c)* in accommodation next door to a church in their charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioners, representing the Church Commissioners): The commissioners do not have the statistics, but their belief is that few incumbents live outside their parishes, and then only with the bishop's permission.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is sad, wrong and damaging to their pastoral performance that some clergy now live outside the parishes for which they are responsible? Are not the Church Commissioners equally distanced from the feelings of many ordinary church people who do not wish to see in Crockford's, for which the Church Commissioner's are responsible——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Where clergy live is not relevant to that question.

Mr. Alison: I should tell my hon. Friend that there are about 9,000 parishes with parochial houses. I believe that all but a handful of parochial houses are located in extremely close proximity to the parish church in question. My hon. Friend also asked about the reference to the Archbishop of Canterbury in Crockford's, and if it is in order for me to respond——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to relate that to where the clergy live.

Clergy (Income)

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what information he has as to the proportion of clergy income currently provided through voluntary giving by the congregations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: Forty-three per cent. of the total stipends bill for the Church's ministry is met from voluntary giving. I shall send my hon. Friend a copy of the Central Stipends Authority's 15th report giving further details.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the level of voluntary giving would be somewhat higher if so many churches had not thrown overboard the twin legacies of the Book of Common Prayer and the King James's Bible, and if certain parishes had given more of a moral lead on some of the great issues facing our country today?

Mr. Alison: I believe that a clear, moral and spiritual lead from both bishops and clergy is vital if Christian congregations are to be kept in good heart and their giving

is likewise to be kept in good shape. The fact that the contribution from parishes towards the stipend of clergy has doubled in the past decade is some sign that there is a good deal of good heart and proper leadership in many parishes.

Mr. Frank Field: While the right hon. Gentleman is correct to draw attention to the doubling of voluntary giving, is it not also important to use this opportunity to draw attention to the fact that if our clergy were dependent on our givings, we would be returning average salaries of less than £3,000 a year?

Mr. Alison: That is true. A substantial proportion of the stipend is met from the income of the Church Commissioners. It is also true that if the congregations were presented with a direct challenge of the need to make up what the Church Commissioners provide, they would rise to that challenge and the full sum would be forthcoming.

Rating Reform

31. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the right honourable Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what further representations the commissioners have received from clergymen on the effects of poll tax on matters for which he is responsible.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners have received representations from clergy and church members about the serious financial implications of the proposed community charge for the clergy and the Church generally. The commissioners continue to work closely with the Churches main committee, which has approached Her Majesty's Government on behalf of the major denominations.

Mr. Allen: When will the right hon. Gentleman, who is speaking on behalf of the Churches, lead an open and public campaign on behalf of Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims against the Government's poll tax, which affects synagogues, temples and churches without discrimination? When will he stop the Government allowing the imposition of VAT on religious works such as the Bible and the Koran? If the right hon. Gentleman refuses to answer me again this month, I will be back next month.

Mr. Alison: I shall welcome seeing the hon. Gentleman in his usual place. If he gives me regular notice of the question, it will not be difficult for me to answer. I should have corrected him by pointing out that no poll tax has been put on to the statute book, and no community charge has been levied by the Government against any denomination to which he referred. I reiterate my earlier answer, that the Church Commissioners are in correspondence and in contact with the Government about some relief for the churches in respect of the community charge corresponding to the 50 per cent. derating that they enjoy under the existing house rating provisions.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

32. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what criteria the commission uses in appointing an accounting officer for the National Audit Office under section 4 of the National Audit Act 1983.

Sir Peter Hordern (on behalf of the Public Accounts Commission): In appointing the serving Comptroller and Auditor General to be accounting officer for the National Audit Office Vote with effect from 1 January 1984, the commission followed the long-standing practice of appointing the officer in the best position to discharge overall responsibility for policy and for the resources allocated to the office. The Comptroller and Auditor General is, of course, by statute, head of the National Audit Office. I have no doubt that, following the appointment of a new Comptroller and Auditor General, the commission will wish to use the same criteria.

Perhaps the House will allow me to pay a tribute to the work of the outgoing comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, who retires at the end of this month. The NAO and Parliament have been extremely will served by him.

Mr. Dalyell: I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to Sir Gordon Downey. Does the Public Accounts Commission agree that whoever is his successor as Comptroller and Auditor General should tell Parliament to scrutinise the £1,000 million budget of the security and intelligence services?

Sir Peter Horden: That is not a matter for the Public Accounts Commission. The hon. Gentleman may, however, wish to pursue his inquiry with his right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman make representations from the Public Accounts Commission to the Public Accounts Committee asking it to look into the possibility of surcharging the Leader of the House for the £750,000 which has been wasted prior to the setting-up of the Select Committees?

Sir Peter Hordern: That is not a matter for the Public Accounts Commission. I doubt whether it is a matter for the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not true that the accountability of the security services and the £1,000 million that they spend is not a matter that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) can deal with? Is it not a matter for the Government? Will the hon. Gentleman respond to the question from my hon. Friend? Will he, as Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission, make representations to Her Majesty's Government seeking the right for the Public Accounts Committee — or for a new security services scrutiny committee — to monitor, and indeed to audit, the accounts of the security services in this country?

Sir Peter Hordern: The role of the Public Accounts Commission is rather limited. Certainly it would not be our role to tell the Government what to do. However, the Comptroller and Auditor General has complete discretion in areas of Government activity which he may wish to examine and he may do so with the views of the Public Accounts Committee, which he should take into account.

WALES

Ambulance Services (Gwent)

15. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the implications for

the effectiveness of Gwent's emergency ambulance services of implementing the reductions in crew numbers propssed in the report currently being considered by the health authority.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): The management and operation of the ambulance service in Gwent is the responsibility of the Gwent health authiority and it is for the authority to determine the number of ambulance staff that it requires for the efficient operation of the service.

Mr. Murphy: Is the Minister aware of the considerable anxiety in the county of Gwent about this matter? Would not a reduction in crews be bound to affect the ambulance emergency services? Despite what he said, will he intervene if Gwent health authority decides to consider such a proposal?

Mr. Grist: I am aware of the proposals, but, given the Secretary of State's appellate functions, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on them now.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committee Reports

33. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will make it his policy to ensure that all Select Committee reports are the subject of timely and substantive motions in the House.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 23 November. With regard to debating all Select Committee reports, I remind the hon. Gentleman that since 1979 there have been more than 500 reports from departmental Select Committees alone.

Mr. Dalyell: Should there not be a Select Committee to shadow the Department of the Attorney-General, which would give us an opportunity to have an informed debate, not only on the injunctions on the BBC, which should attract timely and informed parliamentary comment, but on the position of Mr. Charles Elwell? Is it not extremely unsatisfactory that a party committee, albeit the distinguished defence committee of the Conservative party, should invite a former security officer to Parliament? What does the right hon. Gentleman think about that?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman's latter point is not a matter for me, but I understand that the invitation is not being pursued. The other matters mentioned by the hon. Gentleman have been decided by the whole House, and I have no plans to make any changes.

Sir Hugh Rossi: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Department of the Environment still has to reply to a report on "Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments", published on 18 February last, a report on the "Property Services Agency" published on 8 April last, and a report on "Pollution of Rivers and Estuaries", published on 14 May last? We have been given various excuses, such as an impending general election and the non-reappointment of the Select Committee. Does my right hon. Friend regard those replies as satisfactory? Will he ensure that the convention that Command Papers are placed before the House within three months of the publication of a report is adhered to in the future, and may we have a debate on those papers?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly refer my hon. Friend's points to the Ministers concerned. Select Committees are entitled to replies to their reports, and in the majority of cases that has already been done. There is always pressure on time for debates, but I will do my best.

Mr. Beith: Does the Leader of the House have any plans to have discussions with the broadcasting authorities which deal with broadcasts from the House to ascertain what would happen if, during debates from Select Committees, including the Privileges Committee, references were made to people who had at some time been members of the security services?

Mr. Wakeham: From time to time I have discussions with broadcasting officials, and these matters may come up.

Mr. Rees: The Leader of the House will know that I am anxious that we should debate pretty soon the report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Boundary Commission changes. The changes are already beginning for local government re-warding, and if we are not careful it will be too late to do something. It was an excellent report, and many hon. Members believe that the time has come to change the procedures of the Boundary Commission. But we can do nothing until we debate the report.

Mr. Wakeham: I know of the right hon. Gentleman's concern about such matters. I have already discussed the report with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who will have a word with the right hon. Gentleman. As a result of those discussions, we shall decide how best to proceed.

Palace of Westminster (Cleaning)

34. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if, pursuant to the answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *388*, there are any plans to clean the stonework or otherwise improve the appearance of the internal courtyards of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: Yes, the courtyards are included in the stonework restoration programme, but we intend to give a higher priority to the restoration of the south elevation and the Victoria tower.

Mr. Chapman: Although I welcome that answer and recognise that higher priority should be given to the Victoria tower and completing the clean-up of the external elevations of this splendid pile, does my right hon. Friend nevertheless agree that the general appearance of the internal courtyards is dirty and unsightly? If they were cleaned up, it would considerably brighten the environment of those using this Palace and also perhaps throw new light into some of the rooms and corridors.

Mr. Wakeham: I am glad that my hon. Friend agrees with our priorities for the stonework restoration programme. I accept that everything is not right with the courtyards. They are swept every day by the cleaning contractors. The Refreshment Department is responsible for taking its rubbish to the collection point in the State Officers Court. There are problems because of the

limitations imposed by the building, but I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of the Chairman of the Catering Sub-Committee.

Facsimile Transmission Equipment

35. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will consider the provision at public expense of the necessary equipment to enable hon. Members to make facsimile transmissions from the House direct to other facsimile machine users for use in connection with their parliamentary duties.

Mr. Wakeham: Hon. Members are already able to make transmissions, on a repayment basis, from the facsimile machine in the Central Lobby post office. Several hon. Members have also purchased machines for their own use from their office costs allowance.

Mr. Shersby: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the provision of facsimile services to hon. Members at public expense would be no more revolutionary than the provision of telephone services to hon. Members some years ago? Is he further aware that the service available in the Central Lobby is the Intelpost service, for which hon. Members are charged £2·50 per page to receive a message and £3·50 to deliver the message from the machine in Central Lobby to an hon. Member in his office in the House? Does he not agree that that is most unsatisfactory?

Mr. Wakeham: The present arrangements appeared to be satisfactory until fairly recently. However, I recognise hon. Members' increasing interest in such facilities and I shall ask the Services Committee to consider this matter again.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Leader of the House aware that it is two and a half years since I asked the then Leader of the House to arrange for fascimile machines to be made available to hon. Members in various parts of the House? Is he aware that at that time it would probably have cost about £10,000 to do the whole House? Does he know that over the last one and a half years hundreds of thousands of pounds must have been spent by hon. Members on acquiring individual machines for their own offices, as indeed I did, and I spent £2,000 of taxpayers' money? Is it not a waste of money when a cheap route was available that would have been economic for the taxpayer and would have resolved the difficulties of hon. Members with offices in their constituencies hundreds of miles away?

Mr. Wakeham: The position up to now has seemed satisfactory to the majority of hon. Members. There is now an increasing demand and it is right that we should consider the matter again.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is it not something of a paradox that, when Government and Parliament are always lecturing people outside on the need to innovate and keep up with the latest technology, we always seem to be the last when it comes to introducing new technology for our own benefit? People outside cannot understand it when they are told that they simply cannot pass messages here and that messages must be sent by motor bike dispatch riders. If one does that, the messages promptly get lost in the system. These facilities must be introduced soon.

Mr. Wakeham: We have to work by consent. Hon. Members have different views about the speed at which technology should be introduced in this place.

Government Expenditure (Scrutiny)

36. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to enhance the scrutiny of Government expenditure by the House through departmental Select Committees and the Committee of Public Accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir.

Mr. Allen: I am sure that the Leader of the House is not aware that tonight the Government will try to sneak through public expenditure to the tune of £47 billion on the Vote on Accounts, and over £1 billion on the Winter Supplementary Estimates, without a vote, debate or reference to the Select Committees. Now that he is aware of that, will he ensure that this vast amount of public expenditure is at least debated by the House prior to the Consolidated Fund Bill?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know about sneaking anything through. We are putting matters on the Order Paper in the proper fashion. It was not possible this year to have them debated by the Select Committees. For reasons which the hon. Gentleman knows, it was not possible to set up the Committees any earlier than was done.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend think that it is time for a scrutiny of the expenditure by Select Committees, especially with regard to staff and travel? Does he believe that the House should now look again at the role of Select Committees and decide whether they are worth the money?

Mr. Wakeham: I agree that there are two points of view about Select Committees. Select Committees were established to provide expert and detailed scrutiny of departmental operations, complementing that of the PAC. They have discharged that role in a way in which the House would find difficult given other competing claims on its time. It is not necessary for their reports to be debated for them to have a significant effect on Departments and publicly.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that because the Select Committees were not set up in time at the beginning of the parliamentary Session a lot of money has been saved for the taxpayer in respect of all the trips that have not been enjoyed by hon. Members on both sides of the House—excluding a few of us who do not believe in this sloppy consensus system of Select Committees and who are aware that it does not produce any fruits for the taxpayer? Will he bear in mind that that money should be saved for the taxpayer? Does he agree that that money could be very usefully employed if it was sent to a country such as Ethiopia, where it could help to fill the starving bellies of the kids out there?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was going to suggest that the money might be used to offset the surcharge that the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) sought to impose on me a minute ago. I recognise that, because the Select Committees were set up later than some people had hoped, money was saved. I do not put that forward as a valid argument. I believe that on the whole Select Committees do a good job for the House.

BBC (Injunction)

3.30 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the legal restrictions obtained by the Government on broadcasting by the BBC in the case of the radio series My Country, Right or Wrong."

The matter is specific in that it deals with the gagging of the BBC. Our Law Officers may be trigger-happy in seeking injunctions, but they are not anxious to explain themselves to the House. There was no statement from the Law Officers, and, but for my private question, the House, to which they are answerable, would not have heard from them. A debate will give them a proper opportunity to explain, and, more important, the opportunity to discover the Prime Minister's role in the matter.

The matter is important, as the injunction is but part of a process of limiting discussion. It is censorship. At any rate, at least the BBC was spared having its premises raided on this occasion.

The matter is urgent because it is obvious from the Attorney-General's letter to the BBC last Friday that there is an awareness in high places that the Law Officers have gone too far and there is a willingness to compromise. The House wants to know what motivated the Attorney-General in trying to plug the dam against the charge of inconsistency or something substantial in the programme? Right hon. Members contributed to the programme. There is uncertainty about what the media may now report. Is it really the Government's considered view that allegations of illegal and subversive action must never be published without first informing the proper authorities?

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the legal restrictions imposed by the Government on broadcasting by the BBC in the case of the radio series My Country, Right or Wrong."

I listened with care to what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter he has raised meet the criteria laid down under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. Perhaps I may tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman and the whole House that there will be opportunities to debate the matter — perhaps during the recess Adjournment debate tomorrow.

Parliamentary Questions

3.33 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I promise that I shall not refer to the substance of any individual question. You will have noticed that out of 15 Welsh questions today, no fewer than seven related to health. You will also have gathered from the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and myself that on Friday the future policy for health in Wales was announced by written answer on a day when it is very difficult for hon. Members to know what is being announced.

You will have observed, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State for Wales did not answer any of the seven questions that were tabled. Therefore, can you advise us, as Opposition and Back-Bench Members, how we can ensure that when an important policy statement is issued the Secretary of State answers at least some of the questions related to that statement instead of hiding behind a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, especially when that Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State does not seem to know the answers to any questions put to him?

Mr. Speaker: Who answers at Question Time is not a matter for the Chair, but I am sure that the representatives from the Welsh Office who may be on the Front Bench will have noted what has been said.

BBC (Injunction)

3.35 pm

Mr Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you assure the House that any matter that is raised in the House in relation to the BBC's position regarding the injunction and the programme "My Country, Right or Wrong" can be reported by the BBC, because anything that is said here is, is of course, covered by parliamentary privilege? In fact, I understand that the terms of the injunction seem to be preventing the BBC from even reporting the proceedings of the House. Clearly that must a be serious infringement of our rights.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that anything that is mentioned in the House is in the public domain. It is a matter for the BBC whether it reports what is said.

Parliamentary Language

3.36 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order. Mr. Speaker. May I raise a matter of which I gave your office notice, namely, the use of language in the Chamber? It will be within your recollection that, a fortnight ago, I was expelled from the House for five days for having made an extremely specific accusation about the action of a parliamentary colleague in relation to a specific event—Westland. I did not use generalised abuse. It was a specific point at issue, and it will be within the recollection of the House.

May I draw your attention—the attention of your office has been drawn to it—to column 1124 of the previous Thursday's *Hansard*? It will be within your recollection, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) used an extremely abusive word that was not withdrawn, namely, "twerp", in referring to my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

If some of us are to be expelled for being wholly courteous when making a political charge, we want to know what the general rules are in this regard. I realise that you are in a difficult position, Mr. Speaker, and that there are times when you should turn the Nelson eye. However, the hon. Member for Northampton, North was, in a sense, far more generally abusive of the Leader of the Opposition than I was about the Prime Minister. I wonder whether you have any reflections on this matter?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member said that he intended to raise this matter, but I thought that he intended to do so last week. At the moment when, regrettably, I had to name the hon. Member, he had the Floor of the House and, in a calculated way, he used an un-parliamentary expression. I think that the hon. Member accepts that. I have to confess that I did not hear what happened on Thursday because there was a great deal of noise. The comment was made from a sedentary position, and it was not until I read *Hansard* on Friday morning that I saw exactly what had been said. I must say to the hon. Members for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) that had I heard the remark at the time I would, of course, have had it withdrawn. But I did not hear it.

BBC (Injunction)

3.38 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice because, three or four weeks ago, I appeared on a BBC programme together with the former Lord Chancellor. Last week, much to my surprise, I learnt that the programme had been banned. I understand that the BBC is to oppose the injunction and that we might be in for a long legal case. Would I be in order, under the sub judice rule, if I repeated what I said on that programme, which has been banned, on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Speaker: If the right hon. Gentleman is called in the debate tomorrow, what he says in his speech will be entirely a matter for him. What we do not allow in the Chamber is the reading out of excerpts.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance, following your earlier reply. You said, in answer to a point of order from my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that should anything be said in the Chamber it would be in the public domain. Will you confirm that if it is in the public domain, if the BBC reports it, and if any action is taken by the Government following that reporting, you would regard that action by the Government as a gross contempt of this High Court of Parliament?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for anything that the BBC may or may not say. The BBC will have to take the advice of its legal advisers and make up its own mind as to what it reports from this place. I repeat that everything in the High Court of Parliament is in the public domain.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important point and you, Mr. Speaker, with respect, are the guardian of the liberties of the House. Of course, anything that is said in the High Court of Parliament is privileged. What we want to ensure is that no one will be adversely affected if he reports anything that is said in the House, including, in particular, if he names anyone who is or has been in the security services. At present, the media, particularly the BBC, are inhibited from so doing, in accordance with the terms of the injunction. It would be a grave incursion into the liberties of the House if action were taken against anyone who reported the proceedings of the House in that way.

Mr. Speaker: That would not be a matter for me. I am responsible for order in the House and for what goes on here. I am not responsible for what the BBC does or does not put out on radio or television.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I applied today, under Standing Order No. 20, for a debate on the injunction preventing the media from giving the public information about the activities of the security services. I heard your reply to the application made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). We are placed in some difficulty, because the Leader of the House replies to the debate on the motion to adjourn for Christmas, and on many occasions you have heard the Prime Minister refuse to add anything to the statements that she has made on these matters.

What lies at the heart of our concern is the alleged inconsistency of Government policy on the confidentiality of the security services. The difficulty is that we cannot have any debate unless you grant one in which the Prime Minister, who is responsible for Government policy in these matters, is required to answer to the House. I therefore ask you, Mr. Speaker, to reflect on that difficulty and indicate whether, on reflection, you believe that an application under Standing Order No. 20, such as has been made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon or by me, would facilitate such discussion.

We believe that the accountability of the security services is of major public importance and that the House should be given an early and full opportunity to discuss that issue. We cannot obtain that debate unless you grant it. That is why there is urgency in this important matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I well understand the concern of the House about this issue, but under the standing order I must have regard to other opportunities which the House may have to debate or discuss matters. I have already indicated to the House that there will be an opportunity tomorrow to raise the matter in the debate on the motion to adjourn for Christmas. As to who answers it, it is not my responsibility, but that is the immediate opportunity to discuss this issue.

Mr. John Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to trespass even further on your generosity, but I raise, I hope, a matter that comes within your specific responsibilities as the guardian of the liberties of the House.

My understanding is that the BBC has been given the privilege of broadcasting the proceedings of the House. In particular, it has been given certain facilities within the precincts of the House. I understand that the BBC is now enjoined by the injunction of another court that it should not report the names of persons who either are or have been in the security services; for example, the well-known author of the book "Spycatcher", Mr. Peter Wright. If that name were to be mentioned this afternoon—we have been mentioning it backwards or forwards for the past six or nine months—if the BBC were to use our facilities and report that through the machinery that it now has, and if an action for contempt were brought against the BBC by the Attorney-General, would not that be an inhibition of the rights granted to the BBC by the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a hypothetical matter—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. and learned Gentleman said "if". Surely that is hypothetical.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. You referred to the matter being hypothetical, but there is no other means of defining action in the House except by postulating a situation. We are asking you, Mr. Speaker, to say that you will protect the rights of the House in so far as we have the right, under privilege, to have the proceedings of the House reported outside. That is not a hypothetical matter. It has affected us every day in the past and will affect us every day in the future. We want that assurance from you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Allow me to give that assurance. The hon. Gentleman and the whole House know that anything said in the House, provided it is in order, is the responsibility of the hon. Member concerned. The reporting of them outside is not a matter for me.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the matter. I cannot say any more. I am not responsible for the actions that others take outside the House; I cannot possibly be.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. We entirely accept what you have just said, that you are in no way responsible for the editorial judgment of the media, whether or not it is the BBC, but surely you are responsible for seeing that that editorial judgment is not inhibited by the Government.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you will recall, many years ago the BBC was given the power and the right to record our proceedings, provided that it was done in a fair and responsible way. That meant that it should be at the convenience of the House and that, as its head, Mr. Speaker would be in charge of monitoring in the event of the BBC's not carrying out proper and responsible reporting of the proceedings. I see you shaking your head, Mr. Speaker, but if you look at the record you will see that the BBC was given that power only on condition that it carried out fair, responsible and balanced reporting.

The truth, as we now know, is that the reporting is not balanced. We know that what the Attorney-General did last week means that the BBC cannot carry out the remit that it was granted, in about 1974-75, to broadcast Parliament. If the BBC is not carrying out that balanced reporting it seems to me that you, as Mr. Speaker, and all of us for that matter, must see to it, in some way, that that remit is carried out. Therefore, in my opinion, that in itself is a matter for you and for the House of Commons.

I suggest that on this issue it is important, and convenient, for the House to see to it that the BBC's reporting is at all times fair and balanced, and if there are discussions about the Attorney-General's injunction and they are reported in Parliament, that should be carried on the BBC air waves, because it would be fair and balanced reporting.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly right, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has said, that it was laid down at the time that reports should be fair and balanced, and a Committee was established in the House to ensure that that occurred. It has never been the responsibility of the Speaker to decide which parts of our proceedings should be broadcast. Frequently I have been informed by the BBC that it intended to broadcast certain parts of our proceedings. It is not for me to tell the BBC what it should broadcast.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been following the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Conservative Members appear to make light of a potential invasion of our liberties such as has not taken place in this century. They should, perhaps, remember that they have a duty to the people who elected them—and to those who did not—to sustain the liberties of the House and the freedom of the BBC to report what goes on here.

Having said that, I would be grateful if you, Mr. Speaker, would undertake further to consider the points that have been made and the application under Standing Order No. 20 by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). In view of the points that have been made this afternoon, and of the deep concern that is felt by Opposition Members and, I suspect, by one or two of the quieter Members on the Conservative Benches, and certainly by the BBC, I hope that if there is no further development that is favourable to freedom of speech you will be prepared to consider favourably a further application under Standing Order No. 20.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a busy day ahead of us. I undertake to reflect on what the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has said.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Faulds: This is a specific point of order about this afternoon's proceedings.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already said that I shall reflect on the matter.

Housing (Scotland) Bill

3.51 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): On a different point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): In that case, sit down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I decide who is called to speak.

Mr. Home Robertson: I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), wants your job, Mr. Speaker.

I want to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the Housing (Scotland) Bill, which was published by the Government on Friday. It is an important measure that will dismantle the public sector housing service in Scotland. According to the index to the Bill, it has 67 clauses and 10 schedules. However, look as I might, I could find only nine schedules in my copy. The incompetence of the Scottish Office is legendary. It could not run a sweetie shop. I do not expect you to comment on that, Mr. Speaker, but can you please give an assurance that the House will not be required to consider on Second Reading a Bill that has not been properly published by the Government? Am I right in thinking that the Government will have to have it reprinted and allow a further two clear weeks—during the time that the House is sitting—before we consider the Bill on Second Reading?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I understand that there was some defective printing in the Bill and that it is being reprinted and will be re-issued tomorrow.

Urban Development Corporations

3.53 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Secretary of State is now unveiling to the press his plans to create a number of new urban development corporations, and members of the press therefore have an opportunity to cross-examine him on these matters. Is it not a scandal that Members of Parliament are being denied the opportunity to question the Secretary of State when the creation of urban development corporations will directly affect the constituencies and constituents of hon. Members? Will you, Mr. Speaker, use your influence to enable us to hear the Secretary of State make an oral statement in the House—not an answer to a written question—on the creation of a whole series of new urban development corporations?

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the announcement mentioned by the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), an announcement is to be made either by a press release or by a written reply. As I recall, Mr. Speaker, you have said in the past that these matters should be announced to the House. I ask you to invite the Minister to do that in this case.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that only last week we had the Third Reading of the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill, which reduces the opportunity of the House to debate any matters to do with the activities and financing of urban development corporations. That annual and regular opportunity will be lost if that Bill becomes law later this Session. Given that this week we are to debate local authorities and to approve their orders and their financing, it is unacceptable that the Secretary of State should make an announcement outside the House about territory that is effectively being moved out of the control of local authorities and into the control of Government quangos appointed by Ministers. These quangos are entirely unaccountable and have been much criticised, especially recently, in connection with all sorts of dubious activities. No Minister came to the House to make an announcement about that handover. Can you, Mr. Speaker, make strong representations to ensure that we get a statement on this issue, if not today, tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) have made strong representations and I am sure that they will have been heard by the Leader of the House.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Boyes: It is a matter for the Leader of the House and, as he is present, I hope that he will tell us whether there will be a statement later today or tomorrow on this very important matter.

Housing (Scotland) Bill

3.57 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Further to my earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to you for telling us that the Bill is to be reprinted tomorrow.

Can you confirm that it would be quite improper for the House to be required to consider that on Second Reading next week as the Bill was not available to us in its proper form last week?

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that again is not a matter for me. I do not decide when Bills are to be debated, but the hon. Gentleman's point will have been noted.

BBC (Injunction)

3.57 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: As it is nearly Christmas, I call Mr. Andrew Faulds.

Mr. Faulds: Your parliamentary charity and generosity, Sir, are well renowned.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): We can see him at Selfridge's as well this year.

Mr. Faulds: I hope that this young puppy is not referring to you, Sir. Mine is an immediate, practical point of order to do with the proceedings that the House indulged in a few moments ago.

As I understand it, the practical result of the injunction obtained by the Attorney-General in the courts is that if the BBC wanted to broadcast the exchanges that took place it would have to introduce a bleep the moment the name of Mr. Peter Wright was mentioned. Is that really the practical result of this injunction? If that is so, is it not totally unacceptable censorship of the House of Commons?

Mr. Speaker: I am not an expert on injunctions, so I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question. However, I shall ensure that the rights and privileges of the House are upheld.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Corbyn: It is on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot help the hon. Gentleman, but I call him to put his point of order.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the whole nation heard on the BBC 6 o'clock news that the Corporation was unable to report part of what went on in Parliament because of the injunction that had been obtained against it. Therefore, I ask you to give a ruling on this question. If the BBC is prevented by an injunction from reporting part of what goes on in Parliament, it follows that that is an infringement of the rights of Parliament to discuss what it wishes. Surely it also calls into question *Hansard* and its distribution, because if the injunction covers what is said in Parliament, quite specifically the BBC, newspapers and other news media are prevented from reporting exactly what is said in Parliament.

You, Mr. Speaker, have the right to uphold the legal immunity of Parliament to disuss what it wishes, in the way that it wishes, and to uphold the right of the report of its proceedings to be freely available to every person in Britain. Quite clearly, in granting this injunction against the BBC last week the courts have infringed that right. We appeal to you to protect our right to speak freely in the House and, above all, to protect the rights of people outside Parliament to listen to what we discuss.

Mr. Speaker: I can only repeat what I have already said; that whether a broadcast is made is not a matter for me. I certainly uphold the right of hon. Members to have their say in this Chamber and their right to be reported in *Hansard*.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the four motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Farm Diversification Grant Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1949) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Agriculture Improvement (Amendment) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1950) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Farm Business Specification Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1948) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (Electoral Scheme) (Variation) Order 1988 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Orders of the Day

Health and Medicines Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Minister, in view of the rather late start to the Bill and the large number of right hon. Members and hon. Members who wish to participate, I appeal for short contributions.

4 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

On 25 November I announced publication of the Government's White Paper on primary health care, "Promoting Better Health". The White Paper set out the Government's strategy for primary health care and our key objectives. These were to make the services more responsive to the needs of the consumer, to promote health and prevent illness, to raise standards of care and to improve value for money.

The Bill, which was read the First time on the same day, paves the way for the implementation of some parts of that strategy, others of which do not require legislation. The Bill goes wider than primary health care, for example, in giving health authorities new powers to generate additional income for patient care in various ways. I shall comment on those provisions later.

First, I should like to say a word about the context of the primary health care provisions of the Bill, which I suspect are those on which much of the debate will focus. As the primary health care White Paper stated, expenditure on family practitioner services has risen by £1·5 billion, or 43 per cent. in real terms, since 1978-79 and our existing plans provide for additional expenditure by 1990-91 of over £0·5 billion more in real terms.

The proposals for promoting better health, taken together, will require sizeable additional resources. Subject to the progress and nature of negotiations with the professions, I expect expenditure on the family practitioner services by 1990-91 to be substantially in excess of £600 million in real terms more than it is today. It was against that background, as I emphasised in my statement on the White Paper, that we concluded that it was reasonable to secure some of the additional resources going into primary care services by asking those who can afford it to meet something more of the overall cost of their health care, with the provisions in the Bill concerning dental charges and eyesight tests, about which I shall have something to say at the appropriate part of my speech.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I apologise to my hon. Friend for intervening so early, but will my hon. Friend consider looking more widely at our Health Service and consider the French approach, where people are asked to make a contribution whenever they consult the health services? This would broaden the principle he is outlining and upon which he will expand. Is he prepared to look at it on the same basis, because it might give us more resources and may have a wider beneficial effect than the measures he is proposing today?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion. He will note that there is no proposal along those lines in the Bill. I would not wish to be drawn to comment on that today.

As the House knows, our principal aims, through those proposals, are to improve the standards of care, in particular in the inner cities, and to give greater emphasis to the prevention of ill health. We believe that more can be done for the family doctor service through the practice team by vaccination, immunisation and screening for cervical cancer. The White Paper outlined our plans in those areas for what might be called prevention targets. The intention is that doctors have targets for each of the main preventable diseases and the action taken to prevent them. We shall relate remuneration to the achievement of those targets and encourage greater provision of more general advice on keeping healthy, not only by doctors but by other members of the practice team. We shall introduce a sessional fee for health promotion sessions.

We emphasise also—it is an important point in the broader context of this debate—that vulnerable groups such as elderly people should be properly cared for. In recognition of those needs, higher capitation fees are paid already for each patient over 65 and 75. We propose to discuss with the profession what sorts of additional services should be provided for elderly patients. The routine screening of mobility, sight, emphysema and hearing, and keeping in touch by one means or another with elderly patients, particularly those who live alone, are the sorts of services we have in mind.

The effective development of this approach depends not only on the doctor but on a strong practice team. It is this which lies behind clause 13 of the Bill. We propose to release more funds to enable practice teams to take on extra skills and to carry out the sorts of task I have just described. That may mean, for example, additional practice nurses or the extension of services provided by a practice to include the care that can be given by people such as counsellors, physiotherapists or chiropodists. In inner-city areas, or other areas where a similar problem arises, some practices may wish to recruit interpreters under this heading to help people of ethnic minorities whose command of the English language is limited. Subject to negotiations with the profession, more money will be made available for those purposes.

We also intend to abolish the current central constraints on the type and number of team members whose salary costs can attract direct reimbursemment. Clause 13 substitutes a more flexible system, which rests on giving the local family practitioner committee or health board freedom to determine need and allocate priorities within a budget. Clause 12 will strengthen practice teams by clarifying and extending the scope for reimbursing the training costs of staff. For example, subject to the passage of the Bill, we intend to arrange for general practitioners to be reimbursed for the training costs of practice nurses and for financial recognition to be given to those general practitioners who provide clinical training for undergraduate medical students. Both changes, which have been widely welcomed by the profession, would help to improve the quality of primary care.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Welcome though it may be that physiotherapy, chiropody and other GP services will be extended, how will the Government ensure that minimum standards are retained and that we do not have a patchwork of standards which vary considerably from area to area, withour any guarantee being imposed on the GP services?

Mr. Newton: That is precisely why we think it right to move to the allocation of budgets to family practitioner committees and health boards, so that they can have a say in determining the priorities for expenditure in those areas and seek to achieve a better spread and balance of services than we have at the moment. This is something that sometimes affects rural areas, which may be what the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has in mind. More often it affects inner cities and deprived areas, which have been the more common focus of attention.

The more flexible approach reflected in those clauses also affects clause 13, which provides for financial assistance for practice premises through improvement guarantees or under the cost rent scheme to be controlled locally under a cash-limited system. This picks up the hon. Gentleman's point; it enables locally set priorities to be determined and makes it easier to direct funds to the areas where they are needed most. Quite apart from practice team support, it is often the case that the premises of family doctors are at their worst in the inner city and other deprived areas, and we wish to direct extra resources to their improvement.

Family doctors can also be helped to buy surgery premises by obtaining Government-guaranteed loans from the General Practice Finance Corporation. The White Paper announced our intention to seek powers to change the constitution of the GPFC to allow maximum use of private sector funds. We propose that the corporation should become a statutory company under the Companies Act and a trust should be set up to represent the medical profession on the board of the new corporation. The exact shape of the new arrangements will depend on discussions with the corporation and with the general medical services committee of the British Medical Association, as well as with potential investors. Clauses 1 to 3 would provide powers to enable such changes to take place. They would provide also for the GPFC to have greater access to private sector funds in the period before reconstruction.

I have referred to premises in inner cities and to support for general practitioners in those areas. A striking feature of the inner cities is that they have an above average number of elderly doctors — some of them are very elderly—who too often practise on their own.

The responsibilities of family doctors are extremely exacting and we would expect them to become more exacting following the implementation of the proposals that I have outlined. We have come to the conclusion that it is not reasonable to expect doctors to continue to work beyond the age at which they can carry out their responsibilities properly under NHS contracts.

Clauses 5 and 6 are intended to change the present system. They would give powers to introduce a compulsory retirement age for general practitioners and would end the so-called 24-hours retirement, whereby doctors over the age of 65 years can retire, draw their pension and return to practice a day later without any reduction in either pay or pension. Our proposals were widely supported in consultation and by the Select Committee on Social Services. We would expect and hope that the places of retiring doctors would be taken by younger, vocationally trained doctors who are genuinely keen to work in group practices and as members of primary care teams. That we see as contributing to the improvement in the standard services that we wish to see.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Dentists often own their own businesses, which means that compensation would have to be paid. Any rapid decision to make dentists sell would depress prices, and perhaps mean they would be treated unfairly.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has raised a fair point. If he reads the White Paper he will see that it contains passages on compensation for goodwill. That is something that we have in mind and it will be considered in our negotiations with the professions.

I have referred to the £170 million overall that we expect our proposals in respect of dental charges and eyesight tests to contribute to the £600 million-plus of additional expenditure on primary care services that we expect over the next three years.

I shall turn directly to the issue of dental charges and to clause 8, which is concerned with them, because I know that this is a matter of some concern to the House. The House will know that we propose to move to a proportionate charge for dental treatment and to extend that system to dental examinations that are now free. Existing powers already permit proportionate charging for routine dental treatment. Clause 8 is required to enable such charging to cover dentures and bridges and to permit charges for dental examinations. It follows that we intend to move to the new arrangements in stages.

Under existing provisions, regulations will be brought before the House at the appropriate time to provide for proportionate charges from 1 April 1988. The regulations will also specify fixed charges for dentures and bridges at or about the same percentage of cost. Bearing in mind that the current average of the proportion of treatment charges that is met by the patient is 65 per cent. and that there has been no increase in dental charges since 1985—in other words, by next April they will have been unchanged for three years—we expect to set the figure at 75 per cent. At the same time, the maximum charge—I know that the British Dental Association has been concerned about this—will be increased from £115 to £150.

Subject to the passage of the Bill, we would at a later stage move the charges on bridges and dentures to the same fully proportionate system for routine treatment and introduce the proportionate charge for the dental examination. The House will be aware that the principle of moving to proportionate charges for treatment has been widely welcomed and pressed for by the profession. In saying that, I intend only to associate it with the principle, not with a particular rate.

I think that it is generally acknowledged that the present system is difficult for the public to understand, difficult for the profession to administer and difficult for anyone to defend as fair. For example, the present charges for dentures, bridges and crowns vary from 25 per cent. to 93 per cent. of the cost. The cost of routine treatment ranges from 100 per cent. to less than 50 per cent.

I wish to emphasise the need to consider our proposals as a whole. The move to proportional charges will reduce substantially the costs of much routine treatment. For example, on current figures a 75 per cent. charge would cut the cost of a clean, polish and two small fillings from £14·20 to £10·65. I acknowledge readily that that saving will be offset by the proposed 75 per cent. examination charge, which on current figures would be £2·93. Even after allowing for that, the cost of examination and treatment in the case that I have mentioned would be

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£13·57 compared with £14·20 for the treatment alone on the basis of current charges. We estimate that some 2 million courses of treatment, including the proposed examination charge, will cost less than they do currently. The charges for extensive and more expensive treatment will generally be higher, and the net result of that will be, in our view, to set the signals much more clearly in favour of those who attend a dentist regularly and take proper care of their teeth.

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): My hon. Friend has talked about regarding the Government's proposals in the round. Does he recognise that some of us who are generally very supportive of the main provisions in the Bill, and who will be voting for the Bill's Second Reading this evening, are sharply opposed to charges for sight tests and dental examinations? We are extremely concerned also about the mounting and increasing difficulties that are facing many hospitals and district health authorities, which have been spotlighted by the important statement of the three royal colleges which has been reported today. Does my hon. Friend recognise that clause 4, which refers to giving greater freedom to district health authorities in raising income, is superficial and peripheral to the fundamental and central problems that have been highlighted by the presidents of the royal colleges, which demand the urgent attention of DHSS Ministers and my right hon. Friends the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister? That should be the message from this House.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend has referred to the proposals in clause 4, with which I shall deal later in my speech, and generally to the proposals which I have been outlining, which are perhaps not related directly to hospital and community health services, and described them as peripheral. It is clear to anyone who examines the pressures on the Health Service that it would be wrong to ignore or dismiss any reasonable source of enhancement of the resources that we can put into health care as a whole. That is what I have had in mind—I hope that this will be the view of the House generally—in judging these proposals. We all know that the potential for spending on health is literally infinite. Therefore, we all have a duty to consider every legitimate way of garnering resources to spend on health services.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): My hon. Friend has referred to those who are able to pay. Will he accept that there are many pensioners whose income is slightly above the supplementary benefit level who will find it extremely difficult to meet the new charges that are embodied in the Bill? Will he undertake to examine the present exemptions from charges and give consideration to whether they could be widened to take account of the difficulties that will be faced by those on very modest incomes?

Mr. Newton: I note what my hon. Friend says. I was about to emphasise that all existing exemptions — I know that this does not meet his point directly—from treatment charges will extend to examination charges. In other words, neither will be paid by children, students, those on low incomes, including the elderly, expecting and nursing mothers, and certain other groups. We are talking primarily about those on supplementary benefit or income support.

I recognise the reasons why my hon. Friend has introduced that point. Let me say, in general terms, that the objective of the Government's policy in relation to those over retirement age—which is clearly reflected in the measures that my hon. Friends concerned with social security have been introducing and carrying through in recent months and years — is to build on what has already notably occurred in recent decades: a steady improvement in the general standard of living of those over retirement age, not least with the development of occupational pensions.

I believe that the proper strategy of Government policy —and it is the strategy of our policy—should be to continue to build up the capacity of people in retirement to make choices and decisions for themselves, and thus enhance their independence. It follows from that that when public resources are to be applied by way of exemptions or special concessions, it is right to focus them on those who have not the advantages of, for example, the development of occupational pensions, and are — by definition—too late to benefit from what we are now seeking to do. That, I believe, is the right approach in this and other matters.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): While I accept what my hon. Friend has been saying about the desirability of encouraging those who are able to contribute to do so, will he take on board that many of us who will be voting for the Bill's Second Reading this evening for that very reason nevertheless feel strongly that, if it is impossible for the individual to make a contribution towards health care and only the Government remain capable of providing adequate resources, we should look to them progressively to do so in the weeks and months ahead? Many Conservative Members would be forced at this point to endorse the call by the presidents of the royal colleges this morning.

Mr. Newton: Let me say for the third time that I note what my hon. Friend has said, and ask him to note what I said to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) a few minutes ago. I also ask him to recognise that it is too simple by half to associate all the pressures faced by the expanding Health Service solely with demand for additional financial resources.

I thought that one of the weaknesses of the statement issued by the presidents of the royal colleges last night was that it contained little or no serious discussion of the complex causes of some of the difficulties, including, for example, the nursing shortages which have been acknowledged recently in the Birmingham area — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) says that that has to do with money. But the cardiac clinicians who wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the beginning of last week, in a letter that gained some publicity in the press, made it clear that they felt that they could afford to pay intensive care nurses more within their existing budgets. They did not suggest that it was an overall resource problem; they suggested that it was a question of the structure of pay. We are tackling that through the so-called clinical grading review, on which I hope negotiations are nearly completed. That will give us a basis, through the subsequent recommendations of the review body, to tackle the problem in the way in which it needs to be tackled—in relation to the pay and grading of nurses.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): My hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that we must examine the restructuring of nurses' pay. However, let no one be deceived into thinking that it is just because of pay that 30,000 nurses are leaving the profession. They are leaving because they are demoralised.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is oversimplifying matters in the same way as the statement by the presidents of the royal colleges. As was made clear in the debate in the House the week before last, no one suggests that there are not problems and pressures in the Health Service—as there have always been—over meeting demand. I do not try to dismiss those problems, any more than I did in that debate, or during the past few minutes. I ask in return only that my hon. Friend accepts that they are complex problems, which are often reduced to excessive simplicities by some of the statements that are put out.

Clause 7 of the Bill broadens the scope of the community dental service, and gives health authorities discretion to redirect the service's resources away from the routine treatment of children—who can be, and for the most part are, looked after in the general dental service—and towards providing health education for children in schools. We are also looking for new contractual arrangements, such as a continuing care, contract and capitation, which — subject to negotiations with the profession—will enable general dental practitioners to devote more time and resources to preventive work with their child patients.

I am bearing in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the injunction from Mr. Speaker about brevity. In conjunction with the profession, we shall be launching a dental health testing campaign to promote dental awareness and regular attendance. The campaign will be directed in particular at young people in inner-city areas, where the standards of dental health are still some way behind those in the rest of the country. We shall also be taking a step designed to enhance the quality of treatment — one step among many, but a legislative step. Clause 9 provides increased powers for the Dental Estimates Board to survey and research norms and standards of treatment, and to deal with dentists whose work appears to be at variance with those standards. The White Paper also referred to our intention to consult the profession about a new counselling and monitoring service of dental practice advisers, which we hope will contribute to the improvement of services.

Mr. Dalyell: Why does the Minister think that the British Dental Association has circulated among many of us a powerful memorandum opposing examination charges for adults? Does he agree that charges will mean that people will go to the dentist less regularly, and that, ultimately, the expense will mount?

Mr. Newton: I do not find it surprising that the British Dental Association has circulated such a document. However, I disagree with its assessment of the effect of the proposals, especially against the background that I emphasised, possibly at excessive length. The net result is likely to be the provision of significant ranges of treatment —even with the examination charge—at lower costs than are now incurred; and, therefore, greater incentives for people to visit the dentist regularly while they still need modest treatment, rather than leaving huge problems to build up.

Clauses 10 and 11 relate to the general ophthalmic services. The first confines free National Health Service sight tests to groups which we have specified: children, those on low incomes, young people in full-time education and those who are registered blind or partially sighted. Those groups account for an estimated 30 per cent.—nearly one-third — of such tests. For the remainder, however, free NHS sight tests will cease to be available.

I should make it clear that there is no question of the Government setting or imposing a particular charge. The figure of £10, which has been quoted fairly widely, is simply the amount that we currently pay for such a test by an ophthalmic optician. For a test by an ophthalmic medical practitioner, it is rather less—just over £6. In the light of experience—following the end of free NHS glasses—with vouchers being provided for the priority groups whom I have mentioned—we can sensibly expect that the extension of competition, which has both reduced prices and notably increased consumer choice for spectacles, will restrain charges. Given that even those who already need glasses visit the optician only once every two or three years, I see no reason to suppose that people will be deterred in the way that has been suggested.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Let me remind the Minister that when the House last discussed the matter the previous Secretary of State for Health and Social Services, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), said:

"we also believe that the access to a free sight test is important in detecting serious eye disease." — [*Official Report*, 20 December 1983; Vol. 51, c. 295.]

What medical advice—I stress the word "medical"—has the Minister received that has encouraged the Government to change their view, and no longer to believe that that is important?

Mr. Newton: I shall comment on screening in a few moments. However, I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that we have been seeking to expand and develop our health services as a whole and that we have placed great emphasis on the primary care services. We have rightly kept that policy under review. We launched the primary care consultation, and we have now published the primary care White Paper and this Bill. We have come firmly to the conclusion that we wish to undertake further development of these services in the interests of the general promotion of good health and the prevention of ill health. In the context of furthering and continuing that development, we have thought it legitimate to bring this proposal before the House. It will contribute to the resources that we need to carry out the other developments that we believe are worth while. I make no apology for the fact that we have done that.

Mr. Cook: I repeat my question: what medical advice did the Government receive on that point?

Mr. Newton: I repeat that I shall say something about screening in a few moments.

Clause 11 safeguards competition, which has had a significant effect by reducing the price of spectacles and increasing choice. We believe that that will restrain the cost of sight tests. We propose to safeguard competition by requiring the optician after a sight test to give the patient a prescription, if glasses are needed, so that he or she can shop around for glasses, as can be done now.

I am aware—the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) echoed this point in his interventions — that

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suggestions have been made that our proposed changes will diminish the role that is played by sight tests in screening for other conditions. The extent to which that argument stands up at all depends on expecting people to be deterred from seeking eye tests. There is no reason to expect that to happen. Sight tests will continue to be conducted at least to the same standards, although opticians may decide in practice—partly because of the competitive pressures to which I have referred—to offer a wider range of tests than is available under the National Health Service. It is a professional requirement of the General Optical Council that the optician should refer a patient to a doctor if he detects glaucoma or diabetic retinopathy. That arrangement — clearly on medical advice—will continue.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): If opticians are to be encouraged to conduct different types of tests, with some being not quite so thorough as others, who will be responsible if, during a less than thorough test, early signs of diabetes are missed? Will the optician be responsible, although he has been encouraged by the Government to carry out a less than thorough test on his patient, or will the Government be responsible?

Mr. Newton: I think that I shall carry my hon. Friend, who knows a great deal about these matters, with me if I acknowledge that the extent of the tests that are carried out by opticians already varies from one practice to another. If it is felt that further steps should be taken either to tighten up the procedures or to impose precisely what should be done, that could be considered. I do not dismiss my hon. Friend's point, but I am uneasy about the apparent willingness to rely for the screening of some conditions, in particular diabetes, on the chance that people go to their optician. Our proposals for general practitioners are designed to encourage, particularly in relation to the very young and the elderly, the systematic overall health screening of those who are most likely to be at risk. It is worth considering whether that is a better and a more sensible approach to these problems than to rely on people going to their optician.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my hon. Friend accept that I have a typical diabetic condition that was found when I went for an eye test? I am not elderly and I am not a child. In those circumstances, would I have had the benefit of a sliding scale option? How much would the minimum charge have been and would the optician have given me that option at the beginning or at the end of the diagnosis?

Mr. Newton: I am not, I am afraid, absolutely sure that I have understood the last part of my hon. Friend's question. The charge will depend on what the optician decides to charge. My view is that the pressures of competition, which have significantly reduced the price of spectacles, will similarly restrain, and possibly entirely eliminate, the charges for eyesight testing. However, that is for opticians to decide within a much freer market than exists now. I believe that it will have the same beneficial effect as the move to vouchers has unquestionably had.

Mr. Holt: Am I to understand that each optician will be able to choose what charge he makes, that that charge could be nil, if he so chooses, and that the reimbursement by the Government will be according to a sliding scale that the Government will fix at another time?

Mr. Newton: I have already emphasised that there is no question of the Government setting or prescribing particular charges. We shall continue to discuss with the profession the arrangements for reimbursing opticians for eyesight tests that remain free NHS eyesight tests — according to current figures, about 30 per cent. Where there is no question of a free NHS eyesight test — roughly the other 70 per cent. — it will be for the optician to decide how much he wants to charge. I make no secret of the fact that my guess is that in many cases the charge will be rather less than the amount that is paid to opticians for carrying out those tests now. Indeed, it would be very surprising if that were not the case.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My hon. Friend says that he does not expect people to be deterred by charges for what was previously free. Since that is contrary to what any person would expect the consequence to be, on what objective evidence are his expectations, which seem to be so improbable to common reason, based?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will accept that it can only be a matter of judgment, in the light of the experience that we already have of the abolition of free NHS glasses and the introduction of the voucher scheme. We were told that large numbers of people would be frightened and would not have spectacles. I know of no evidence that that has occurred. We were also told that opticians would never be able to provide spectacles that were as good as or better than the old NHS ones at the sort of price that the voucher values represent. One only has to visit one of the attractive spectacle stores that have now been set up to find that such establishments are offering a significantly wider range of much more attractive spectacles that come within the voucher values. I accept that it is a matter of judgment, and I hestitate to quarrel with my hon. Friend's judgment, but in this case my judgment differs from his.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Is it not possible that the charges are most unlikely to be as much as £10 a visit, and is it not possible that more people will be encouraged to visit their optician? As for the complaints by the principals of the royal colleges, is it not a fact that there are now twice as many nurses and doctors as there were 20 years ago, when these eminent people first started in practice, and that if only they had run their hospitals better and achieved better savings, and if there were not so many hospitals, the Health Service would be a great deal better off?

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I can vouch for my hon. Friend's statistics. Mine usually go back to 1979 for reasons about which the House will speculate. However, I confirm my hon. Friend's view. One need only consider the different periods of day surgery care from health authority to health authority, and, indeed, from hospital to hospital, the differing periods of time that patients spend in hospital following certain procedures or the relative costs of different hospitals and different clinicians to know that there is a good deal of room for improvement among all who are connected with the Health Service. I hope that doctors will reflect on that.

In addition to the contributions to the general improvement in health care services, especially screening

and preventive services, with which we expect the resources released by the changes to assist, I should emphasise that the changes will enable us to extend other important services related to eye care. We propose to extend the voucher scheme to help adults who frequently break their glasses because of physical or mental disability. Negotiations will shortly begin with the profession about widening the National Health services to enable practitioners to provide a sight testing service to the housebound. I know that many people who are concerned with community care attach great importance to that point, which will be of real assistance to many elderly people. In addition, the value of vouchers that are available to those who require complex and expensive lenses will be given special consideration to ensure that that group of patients is not placed at a disadvantage.

I have already taken quite some time from the House and shall cover the remaining clauses briefly so that, at least, I shall have given the House some idea of what they contain. Some are principally technical measures to tie up loose ends that arise from earlier uncertainties.

Clause 14 anticipates the integration of the artificial limb and appliance services into the National Health Service in 1991. That has the effect of maintaining continunity of employment to civil servants who choose to transfer to the National Health Service.

Clause 17 confirms the legal basis of fees for licences that are issued under the Medicines Act 1971.

Clause 16 fills the gap in the limited powers of the Secretary of State to make grants for the training of local authorities' social services staff in England and Wales. That may sound a small point, but one aim is to enable us, at some appropriate moment, to put resources into improving the training of staff concerned with child abuse, for which we think we currently have inadequate powers.

Clause 15 removes the power of local authorities to charge health authorities for the services of social work staff. When the National Health Service was reorganised in 1974, local authorities were made responsible for employing social workers and health authorities for employing doctors and nurses. Resources were transferred centrally at that time from the health budget to local government grant arrangements to reflect that change of responsibility. There is no justification for retaining the anomalous powers for local authorities to make the charges. Subject to passage of the Bill, we intend that that should take effect at midnight on the day of publication, 26 November.

I return, as I said I would, to the issue of income generation by health authorities. The Bill is intended to assist health authorities in creating new opportunities to generate additional resources and, not least in connection with the points made during the past half hour by my hon. Friends on the Back Benches, to improve health care. The Bill gives health authorities new powers to supplement their resources by making, for example, better use of their facilities. They will be able to take greater advantage of opportunities to lease space to commercial outlets, such as shops or hairdressers. If they wish, they could sell advertising space in the hospital or at other premises. They will be able to consider providing completely new facilities such as health clubs, for which they can, quite sensibly and properly, make charges.

Several authorities have already made a modest start, for example, by charging taxi companies for the installation in hospitals of free taxi-phones for use by patients and visitors, or by recovering and selling the silver from used X-rays. The Bill is designed to enhance such opportunities and to make it clear, in the statute, that such activities can only be undertaken provided that they do not interfere, in any way, with the main duty, which is to provide services to patients under the National Health Service.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Newton: Yes, but then I must get on.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. If an entrepreneurial health authority holds bazaars and all sorts of events and raises a lot of money in the next year, will it suffer a deflation of its allocation by the regional health authority or will it be allowed to keep that money, in addition?

Mr. Newton: I intend to make it clear to regional health authorities, without attempting to dictate every detail of their allocation policy, that I expect them to ensure that district health authorities are not put in a position in which it does not seem worthwhile to engage in entrepreneurial activities because they fear that they will not gain or benefit from them.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Newton: Yes, but this may have to be the last time that I do so because otherwise many hon. Members will be unable to speak.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister said that those other functions must not interfere with patients and subsection (5)(a) of clause 4 state that they should not,

"to a significant extent, interfere with the performance".

Will he tell us how he will ensure that they do not interfere with performance?

Mr. Newton: The sort of schemes that we would be prepared to countenance will be a matter for monitoring by the Department and by regions. We intend to set up a central unit to distribute the information and to assist health authorities in such matters. I re-emphasise, because I do not want this to be misunderstood, that there is no intention of permitting activities that could be seen as detracting from the services provided under the Health Service to those to whom the health authorities have a responsibility. The purpose is to gain additional resources for the continued improvement of the National Health Service.

The clause gives health authorities much greater freedom as to the way in which they set charges for private patients. Currently, authorities can only recover through charges the costs of the services provided for private patients. We intend that in future they should be able to set charges according to the prevailing market conditions. That should enable authorities to increase their income from such services.

Partly because I have given way so much, I have taken rather longer than I would have wished and shall conclude briefly. In many important respects, the Bill paves the way for the implementation of significant improvements in primary health care in this country, for increasing consumer choice and improving the quality and quantity of services overall. It also provides those new powers that will make a useful contribution to the further development of hospital and community health services. In that sense,

[Mr. Newton]

it will be a significant and useful step forwared in the continued development of policy for improving the Health Service in this country and, therefore, I commend it to the House.

4.47 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Under this Government, the straightest way to the heart of any Bill is to turn to the financial memorandum. From the financial memorandum we learn that there will be no significant effect on public sector manpower, but that there will be significant net savings on public expenditure. I congratulate the Minister on his nerves of steel. Against a background of financial crisis in the Health Service, it takes a thick-skinned and impervious Government to come to the House of Commons to ask it to pass a Bill that will further reduce Government spending on the National Health Service.

I saw the contrast between the needs of the Health Service and the priorities of the Government graphically illustrated yesterday on the front page of my Sunday newspaper. Side by side with the report of the death of baby Barber there was a report that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was considering a 2p cut in the basic rate of income tax next March, plus a cut of 10p in the income tax of top people. Apparently that is because of what is described as the "prosperous" state of Treasury revenues and the "negligible" need for public borrowing next year.

It costs £3 billion to reduce income tax by 2p, leaving aside the extra gilt for the top-rate payers. One third, or even one sixth, of that sum would transform the situation in British hospitals. If the Chancellor of the Exchequer has such money to spare, it is the duty of the Minister for Health to get it for the National Health Service. It is a function of Government to make a judgment between competing priorities for resources. However, only a Government who have abandoned all pretence of measuring social need could persuade themselves this winter that tax cuts should take priority over spending on the National Health Service.

The point was expressed yesterday succinctly by Philip Barber, who was interrupted at a marathon, sponsored game of pool to be told of his son's death, when he observed:

"There is something wrong in a society which needs me to play pool so that babies can have operations to save their lives"

Yet the Bill confirms that even the Ministers responsible for the nation's health have agreed to share the priority of cutting spending rather than meeting need.

Mr. Hayes: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House in any way. When he talked about the financial and manpower effects he talked about significant net savings, but he did not go on to say that that was because the General Practice Finance Corporation will be a limited company and will not be counted in the public sector borrowing requirement. I am sure that he would like to explain that.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman refers to clauses 1 to 3, to which I shall refer in a moment. If he re-reads the passage that talks of significant net savings in public expenditure, he will recognise that it refers to clauses 1 to 13, which go well beyond clauses 1 to 3.

Clause 13 is likely to be the most profound measure, because for the first time it extends cash limits to the family practitioner service. I noticed that the Minister said that that would be a more flexible system than the present one. We are surrounded by abundant evidence of what this flexible system of cash limits has done to our hospital service. The rest of the nation is appalled at the consequences of this flexible system on the hospital service, yet apparently the Government are so pleased with the results that they propose to extend the system to general practitioners. Clauses 1 to 3 promise considerable savings to the public sector borrowing requirement, never mind that *The Observer* tells us that the PSBR is also negligible. Apparently it is the first duty of the Minister for Health to find still more savings to make it even more negligible.

The savings arise from a proposal to privatise, not the family practitioner committees — the Government have not yet reached that stage — but the General Practice Finance Corporation. It was set up because GPs had difficulty in obtaining commercial loans to purchase property in areas of poverty and under-privilege; in other words, in areas where the banks were reluctant to lend. That remains the distinctive contribution of the GPFC. It is astonishing that in a package that we are told is designed to improve primary health care the Government should wash their hands of the major provider of funds for premises in inner cities, where there is the greatest need to obtain more premises and to modernise existing ones.

The Government considered privatising the GPFC in 1984 and rejected the idea. The Minister's predecessor came to the Dispatch Box on Report on the Health and Social Security Bill and positively preened himself on keeping the corporation in the public sector. He said:

"It shows what a flexible and non-ideological Government we are."—[*Official Report*, 2 May 1984; Vol 59, c. 366.]

By the same token, we can only conclude from today's measure that we are faced with an inflexible and ideological Government. The savings from this bit of ideology are small beer, because the Government have already so reduced the borrowing limits of the corporation that it is allowed to spend only £10 million to £12 million a year. The Government will now receive 15 times that sum in increased income from the proposals on new charges for teeth and eyes.

I shall flag an anxiety raised by several members of the BMA about the breadth of clause 8. Mysteriously, reference to dentists and dental charges vanishes in subsection (2). When the Minister replies, will she clarify the scope of clause 8 and confirm that she is not giving herself powers to introduce by regulation charges on the services of general pracitioners? I shall wait in expectation of her reply when she is briefed.

What we know about the clause is bad enough. It provides for a new charge on having one's teeth examined. Since 1948 teeth have been examined free under the NHS as a matter of principle. The Government propose to raise £50 million by abandoning that free examination. One is bound to observe that they sell their principles cheaply——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): As the Labour Government did in 1951 with the introduction of prescription and dental charges.

Mr. Cook: With the greatest respect, no previous Government, of whatever colour, have introduced a charge for the examination of teeth. Nowhere are we favoured with an explanation of how it will help to prevent

dental disease by deterring patients from going for a regular check-up, and deter them it will. I assert that with confidence because, thanks to the Government, we have experience of what happens when dental charges are hoicked up. In April 1985 the Government increased dental charges by 25 per cent. Over the subsequent year the number of fillings fell by 5 million, the treatment of gum disease fell by 1 million and root treatments fell by more than 100,000. By contrast, the number of patients opting for the cheaper treatment of extraction increased by 5 per cent.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton) *rose*——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I shall happily give way when I have finished this point.

It need not surprise Conservative Members that increasing charges has that effect on demand. After all, they, more than anybody else, have put their faith in the market mechanism, and they should be gratified to learn that that faith is justified when patients respond to the pricing signal by staying away from surgeries or opting for the cheaper option of extraction.

Mr. Leigh: What happened to the nation's teeth when the Labour Government increased the cost of routine dental treatment by 150 per cent. in 1977?

Mr. Cook: I cannot answer that, but I can say what happened at the local elections, because I was canvassing on the night when that was announced. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that several colleagues and I resisted that charge when it came before the House, and if we had had the support of his colleagues we would have defeated it.

Many will undoubtedly now stay away when they receive the reminder for a six-monthly examination. It is worth remembering that that examination has importance in health care well beyond sound teeth; the dental examination can reveal other medical conditions. To take one topical disease, it is likely that some AIDS carriers will first be detected through thrush of the gums when they present themselves to a dentist. It is important not only for them, but for the rest of the community, that they are not inhibited from obtaining early diagnosis of that condition.

There is also the wider issue of the structure of the charges. The Minister prided himself on the fact that some people will pay less under his new charges, and that may be so. I am prepared to concede that some people may have a smaller bill, but the Minister cannot stand at the Dispatch Box and pretend that that is some sort of general rule. After all, we know that he is budgeting to expect £85 million more in charges from those who visit the dentist, so, demonstrably, most will pay more. In particular, the 100,000 who at present bump against the ceiling of £115 on charges will now bump against the ceiling of £150 per charge.

The Minister said that the charge would be proportional to the cost, but no such proportion is set out in clause 8. On the contrary, clause 8 is drafted in alarming terms which would allow the Minister to recover the whole cost of the charge. I suppose that 100 per cent. may be passed off as a proportion of a sort, but it is hardly what most people understand by the use of the term. Clause 8 gives the Government the power to abolish by order all public support of NHS dental treatment. It puts the dental service on the slipway to an entirely private marketed service, and if anyone concludes that that is fanciful, I would ask who would have thought eight years ago that that is precisely where the NHS optical service would now be?

That brings me to the key proposal in the Government's preventive approach to eye care, which is to introduce charges for eye tests. The Minister said that it would not necessarily cost a tenner. A tenner happens to be approximately what optometrists are paid—£9·30 to be precise. Anything less than that would leave them out of pocket. The Government may argue, as the Minister argued, that they could opt for a lower income and therefore suffer a lower charge

The Minister referred to the market. Markets seek equilibrium when supply and demand are in balance. I should not have to point that out to such a disciple of the Prime Minister's economic philosophy. It would be a curious market which found it equilibrium at the point at which all demand was met. By definition, if the Minister is leaving it to the market to settle the charge, some demand will not be met because it cannot meet the charge. There was no hint in the consultation document of that proposal. There was not a breath of it in the Conservative party manifesto—a point of some relevance.

Mr. Ian Hunter, the general secretary of the Association of Optical Practitioners, told Conservative Back Benchers that most of them had voted for the Government. No doubt optometrists are men of strong political convictions who would have done so anyway, but it is a pity that the Conservative party did not trust them enough to tell them in advance what they were voting for.

The majority of optometrists' clients are pensioners, and pensioners need the eye test most, and they need it most often. Six million pensioners will not qualify for a free eye test. Many of them simply will not go, or will not go as often as they should. They may save a tenner, or perhaps a fiver if the market system operates, but they may also lose their eye sight. The eye sight test is a misnomer. Optometrists offer a full examination of the back of the eye, and they require specialist training and special equipment. They can detect serious health risks such as diabetes and hypertension.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) was in contact with me over the weekend, following a visit from a constituent who visited an optometrist about three months ago. The optometrist examined the back of her eye and immediately arranged for her to see an eye specialist, who referred her to a neurosurgeon. Within a week of her examination, she was operated on for a brain tumour and was advised by the neurosurgeon that had she waited for another two weeks it is likely that she would have lost the use of her legs permanently. In that case a very serious medical condition was revealed by the eye test. I must add that the constituent in question was quite frank in saying that, on her wages as a cook, she would not have gone for that test if she had had to pay a tenner.

The damage that will arise from the introduction of charges is perhaps best illustrated in the case of glaucoma. Three out of four cases of glaucoma are detected by the eye test. I cannot do better than read the observations of the International Glaucoma Association, which says that it

"can only conclude that either the Government have not been well advised; or that they have deliberately decided to brush

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aside as of no consequence the certain increase in the number of people with glaucoma who will not be discovered until the disease is well advanced."

I listened with interest to the interventions of the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) and of the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) who are no longer in the Chamber. It would have been nice if they had stayed and participated in the rest of the debate, as they feel so strongly. They said that, although they would vote for the Bill, the Minister could not expect them to support the measure.

I have to tell those hon. Members that the Minister made a very interesting statement of particular relevance to Conservative Back Benchers who claim to disagree with his proposal. The Minister said that he believed that adults with means of their own should make up their own minds and make choices for themselves. I believe that that is precisely what those Conservative Back Benchers who are unhappy with the proposal must now do. It will not do for them to stand up in the House and say that they disagree with the Bill and then go into the Lobby and vote for it.

Clause 4 gives expression to the Government's latest fad, which they have termed income generation, and provides a new place in district management teams for a marketing director whose role will not be meeting health needs, but that of finding the sponsor who will pay most to get his name on nurses' uniforms — the Adidas solution to Health Service funding. It is not an optional course, which is being offered to managers as light relief from the stress of being unable to meet health needs. Clause 4 authorises the Secretary of State to direct health authorities to market their services. For good measure, it adds that it is their duty to comply with such directions.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) made a penetrating intervention, if I may say that without prejudicing his career, when he asked whether the Minister would allow health authorities to keep the fruits of their marketing. He received a particularly Delphic response. I have in front of me the words that the Minister used when he was asked an identical question at a press conference last week. His words on that occasion were slightly less Delphic. He said:

"Inescapably, we have to look at the totality of resources available from all sources."

The hon. Gentleman feared that that meant that the Minister would deduct from the allocation to health authorities the revenue that they had raised from marketing. I have to warn the hon. Gentleman that it will be worse than that. After the Minister has taken his powers to direct health authorities to market the services, and after he has taken the power to oblige them to comply with those directions, he will assume that they are obtaining income from marketing the services, whether or not they are securing that income. It is a fraud on the House and on the nation to pretend that extra revenue will be available for patient care.

Let me make it clear where the Opposition stand on that matter. We believe that the test that has to be applied to marketing services is whether they will improve the service to the patient. If a spot of franchising provides greater variety in the cafeterias, that is well and good. If those cafeterias are run on the principle of a healthy diet, that is even better, although that rules out 90 per cent. of the fast food chains in Britain.

Mr. Holt: And in the House of Commons.

Mr. Cook: In the House of Commons, too. What is wholly dishonest is to pretend that clause 4 will unlock a chest of gold that will plug the yawning gap in hospital finance.

Last week the Minister objected to my description of this as tuck shop economics. Ken Grant, the manager of the City and Hackney health authority, who has done more than anyone else to generate income, expressed it in more blunt language than I dare use. He said:

"In terms of what the NHS needs, the money we are raising is peanuts. It's just that at the moment peanuts are bloody useful"

After three years the peanuts will amount to £70 million in a full year. To put that in perspective, it is less than half the £168 million by which the Government have underfunded nurses' pay in the past year alone. It is sheer effrontery for a Government who cheated the health authorities on that scale now to claim the credit for allowing them to raise half that money in the market. The basic reason why we are suspicious of clause 4 is that, eventually, the pressures on hospitals to make profit will make the patient pay. Nearly two thirds of clause 4 is about charging patients.

It might be salutary to recall at this point the crushing failure of the Government's previous intervention on charging patients, which encouraged hospitals to expand pay beds by one quarter over six years. Unfortunately for them, those six years turned out to be the same period in which the number of patients wanting pay beds fell by one third. The legacy of that colossal misreading of the market is a mountain of bad debt. Health authorities are writing off £500,000 in bad debt from private patients who slipped to the front of the queue into pay beds and failed to pay for them.

Despite that lesson of history, the Government now want to encourage health authorities to invest still more money in that loss leader. I have evidence of what the Minister has in mind. I understand that on Wednesday, or later in the week, at a press conference he intends to reveal a deal which the Government have struck with Bioplan Holdings to develop private day units in NHS hospitals. One of those is the Hope hospital in Salford, where Bioplan is to build a 12-bed new day centre unit. Another is the Churchill hospital in Oxford, where Bioplan is to equip an existing Health Service day surgery unit and provide 15 private beds. Those are the first two out of six such deals around the country. Each of them will have the capacity to carry out 10,000 operations.

That reflects the trend in America for fast in and out day surgery as the basis of private care—the "Kwik-Fit" approach to surgery. It breaks new ground in reducing health care to a market commodity. It will mean that NHS hospitals and private hospitals will occupy the same sites — in the case of the Churchill hospital, the same building. They will share common staff. It is not even clear whether consultants will operate in their own time or in the time paid for by the district health authority. They will share common laboratory staff—at any rate until such time as the Government privatise the laboratories.

The absurdity of the position is that the district health authorities will provide the sites, lend the staff, run the back-up services and must then pay Bioplan for the treatment of the patients. Of course, the deal has been stitched up behind closed doors, which is the very antithesis of market forces. There was no open tender here.

It is a flagrant case of favouritism — and what a favourite to have chosen. Bioplan shares its directors with the British subsidiary of the Hospital Corporation of America. The vice-president of that corporation has observed with engaging frankness:

"We try to maintain a low profile when we enter a country because we don't want it to appear that — here is a big American company to take over the health care system."

With equal candour, two years ago the founder and controlling shareholder of Bioplan stated his health care philosophy at a *Financial Times* conference. He said:

"I don't apologise for being commercial — the bottom line to me means profit."

How fitting that this Government should choose such a company as a partner. How perfectly that demonstrates where we are going with clause 4 and the joint priorities of that company and the Government.

Meanwhile, back in the state sector, every day we see more clearly the reality of the Government's commitment to the NHS. In Birmingham the reality of health care under the Government is a charity appeal for £500,000 to cover a corridor from the operating theatre so that ill babies need not be wheeled through the mud. In Leeds the reality is parents clubbing together to fund a registrar's post in a children's cancer ward.

At the weekend it was the turn of the royal colleges to issue an unprecedented joint statement. I have not been charged with the health portfolio for as long as the Minister has, but even if I had the years of experience that he has I hope that I would not presume to tell the presidents of the three senior royal colleges that they had not grasped the complexity of the issue. The three presidents said:

"In spite of the efforts of doctors, nurses and other hospital staff, patient care is deteriorating. Acute hospital services have almost reached breaking point."

That statement is a damning indictment of the state of our hospitals this year. The statement demands a response from the Government that matches the magnitude of the crisis that it depicts. That response will require vision and clear-headed choices between priorities. It will require a readiness to square up to providing the resources to do the job adequately. Instead, the House is offered this tawdry Bill about putting petrol pumps in hospital forecourts and charging the elderly to have their eyes examined.

The measures are objectionable enough in themselves. The Bill that contains them is doubly objectionable because it is a pathetic and fatuous irrelevance to the real crisis in the Health Service. We will vote against it tonight with contempt.

5.13 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Following Mr. Speaker's injunction to make brief speeches, I hope that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) will forgive me if I do not immediately answer some of his important points, especially the latter ones. I hope to take up some of them during my brief contribution.

I am the only member of the former Select Committee on Social Services, which spent most of last year examining primary health care, who is present for this debate. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for agreeing, at least in principle, with most of the recommendations in our report. It would be churlish of me not to extend similar thanks to the Goverment for their White Paper. It is important for us to realise the commitment that they have made. In the preface to the White Paper, the four Secretaries of State say that we must

"shift the emphasis in primary care from the treatment of illness to the promotion of health and the prevention of disease."

To succeed, that shift will require extra resources. Illness will not just vanish because we decide to work for a healthier nation.

In the long term, if we place more emphasis on the prevention of illness and immunisation, it will be reasonable to expect a reduction in known ailments, with known causes where they are known to be preventable. Former killer diseases such as smallpox, scarlet fever, diphtheria and tuberculosis have been nearly, if not completely, eliminated through public health campaigns, immunisation and the development of antibiotics. Thus, there is an historical basis for the long-term hope that prevention will reduce the incidence of illness. But we have no chance of doing it quickly. Therefore, the extra activity that we hope will come into primary care as a result of the White Paper will require further resources. We know that resources are already under strain, and the hon. Member for Livingston drew our attention—if we needed it—to the statement from the presidents of the royal colleges.

What are the Government doing to provide extra resources? In his statement of 25 November, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health outlined the Government's commitment to putting more resources into primary health care. He reminded us that existing plans already provided for an additional £570 million in real terms by 1990-91. Today, he talked about £600 million. I do not know whether he was rounding up or whether we have got another £30 million out of him.

Mr. Newton: I started rounding down and said that we were committed to spending at least another £500 million. The programme of additional expenditure contained in the White Paper will take it from under £600 million to well over £600 million.

Sir David Price: My hon. Friend went on to say in his statement that the £570 million

"will be further increased by the substantial extra resources that the Government will make available to finance the improvements that I have described today." — [*Official Report*, 25 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 260.]

Paragraph 2.6 of the White Paper examines the Government's intentions and suggests that additional resources will be available. That puts a different light on the Government's proposals from what was said by the hon. Member for Livingston and by some of my hon. Friends. Will my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who will reply to the debate spell out more precisely the Government's commitment to provide these extra resources? It is important for us all to know what that commitment is. I will carry the whole House with me when I say that to move forward in health promotion, the prevention of illness and immunisation—all the matters that were set out in the Select Committee report—we shall need extra resources. I believe that the Government are committed to making available those extra resources, but that message is not getting through to the public or to the House. Much of the debate so far has centred on the false idea that the Government are reducing resources.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): It seems a pity that that point has not got through to the

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

professionals. When the discussion document was put out for consultation, no suggestions were made about how the developments could be financed. The professionals were slow to come forward, but they were not slow to be entrepreneurial. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that the Health Service could consider other opportunities, but the professionals have not been slow to find other opportunities to boost their income. The *Sunday Times* said that consultants in the Bristol hospital were earning £60,000. Perhaps members of the profession will come forward with suggestions.

Sir David Price: My hon. Friend makes a useful intervention which goes rather wider than the scope of the Bill, but he takes me on to my next point. If, as a nation, we are to develop our health services as everybody wants, we must consider new methods of financing them. That takes up my hon. Friend's point.

We must not reject ideologically the use of charges, but we must ask what sort of charges should be made and whether they are acceptable medically. The hon. Member for Livingston made a very telling point. I could put the same point in the language of the Royal College of Nursing which said that we encourage free medical checks of all parts of our body by clinicians except our teeth and our eyes for which we will have to pay. This distinction requires a more detailed justification than we have had so far. I am not opposed to the concept of charges. It is an important matter and we must discuss which charges are relevant. No charge must be imposed which might reduce a citizen's access to services because he cannot afford them.

Mr. Galbraith: I do not agree with charges, but there are different types of services for which we can charge, for example, treatment, including prescription of spectacles, and screening. That is an important distinction. People would continue to take up preventive treatment, but they would not take up a screening test.

Sir David Price: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's point. Let me move from charging to my old hobby horse, which I do not apologise for raising again. We must aim at smaller lists for general practice. I have already quoted the Select Committee's recommendation on this matter and, with the indulgence of the House, I shall repeat it because it goes to the heart of improving the scope of primary health care. We said:

"With an ageing population, earlier patient discharge from hospital—particularly of children, increasing opportunities for diagnosis in general practice to reduce referrals to hospital, as well as greater responsibility for the management of chronic disease in general practice and a greater emphasis on a range of preventive services, the case for further reduction in the GP list size seems unanswerable."

I believe that it is unanswerable. The measures necessary to implement the House's intention for better primary health care — the House supports the White Paper's intentions—must centre upon the reduction of list sizes.

If we wish to improve our primary health care, we must recognise that nurses should play a greater role than they have hitherto and that they are professionally competent to do so. I hope, therefore, that the House will agree with what we said in paragraph 60 of our report, which is clearly relevant to the Bill. We state:

"There must also be better training for nurses and a proper career structure, if they are to perform an extended role in the community. Steps need to be taken to recognise and raise the status of nurses working in primary care. Practice nurses need training specifically directed towards work in the community."

If the Government accept that view, why does clause 12 provide extra remuneration for training by doctors, but does not extend it to nurses? It would be an important improvement to the Bill if a clause to that effect were added.

In the same vein, why are the Government not taking advantage of the Bill

"to permit nurses with appropriate training limited powers to prescribe and in defined circumstances to modify dosage"?

That was our recommendation 30 with which the Government agreed in principle. In their reply they said that they accepted the proposal, but that they would have to consult the professional standing advisory committees. It is nine months since we made that proposal and a good deal longer since Julia Cumberlege also proposed it. We must take advantage of the Bill because we do not have a Bill like this every year. Therefore, I hope that the Government will add a new clause to that effect.

There are many other matters with which I should like to deal. We issued a long report with 62 recommendations. I wish to put a few of our points in headline form because they are relevant to our debate. We must consider the role of other professionals in primary health care, particularly physiotherapists and occupational therapists. It is important to include social workers in the primary health care team. We must develop pathological and radiological services and bring them closer to the community, giving a quicker back-up to primary health care. The community hospital must support the general practice and act as a satellite to the district general hospital, thus linking the hospital service through to general practice. We must also consider how voluntary bodies fit into the scheme of health care. I wish to impress on the House the need for closer ties between hospitals and general practice. Those ties should be so close that there would be a seamless robe of care from the patients' bedside right through to intensive care, if needed. We do not make this any easier when we separate the family practitioner service from the hospital service. As my right hon. Friend knows, this is one of my hobby horses. Scotland shows a very much better example in these matters.

Occupational medicine has a contribution to make in improving standards of preventive medicine and promoting good health care. The private citizen in ordinary families provides most care. I remind the House that there are more private carers—as the House knows, I count myself among them—than all the professionals in the public and private sectors added together. It is worth reminding the professionals occasionally that we amateurs carry more of the heat and burden of personal caring than they do.

The Select Committee believed that new legislation had only a minor role to play in the improvement of primary health care. It was much more a matter of improved administration, better deployment of staff, more training, additional resources, and, above all, the will to succeed. Like my fellow Select Committee members, I came away from our inquiry optimistic about the prospects for better primary health care, provided that more resources went into the service. I was encouraged by much evidence of good practice in many different areas, including rural areas and inner cities.

I welcome the Bill and the White Paper. Unlike some other hon. Members who may speak in the debate, I view them with hope and optimism.

5.29 pm

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) made a number of interesting points. He knows that he and I do not agree on everything, but we have a meeting of minds on some things. We seem to spend our time in the House complimenting each other. He obviously has a very astute and sharp mind if he agrees with me.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): He understands.

Mr. Galbraith: Yes, he understands.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) referred to consultants. Since I have been a Member of the House, I have heard veiled threats about consultants. The hon. Gentleman referred to consultants earning £60,000. Anyone who knows my background will be aware that I have been one of the greatest critics of consultants and some of their practices. My salary would not reach such a level because of my antipathy to private practice, which is the method by which such sums are earned. Many consultants will not indulge in private practice and I was one of them. I hope that we shall not hear any more contributions like that from the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East.

Although the Minister for Health has now left the Chamber, I thank him for allowing so many people to intervene in his speech. That was very laudable. Indeed, it was in stark contrast to the speech made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security who, when she replied to the previous debate on this subject, did not allow anyone to intervene. It was odd that the hon. Lady would not allow interventions, especially when she misquoted me for purely party political purposes. I know that I am new to this House, but I would advise her that such action did not help her or her argument. When she replies today, I hope that we shall not hear any silly claims that the Government are responsible for the increased rates of survival of kidney transplant patients. That would do nothing to help the hon. Lady or her argument.

I was very interested to hear the comments of the hon. Member for Eastleigh about primary care and the way forward, and I agreed with some of them. The trouble with the Bill, as the hon. Member for Eastleigh almost admitted, is that it misses the opportunity to make a number of contributions in the right direction. This is a nasty little bit of piecemeal legislation which does not tackle what is at issue. The thrust of the Bill, that primary care should be directed towards the promotion of health and the prevention of disease and that GPs should take more responsibility, is correct.

I welcome a few parts of the Bill. I welcome the parts about doctors retiring earlier and the aspects of GPs issuing information leaflets about services on offer, for example, whether family planning is carried out or whether there is parking for disabled drivers. Those are worthwhile. However, as long as we continue to adopt a piecemeal approach to primary care, we shall not progress.

As the hon. Member for Eastleigh asked, why is the general practioner service still separate from the hospital service in England? We could have brought the primary care services together under a health board incorporating family practitioners, primary care and community units. The health board could have pulled together the physiotherapists, dentists, social workers and GPs. It could have clearly planned a tip-top primary care service. It could have set standards and asked the GPs to follow them. If we wanted to allow financial inducements to practices, they should not have been achieved in this manner. They should not be applied for services, as that might produce unnecessary services. We could have identified a basic practice allowance for practices that were willing to follow standards and attainments set out by the primary care and community health board. The practices that did not wish to follow those standards would receive a smaller basic practice allowance.

I also accept that there is a need to reduce the size of practices to the ideal number of 1,700. Perhaps the Minister will tell us when she replies what in the Bill will induce practices to become smaller. The way to achieve smaller practices is to reduce the capitation fee for patients above the figure of 1,700 and reduce it further above 2,300. I believe that the Bill is a missed opportunity with regard to primary care.

I want to consider clause 4. It appears that not only the Labour party has trouble with clause 4. I will try to be brief as I understand that other hon. Members want to speak. Clause 4 refers to finding additional resources. I want to re-emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). Any additional resources will be marginal in comparison with the health care budget. If we want more resources for the Health Service, they must be obtained from income tax. That is the basis on which the Health Service was set up and that is the only way in which extra resources can be obtained. We must remember that, when we refer to increased resources, we are talking about marginal increases.

I am worried about the question of selling hospital services within clause 4. I am not referring to a hamburger chain in a hospital foyer. I do not have hang-ups about that. However, I am concerned about the idea of health boards going out of their way to sell services to patients at a profit. I want to restrict this point for the moment to British nationals otherwise other considerations will have to be taken into account. The selling of services and the provision of pay beds can be achieved only at the expense of other patients within the hospital. No matter what anyone else may say, that can be achieved only at the expense of the rest of the patients within that service.

There are certain reassurances written into the Bill. It is claimed that there will be no interference with performance. I asked the Minister earlier how he would ensure that and he responded vaguely. I know how he will achieve that. The Government will issue guidelines as they did in the Social Security Act 1979. Those pious guidelines are not worth the paper they are written on. No one follows them, they are hopeless. The provisions in clause 4, in many respects, will lead to the deterioration of the service for those who are not paying. That is the only consequence of clause 4.

When the Minister replies, will she tell us, if the guidelines are issued, that the services cannot be sold if the hospital has a waiting list for that service or if a waiting list would be induced as a result of the sale? The Minister might be able to build in a mechanism to prevent some damage that might be caused.

[Mr. Galbraith]

I want to refer to some other marginal sources of finance that the Health Service might consider. Such sources of finance might stop us from introducing charges for eye inspections and dental care. There are some areas which have not been examined. The Government are so determined to cut services and so intent on flogging the service off to the private sector that they have not considered the opportunities within the Health Service.

I suggest that the Minister might consider the whole question of domiciliary visits. That service does not incur great expense, amounting to about £10 million. It has probably outlived its usefulness and is considered to be abused. Will she consider domiciliary consultations by consultants with GPs? Will she also consider merit awards? Merit awards involve about £60 million. What can be done about them? Will she also consider drug companies? Before Conservative Members jump up, I am not referring to nationalisation. I am sure that the Minister is aware that the drug companies carry out a considerable amount of research for their products within hospitals. Of necessity, that research involves patients staying in hospital longer and they always receive additional X-rays, scans, investigations and blood tests. Will the Minister consider whether the drug companies should be charged for that research on their behalf?

The only area of charging that would be acceptable is one that does not involve patients. Patients should not be involved. However, we can consider a particular area of charging. Patients may be seen privately at a private consultation and as a result they may move into a National Health Service sector hospital. Patients may also be in a private hospital, but then enter a NHS hospital because the facilities are better there. Will the Minister consider the possibility of charging that private sector hospital—not the patients—when they are moved in? Will she consider charging the organisation responsible for patients entering a NHS hospital and charging it at a rate that it would charge in a private hospital? Certainly, that charge represents more than £100 million, but it is only a marginal amount. However, that idea contains the seeds for considering other methods of raising finance.

I agree that the NHS is receiving more funds than it received in 1979, but that funding is not adequate to provide the services that are required. It is not true to say that we can never meet those requirements. The Health Service in Britain receives less in funds than any other country in Europe apart from Greece. We must find the resources for the NHS. Those resources must come from central Government and from taxation. Therefore, the Opposition will continue to fight for those resources so that we may have a better Health Service for everyone.

5.39 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I start by saying, wistfully, that I would like to be able to support this Bill. The Bill contains some things that are right. We have a significant number of doctors and dentists who still practise when they are well over 80 years of age—some are even over 90 years of age. There has been a degree—I do not want to mince my words—of cheating about the business of retiring and then going back to work within 24 hours. I believe that the Government are absolutely right to tackle that. I also support the idea of more education and training for professionals in primary care. I also support the few suggestions for obtaining more money—an honest copper or two—by the commercial use of Health Service resources. Why have the Government spoilt it all by bringing in charges for tests for dentists and ophthalmic opticians?

The Secretary of State will already be well aware that he faces the united opposition of the British Dental Association, the General Dental Practitioners Association, the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians, the British Medical Association's committee, the British College of Optometrists and the Association of Optical Practitioners. I must also tell the Minister that a significant number of our hon. Friends are anxious about the proposals in the Bill. There is no doubt that there is also a large body of concern among citizens outside the House.

Can it be that the opposition to this Bill is based either on the anger felt by the public for having to pay more money if they want to be treated or the irritation felt by the professionals over being forced into a position where they receive less money? Does human greed operate those groups as a puppeteer operates his dolls? Or is it possible that there might just be some wise, sound, even altruistic arguments against what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to do? I believe that that is the case. Both dental and ophthalmic checks keep necessary treatments down to the minimum. Such checks make cases quicker, simpler and cheaper to treat. I believe that it is turning the argument on its head to say that if people must pay for a check it will mean that things will be cheaper in the end because people will find they need treatment at an earlier stage and it will not cost anything like it would if the problem were treated later on. Surely that is what happens now. People have tests at an early stage. How can it be logical to argue that, by making a charge for checks, people will receive cheaper care? I have the greatest respect for my hon. Friend the Minister, but I find it difficult to follow that argument.

In every sense, checks are preventive medicine. Astonishingly, the Bill claims to support such medicine. Early signs of conditions that can be cured or certainly treated often appear in the eyes and the mouth before the sufferer has any idea that he has a serious medical complaint. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has already told us of such a case. Indeed, this morning a young man told me about how he had gone into an opticians, quite casually, to have a test. He had some time on his hands and he suddenly thought that he had never had his eyes tested and considered the fact that both his parents wore spectacles. As a result of that test he was immediately referred to a hospital because he had signs of early heart disease. He told me that, as a result of that test, he had been saved. The hospital had been able to start treating him early and had given him diet sheets. He told me that he would not have gone in for that eye test if he had had to pay a charge of £10.

There are many examples of the importance of preventive care. Glaucoma has already been mentioned. That complaint is caused by pressure building up within the eye that eventually starts to damage the optic nerve. Often, during the early stages of that complaint the patient does not notice that something is wrong, but if that problem is not caught early the condition is irreversible. Diabetes can lead to kidney failure and, as many hon. Members will know, to blindness. Again, early detection

—provided by eye tests — is absolutely essential. I received a letter from the consultant in diabetes at University College hospital and he says:

"Diabetes mellitus is the leading cause of blindness in people of working age in the UK. Treatment . . . is able to prevent some 60 per cent. of blindness, but the changes must be detected at an early stage."

That is an important piece of evidence.

Cancer can often be discovered by both dentists and optometrists as a result of ordinary, routine check-ups. I am sure that no one in this House needs to be told how important it is to diagnose cancer early—it is a matter of life or death. Dentists can detect anaemias and sexually transmitted diseases. That is extremely important.

Dentists are extremely worried at the proposition that checks will no longer be free. When that was mentioned earlier on in this debate there was a fairly solid outcry from my hon. Friends to the effect that dentists are worried because it affects their pockets. In fact, one letter that came to me from the memberhip officer of the General Dental Practitioners Association states:

"Because of the way in which dentists' remuneration is calculated (review body—DRSG)—"

I am sure that all hon. Members know about that—

"a reduced demand will not and cannot reduce our average net income—charges will be amended next year to make good any deficit. I hope this alone will argue the case that I am not in any way in this argument considering my income."

That is a relevant piece of evidence.

Certainly patients are also concerned because there is a great strength of feeling—I must put this on record—that dental treatment is already extremely expensive. Many people complain about the costs of dental treatment. If people are also to be charged for examinations, I do not have the slightest doubt that the majority of people will not go for check-ups. Dentists who have contacted me have told me that, at the moment, we have a wonderful state of affairs in this country. People have better teeth now than at any time in our history. Dentists feel that that will change if the proposed regulations are agreed. They say that an increase in dental disease will cost the NHS far more in the long run—we should consider the long-term effects of the Bill.

Dentists have also said that there will be a lowering standard of general health due to neglected mouths. All this hinges on whether or not people will go for check-ups. However, the highest authorities within the dental profession assume that people will not go for those check-ups. They say that, as a result, mouths will be neglected and the effect will be bacteraemia, heart disease, digestive disease and chest complaints. Indeed, one dental surgeon in my constituency came up with an entirely new suggestion. He said that it would be better to do away with free dental treatment for expectant and nursing mothers since there is not a shred of scientific evidence to suggest that the incidence of dental decay is any greater for those women. So perhaps if we are considering costs we might bear that in mind as well.

The dentist also suggested that dentists should not be given a fee for examining people who have no teeth—I was astounded to hear that dentists are given a fee for examining people who have no teeth — when those people come along for replacement dentures. He says that the fee is paid for spotting oral diseases and cancers, but that it is unnecessary to spend any time on testing because such conditions will immediately be apparent during the normal course of fitting dentures.

So if my hon. Friend is anxious to save money, there are two little suggestions by people who are in the profession.

Dentists undoubtedly see the free check-up as the cornerstone of National Health Service dentistry. They are in no doubt that people will be discouraged from visiting the dentist regularly and that the present happy situation will deteriorate. Is all this really worth it to save the sum that my hon. Friend has mentioned?

Either the Minister believes that regular check-ups are not important or he thinks that people will still go for check-ups anyway. If the former, I must tell him that all the evidence is against him. I have a feeling that he himself believes that regular check-ups are important, otherwise why is he suggesting that the Government will pay for so many people to have them? If they are not important, there is no point in paying for them anyway. If they are important, are people going to go for these checks? People who have no money worries will probably still go and have their checks. I am not really worried about those people. I am worried about the broad, middle band of people who do not qualify for free check-ups but who nevertheless cannot possibly find £8 of £10 or whatever the fee will be. One lady tells me,

"I have a small growth in the pituitary gland which, if it should grow, will jeopardise my sight—starting with the peripheral vision. I therefore have to have sight and fields-of-vision tests twice a year."

She goes on,

"I am the only breadwinner in the family."

Do we really think that she could go on having those tests as often as she is supposed to if she had to pay £8 or £10 every time? This lady has a problem in making ends meet as it is.

There will be young parents who will not spend the money if, say, Johnny needs a new winter coat or Jane is growing out of her shoes. If they are faced with either paying for an eye test or buying the clothes, the children's clothes are what they will go for. Parents of young children are like that.

Elderly people a little above the limit for supplementary benefit will not go for their tests either, and they are very much at risk. Elderly people are in a special category.

There are those who must have checks frequently, possibly because of a family medical history. It is the frequency of the testing which will be a cost to them, one that they will be unable to afford.

I come now to a point to which I would particularly request a reply later in the debate. If a patient goes to a doctor in his consulting room complaining of bad headaches and the doctor tells him that he needs an eye test and can either have it from an optician and pay £10 for it or have it free at a hospital, it is obvious that the patient will go to the hospital. Hospital eye departments have been under stress for years. Already we have very serious problems fitting in the patients who need to be cared for in our hospitals. Is it really sensible to direct people to have their free test at a hospital? Or—and I ask my hon. Friend this gentle question—is it suggested that later on the payment will be extended to tests in hospitals and general practitioners as well? If so, I would really rather know it now. But if it is a half-and-half service—free when given by a doctor or in a hospital and chargeable when given by an ophthalmic optician or dental surgeon —the implications are worrying.

[Dame Jill Knight]

As regards ophthalmic opticians, I must tell my hon. Friend with as much force as I can muster that it is insulting to tell a man who has been trained for three, four or five years at a university or at an eye hospital that he should give his professional, expert services free and make his money selling frames. That is an offensive thing to say to him, that his professional expertise is worth nothing and that he must get his money by other means. It is particularly offensive when the Government themselves took away the ophthalmic opticians' customary sale of frames in the 1985 legislation. I listened very carefully to my hon. Friend this afternoon when he said that the Government had enabled people to take their prescriptions from the optician and go and buy their frames wherever they liked. That is what they do.

What we are saying is that they must give the test for nothing and will probably not even be able to sell the spectacles to the person concerned. I have no pecuniary interest in this at all but I happen to know quite a lot about it. It seems to me extraordinary to tell a trained, professional man that he must give his services free when testing a person and allow that person to go and get his glasses somewhere else—because that is what we have encouraged them to do. How will the optician pay his bills, for goodness sake? How will he pay his overheads, let alone his salary and those of his staff, his rates and his rent? We really cannot expect him to do all this for absolutely nothing.

Mr. Newton: I apologise to my hon. Friend for interrupting her, but it is important that this point be understood. Firstly, I have no intention of being offensive to anyone—I always try to avoid being offensive—and I am not telling them that they should or must give their services free; all I am saying is that it is up to them to decide how they wish to do it. Another important point: while we do not think it right that people should be in a position to say that they will only test a person's eyesight if the glasses are subsequently bought from their shop, there is nothing to stop an optician, if he makes a charge for the test, offering a discount, as others would do in comparable circumstances, if the spectacles are bought from the shop. We are anxious, however, to ensure even-handed competition.

Dame Jill Knight: That does not really invalidate what I said.

My hon. Friend said earlier, and not only here but on another occasion, that it might well be that opticians would provide their expert professional services for nothing in the hope of being able to sell the frames. This is not an acceptable thing to say to a group of professional people. Before the 1985 Bill, successive Governments had for years expected opticians to take a low fee for doing the test and to make their money on selling the glasses. Now we are beginning to say, "Never mind a low fee—none at all" and it is up to them to decide. This is not on.

I was interested to hear my hon. Friend say that there will be encouragement to treat people, test them, in their homes. This has been going on for years. Domiciliary eye tests have been carried out by many ophthalmic opticians; they have never made money on it and look on it as a form of social service. It is very expensive to load equipment into the car and then drive to a person's home. I do not know what fee would be suggested, but they certainly would not be able to do that except at considerable cost.

Mr. Newton: NHS tests will be paid.

Dame Jill Knight: If they are to be paid, it might be more expensive than my hon. Friend thinks at present. It is a good idea, because some people cannot get out of their home, and cannot go to an ophthalmic optician for an eye test.

I entirely agree that more money must be found for the NHS. I agree with the parts of the Bill concerned with getting more money, but I do not think that we shall solve the problems of financing the Health Service in the way described in the Bill because the demand for the services that are miraculously available now is never-ending. I am certain that we must look at new methods of financing the Health Service. When we are doing that, it might be a good thing to reflect on how willing people are to show their gratitude to and appreciation of the Health Service. The money that comes out of the Exchequer is one thing, but there are so many people in this land who are willing to put more money into the Health Service, but not so that preventive medicine is as seriously hampered as I fear it might be by the Bill.

6.1 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): As several hon. Members have said, it is particularly ironic that we are conducting this debate against the background of the presidents of three royal medical colleges calling on the Government to save the Health Service. They are not Left-wing doctors, militant nurses or even restive Conservative Back Benchers. After all, one of them is the Queen's gynaecologist. It is remarkable that they feel that they should have to say publicly:

"the Government must do something to save our Health Service".

I welcome much of what the Government are trying to do in putting an increased emphasis on primary health care. For far too long, primary and preventive medicine have laboured under a Cinderella image, and their importance has not been reflected in finance and development. Although today the important matters are being brought to our attention, financing is still a major problem.

The White Paper attempts to redress the balance in terms of primary health care, but perhaps it is a matter of regret that it took some eight years to arrive. However, we are glad to see it. It is clear that resources, not just for this area, but for the Health Service itself, are at the heart of our debate.

The Government have put up a seductive and perhaps logical argument on why we need to find savings within primary health care to pay for the improvements needed in that area, but I firmly reject the principle of charging for health care checks. First, it is clearly the belief and conviction of the people that more of the wealth currently being generated should be spent on our Health Service. We all saw in the Sunday newspapers the rumour that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is contemplating a further 2 per cent. cut in income tax. It was an interesting juxtaposition that on the same page we had the cash plea from the three royal colleges.

The National Health Service benefits all the people, and the best and proper way to finance it is through general

taxation. Survey after survey has reinforced the understanding that people are prepared to forgo tax increases to pay for the NHS.

It is nothing short of scandalous that this country spends less on health as a proportion of gross national product than our major European competitors. That figure is declining, not going up. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), stated recently that spending on the NHS would decline as a percentage of GDP over the next few years, or, as she put it, spending would "stabilise". That is at a time when spending had not been increased to meet nurses' pay awards, and health authorities are having to pay for them out of cost improvement schemes. That should be remedied before the Chancellor of the Exchequer hands out any further tax cuts. It should be addressed before we consider further the Bill's implications.

It is not possible to place a greater emphasis on primary health care or attempt to push through major reforms without providing the necessary finance. Other sections of our National Health Service are in desperate need, but if we are to make primary health care an important part of that service, we have to pay for it. Improvements in the long term will be cost effective. There will be a time lag, but primary health care and preventive medicine will have cost benefits in future. That will not happen immediately. We shall still pay high hospital costs for curing current diseases, many of which will be preventable in future if we spend that money on primary health care now.

It is a false economy to save money in that critical area. There is no better example than to compare the cost of having to care for people who develop glaucoma, cataracts, even blindness, cancer and AIDS—many of the diseases that have been mentioned today, which can be detected through simple eye or dental checks—with the cost of continuing free tests. As a result of the Bill, people will have basic check-ups less frequently than they do now.

I shall now examine some of the less contentious points in the Bill. I accept the Government's move to turn the General Practice Finance Corporation into a limited company because that will remove the financial restrictions placed on that body by its being subject to the public sector borrowing requirement. Being allowed to spend only £12 million when there is an estimated need of over £27 million is hardly the best way to ensure that the shortage of doctors' surgeries is made up.

As a Member of Parliament for an inner-city area, which much of Greenwich is, I ask the Secretary of State to ensure that there is as much flexibility as possible in the new system to make sure that general practitioners in the inner cities get the resources that they need. I have no objection in principle to raising money through the commercial means that we have heard about today, but I worry that the Secretary of State is taking such wide-ranging powers. It is clear that he is giving himself the power to direct health authorities on how that extra revenue should be raised, and it will be their duty to comply with the regulations. I should not be so worried about those powers if I thought that it would make a huge difference to the health authorities' budget, but it will not.

I also should not be so worried if I thought that hospital managers had time to devote to those schemes, but they have not. In the same month that the Government issued the White Paper, we had a report from the National Audit Office showing that there is significant unused theatre capacity in the NHS. Surely our hospital managers would be better used in solving the problems that deal directly with patient care. I should not be so worried if I thought that Health Service managers had the expertise to implement the directives, but in many cases that is not what they have been trained to do. It is critical that they should reap the benefit financially, and not have any extra money that they raise deducted from their revenue.

Dental inspection in schools can still take place under the Bill, but it is no longer a duty, which is a great step backwards—as was the withdrawal from the commitment to the nutritional content of school dinners. We have an obligation to ensure that our children's well-being—especially children whose parents do not take them regularly to the dentist—is maintained.

I come now to the specific issue in the Bill—charging for check-ups on eyes and teeth. I oppose such charging for three reasons. First, we have always been, and still are, wholly committed to the principle of the National Health Service being free at the point of use. So, I thought, was the Secretary of State; indeed, he is on record as having said so. The introduction of charges for eyes and teeth examinations erodes that principle. What will we have to pay for next? As has already been pointed out, it is ridiculous to be able to have free examinations for any part of the body except the eyes and teeth. Perhaps we should be considering more free check-ups on the lines of those offered by private health companies, which, in the long run, will save the National Health Service money.

Secondly, charges make no sense in health or financial terms. The dental rates study group research clearly demonstrates that charging people for examinations will mean that fewer people have them. Fewer dental and sight examinations will mean less prevention and screening, which will inevitably lead to worse health. Eye disease cases will overburden the Health Service, and other non-related, but detectable, diseases will go undiagnosed until it is too late for simple and effective treatment. This lack of free check-up treatment will overburden our hospitals. GPs will refer patients to hospitals, which will have to pick up the pieces of patients who are not diagnosed as having a serious complaint until it has become very serious.

Thirdly, I challenge the charging element because it is wholly out of keeping with what the Government purport to be trying to do in the Bill. How can one call for greater emphasis on primary care on the one hand and reduce basic access to primary care measures—by charging for them—on the other?

Let us examine some of the categories of people who will be most affected by the Bill. Pensioners are, perhaps, one of the most vulnerable groups of all. About 6·5 million of our 9 million pensioners will have to pay for eye tests under the Government's proposals. Some of them may be able to afford them, but we all know that, as people get older, they worry about their financial security and future, and many of them will shy away from paying £10 if that money can be saved for basic heating bills and other weekly expenditure.

Another category comprises low-paid people, particularly parents of young children, who are not eligible for supplementary benefit or family income supplement. Such people will not come forward for check-ups. I was involved in collecting information for the Central Office of Information before becoming an hon. Member. My work illustrated the point clearly. People who are hard up will make savings first and foremost in this sort of area.

[Mrs. Rosie Barnes]

The short, simple truth is that eye tests will be missed by elderly people, who will not be screened for many of the illnesses about which we have heard today.

It has been suggested that part of the cost of an eye test can be transferred to the price of spectacles. That is not true for the many ophthalmic medical practitioners who do not sell spectacles but give of their valuable time to perform a service for their patients. There is a lack of logic in the assumption that people who are unfortunate enough to have to wear spectacles should cover the cost of eye tests for the rest of us who may want an eye test but have to wear glasses. Charging for those tests is bad; it goes against the principles of the National Health Service and of basic preventive medicine — both of which the Bill purports to endorse.

I want to draw attention to four omissions—some of which have already been mentioned. First, I want nurses to be able to prescribe. That has already been discussed, and it is not necessary for lengthy further consultations to be held before a decision is made. I also want doctors' capitation fees to be adjusted so that they are not tempted to have lists of patients that are longer than they can adequately cope with, and they can give proper consultation time to the people who come to them for attention. I suggest that capitation fees taper off above an agreed figure—somewhere above the 2,000 mark.

Thirdly, social workers should be included in primary health care teams. That is an idea of the greatest importance. We constantly hear from doctors that they are dealing with the emotional wreckage of our society, particularly in inner-city areas, where they often deal not with a health problem, but with a housing problem. Social workers in a primary team would be the ideal means of dealing with such problems.

Finally, I suggest amalgamating the family practitioner committees with the district health authorities. That would be a sensible move. At present, two potentially rival bodies operate in the same area, which does not seem sensible.

I hope that many Conservative Members will join us in defending the principle of the National Health Service—that it should be free at the point of use—by opposing the Bill.

6.18 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I am pleased to have this opportunity to welcome the main provisions of the legislation. Some of us have waited a long time for the White Paper and for parts of the Bill. It is only right and proper, as I am sure all hon. Members will agree, that we should have a Health Service based on screening and prevention, as opposed to the sickness service that we now have. It is right and proper that doctors should be given incentives, sometimes in cash, to go into the inner cities and to check the most vulnerable in our society — the under-fives and the elderly.

It is also only right and proper that people should have the chance of being able to complain about their doctor in a more relaxed way. Many hon. Members, I am sure, know of many unfortunate incidents in which incompetent family practitioner committees and skulduggerous doctors have combined to provide little justice for some of our constituents. I am therefore delighted that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench have grasped that nettle.

It is right that we should change the dentists' contract so as to place more emphasis on prevention. All that is laudable and should be applauded by all hon. Members.

The trouble with the Bill is that it has the Treasury's fingermarks all over it. They seem to reach right up to its throat. How can we say with our hands on our hearts—despite what Opposition Members say, most Conservative Members have hearts — that the Bill really promotes preventive medicine and screening, when we shall be charging people for their first entry into the dentist's surgery and the optician's consulting room? It is difficult enough getting people into the dentist's surgery anyway without slapping a charge on them.

In the very able and eloquent winding-up speech that I expect from my hon. Friend the Minister, I know that she will quite properly trot out the old brief with the statistics about how many people will be exempted. However, it will not really cut a great deal of ice, and in the long run this will cost the Health Service a great deal more money. I am in favour of proportional charging for people who can afford to pay, but let us have it after they have had the professional advice from the optician or the dentist, and not before.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) spoke about the community dental service, because I, too, am concerned about that. The community dental service presently has a duty to examine, and in some cases to treat, children's teeth. Under the Bill that duty will be turned into a power, and we all know what occurs when that happens. Health authorities that are hard-pressed for resources—in other words, most of them—will say that they have an opportunity to cut out a non-acute service. That service will be the treatment of our children's teeth. Admittedly, the British Dental Association has a vested interest in this matter, but it is right when it warns that because of this there is a very good chance that 50 per cent. of our children will not receive free dental care. That cannot be right.

On the broader matter of the Health Service, the Government have a record second to none. We know that we have more doctors and nurses and by how much in real terms we have increased Health Service resources. We know how many hip operations, heart bypass operations and other operations have taken place, and how the waiting lists have decreased. However, there is no point in all of us repeating those statistics like some sort of mantra. Every hon. Member, whatever his party, knows that most health authorities have some serious problems. Unless the Government get to grips with the general problem of financing, I suspect that there will be serious trouble.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that I went to see her with a delegation about my own district health authority, West Essex. I do not want to bore the House with specific details or with too many statistics, but that health authority is a classic case. It is doing the things that the Government are asking authorities to do. It was the first one in the region to put personal services out to tender, and one of the first in the region to implement the Griffiths proposals. I presented to my hon. Friend a team consisting of consultants, management, nurses and the community health council, and all the members of that delegation were wholly united in their aims on cost efficiency. That is rather unusual, because very often those strands in the Health Service tend to pull against one another rather than with one another.

Sadly, we were not able to get the £600,000 that we need, despite the savings that have been made. We have even had to close a hospital, and that was a difficult political decision. It was the right decision, but it was difficult to close a hospital in order to make us more efficient. Despite all that, we will be overspent next year by £1 million, and the situation will get worse. It also means that from 11 December four acute wards will be closed. That means that 20 per cent. of acute beds will be knocked out of the West Essex district health authority, and from that date there will be only emergency surgery for the whole of the district.

What do I tell my constituents? Do I go through the figures showing how much more money we have put into the Health Service, and do I tell them about cost efficiency and about the pay awards? If I do, they will say to me, "Never mind all that. We see demoralised nurses and wards being closed, and we know that when we want to see a consultant paediatrician or an orthopaedic surgeon we will have to wait seven months for the first consultation." As a result of the cost efficiencies, or the cuts, that we have had to make, the waiting lists are increasing at the rate of 100 people a week. That cannot be right. There are swathes of inefficiency in the Health Service, and it contains incompetent management. It is right that such things should be rooted out, and the last thing that I would ask this or any Government to do is to featherbed such people. However, I suspect that just about every district will have such problems by next year.

I should like to propose one or two matters that the Government should take into account. First, doctors' and nurses' pay awards are negotiated nationally. District health authorities have no input whatever, and no matter how generous the Government properly are sometimes, they do not always phase these pay awards, and the district health authorities have to pay a large proportion of those awards on top of cost efficiencies. Next year this will probably cost us about £300,000. If the Government expect us to behave like a business—as the Bill properly expects us to do—and be efficient and cost effective, we should be treated like a business. We should not be expected to go into the market place with both hands tied behind our back. I ask the Government to consider the suggestion that the Treasury should foot the bill after the next pay round.

There is also the problem of private agencies. All hon. Members must have experience of the difficulty in prosperous areas of getting doctors and nurses. When we cannot get them on the National Health Service, we have to go to private nurses' and doctors' agencies, and they charge three to four times the usual amount. What help are we getting with that? Authorities that are efficient and taking the sort of measures that the Government have asked them to take should be favourably considered.

May we have another look at the role of the family practitioner committees? I am mystified, as was the Select Committee on Social Services, about why we had them in the first place. Very often they mirror what is done by district health authorities.

May we also have another look at the role of the regions? I am quite happy to go on record as saying that I am horrified at the way in which my own regional health authority, North East Thames, behaves. Its members are an absolute shower, and the sooner they are all given DBEs and knighthoods, and all of them packed off, the better. I do not think that a region could do any better than have a committee of the various heads, general managers and chairmen of district health authorities, because they could make the strategic plans that are absolutely necessary.

This is a Second Reading debate and we are talking about the principles of the Bill which, apart from the exceptions that I mentioned, I support. However, I will be unable to support it further unless those controversial and very damaging measures to the health of ordinary people are removed. I fear that unless the Government abandon their plan for the charges that have been mentioned in the debate, the Bill, which could be a great landmark in health care, will be nothing but a dusty monument and a graveyard of expectations.

6.28 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): It cannot be denied that the Health Service is grossly under-funded. When children wait for months for necessary operations and babies die, it is clear to all caring people that more money must be put into the Health Service. What is happening to the wealth of the country that the health of its people should be of so little concern to the Government? Where is all the money going? Where is the £827 million made from the sale of BP shares, the £43 million made from the sale of British Aerospace shares, the £120 million made from the sale of shareholdings in the National Enterprise Board, the £22 million made from the sale of shares in the Suez Finance Company and the £195 million from North Sea oil licence premiums?

The Bill asks health authorities to become garage and petrol pump attendants and shopkeepers to raise money. Have the Government and the Minister no conception of the strain already put on officers of district health authorities — district general managers, treasurers and other officers — who spend long hours juggling figures and looking at changes in funding, the lack of funding for pay increases and the knock-on effects of every hard decision they have to take?

I have worked in 23 hospitals and clinics in my time in the Health Service and I have served for six years on a community health council and for four years on a district health authority. I have never known morale to be so low or known so many people to ask, "What is happening to our Health Service? Will nobody do anything to save it?" What has happened to the money from the sale of land and buildings of the New Towns Development Corporation and Commission for the New Towns, £78 million, the money from the sale of land and buildings of the Property Services Agency, £9 million, the £28 million raised from the sale of land and buildings, leases on motorway service areas, the £3 million from the sale of land of regional water authorities and the £72 million from the sale of land and buildings of the Forestry Commission? The Bill extends the provision for charging for dental and eye examinations. Does the Minister not want people to see what the Government are doing? Is there no concern for the health of people's teeth?

My niece's husband is a dental mechanic and he is very proud of that profession. If I may say so, he is 40 years old today and his wife has ordered him a birthday cake in the form of false teeth. However, it has a large red tongue sticking through the teeth; perhaps that is a comment on the charges for dental examinations. I have often spoken to him about the charges for dental health and he is deeply

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

concerned about the increase in his work load and that early provision should be made to prevent so many people from needing false teeth.

What has happened to the £64 million from the sale of shares of Amersham International, the £97 million from the sale of shares of Associated British Ports Holdings, the £2,703 million from the sale of shares of BT, the £1,053 million from the sale of shares of Cable and Wireless and the £107 million from the sale of oil stockpiles? I could go on, but suffice it to say that from 1979-80 to 1986-87 it is estimated that privatisation proceeds totalled £12·1 billion. With all that money having come in, the Bill restricts the amount that can be spent on some aspects of the general practitioner services. What happens if the money runs out and the need is urgent? Will sick people be told that they will have to wait until the next financial year to be ill? Where is the Tory philosophy of let the market decide; or does that not apply to sick people?

We are informed that British Steel makes a profit, so it must be sold off, for perhaps another £2 billion. Where will that money go? We can rest assured that it will not go into the Health Service to solve the problems of services to mentally handicapped or the elderly, primary care services, acute services, maternity services or all the other services so desperately in need of money. We all know that the money will go to keep people unemployed and to reduce taxes to the promised 25p in the pound, but at what cost to the health of the nation?

I remind the Minister that the Prime Minister promised that the Health Service would be safe in her hands, as well as the 25p in the pound tax. The Minister should be aware that there is real public and professional concern about hospital and community funding. The 1986 report of the Social Services Select Committee, "Public Expenditure on the Social Services", pointed out that expenditure in hospitals and community health services has been lower than in the health services. It has grown by less than 0·5 per cent. annually in real terms in the past five years. People are entitled to know how the Health Service will be funded when the Government have sold off everything that makes a profit. Will the Government have to raise taxes? Where will the money come from, and where has the money already raised gone to?

Mrs. Brown, a constituent of mine, whose small son Andrew is waiting for a heart operation at the children's hospital in Birmingham, told me yesterday that a quarter of all the beds in the hospital, which also caters for children with cancer, are empty due to lack of money, as are one third of the beds in the older children's heart ward and half of the beds in the babies' ward. She told me that only four cots in the intensive care unit were in use last week.

The Bill does not even pretend to consider the health of the nation. Everyone knows that it is expensive to keep a nation healthy and to care for the sick, but when we see the sale of major Government assets we are entitled to ask how the Government will raise the money to finance the National Health Service. Will the Minister tell the House that the Government are no longer prepared to stand by and see sick people suffer? I make no apology for ending with a special plea to the Minister: the young children who are awaiting heart surgery need our help now. Please listen to them and to the nation and please give them some hope.

6.37 pm

Mrs. Gillian Shephard (Norfolk, South-West): I am delighted to have been asked to contribute to the debate because I should like to focus attention on the primary health care network, with which most people are familiar, and which is at least as concerned with health as with illness. Debates have been raging in the House and elsewhere about the undeniably dramatic confrontation between technological advance and the public purse, particularly in the acute sector of the Health Service. Meanwhile, the primary health care network continues to deal every day of the week with millions of patients. The review of the network in the Bill and in the White Paper — the first for 40 years and resulting from extensive consultation—was long overdue.

It was to be expected that the controversy, to put it mildly, about the proposed charges for those more able to pay for teeth and eye inspections would overshadow the many positive proposals in the Bill and White Paper for improving the primary care network. A rationalisation of dental charges, to make them more logical and comprehensible, has been sought by the dental profession for a long time. I do not want to make light of anything, but it is a very long time since I had a free inspection from my dentist. He may be quicker on the draw than many people, but I have always been inveigled into having cleaning, brushing or this or that when I have gone for my free inspection.

There is much concern on both sides of the Chamber about charges, particularly the eye inspection charges. They could militate against the emphasis on prevention, which is the main thrust of the White Paper and the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will give due emphasis to that concern and to the way in which the proposed charges can help to resource some of the other proposals in the Bill. I hope also that she will say that there will be constant monitoring of the effect of the charges.

Some interesting suggestions have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House about how extra resources can be found for the Health Service. I remind the House of the £160 million which is wasted every year in over-prescribing drugs. That money could be used instead to run 40 geriatric wards. I hope that some attention will be paid to that.

I represent a rural constituency of 1,100 sq miles. A population of 76,000 is scattered rather unevenly throughout it. Some parts of the constituency are 20 or 30 miles from the nearest acute hospital. In those circumstances, the primary health care network assumes an importance that is not experienced by, for example, the populations of Bradford, Bromley or Greenwich.

Of key importance in rural areas is the quality of service provided by the local general practitioner and the ability and-or possibility that he has to work with other health care professionals. I was delighted to read in the Bill that there will be enhanced incentives for the improved training of doctors and other primary health care workers. Better still is the suggestion in the White Paper that there should be negotiations with the profession on special arrangements for releasing for training practitioners who work single-handed. That is a rare mention of a specifically rural problem. There may be practitioners who work single-handed in urban areas, but patients in those areas have the choice of walking to a group practice. In rural areas there may be no choice.

The White Paper concerns itself with making services more responsive to consumers' needs and giving patients the widest possible range of choice in obtaining high-quality primary care services. Family practitioner committees will be required to provide more details of qualifications, the success of the doctors and opening hours, for example. That will be helpful, but choice in rural areas will still have to be governed by geography and by the professional catchment area arrangements that are made by doctors. It is entirely reasonable that doctors should create those areas, which are based on how far they have to travel to make home visits. I hope that the information to be provided by FPCs will make entirely clear to patients the rationale for the areas so that there can be no suspicion that an element of professional solidarity may have contributed to their creation.

As nearly 50 per cent. of medical students are now women, it is not unreasonable to suggest that in the near future all patients should be able to consult a woman doctor if they wish to do so. I hope that the negotiations with the profession will take account of the fact that some patients would prefer not to be registered with a single-handed practice while others would prefer not to be with one that does not offer an appointment system. Single-handed practices and others that do not operate the appointment system are not uncommon in rural areas.

I believe that greater competition in GP services will result in enhanced services for patients in urban areas, but in rural areas, where a patient's choice may be limited to Dr. X, I question whether rewarding the doctor for the size of his list will improve his performance. Rewards should reflect excellence, and I am certain that they will in due course. They should not reflect a doctor's geographical location. I am sure that this matter will be borne in mind by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary when she negotiates with the profession.

Sometimes the strength of a rural community, especially its close-knit nature, can, in reverse, be its weakness. A good example is complaints. Fortunately, complaints about GPs in my constituency are rare, but they can and do occur. I welcome the recognition given in the White Paper to the great difficulty that most patients would feel in making complaints about their doctor. The deference factor is still strong in areas such as mine. In some instances there is a fear—it is to be hoped that it is without justification—of reprisals or at the very least embarrassment, when there can be no question of an individual changing his doctor because of geographical considerations. I warmly welcome the improved, simplified and strengthened complaints procedure which I believe will be effected by circular.

Enhanced powers are to be given to FPCs. They and health authorities will be encouraged to collaborate more effectively. The divisions between FPCs and health authorities are utterly meaningless to patients, the average patient not knowing, and not wishing to know, that a general practitioner looks to one while the community nurse looks to the other. The patient wants care when he needs it, and he wants it to be delivered to him in a way that is professionally co-ordinated and effective. That is why emphasis is given in the White Paper to various forms of preventive work such as immunisation, vaccination and screening. That is to be welcomed, and it stems from the fact that this work is already being undertaken in a variety of ways in the best practices throughout the country. That has been revealed by the work of the Select Committee on Social Services.

I have mentioned previously the work that is taking place in my constituency and, in the interests of being brief, I shall not go into it in detail again. In parts of the Norwich health authority there are multi-disciplinary teams of health professionals who are employed by the health authority. They work closely with doctors, or groups of doctors, to provide a complete network of primary health care. These teams include physiotherapists, clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists and dieticians, for example. Also included in the team are health educators, social workers and voluntary co-ordinators.

Artificial divisions between FPCs and health authorities need not be relevant when there is goodwill, as in my constituency, and when the well-being of patients is at stake. It is not the pattern that is proposed in the community nursing review, but it includes several elements of it. It avoids the hazard, as perceived by some, of making all services practice-based rather than community-based. I hope that the circular that was issued last week will encourage health authorities to find their own solutions that are tailored to the needs of their communities.

I hope, too, that the intention behind paragraph 7.13 of the White Paper to give nurses more freedom to prescribe will be pursued without delay. It can only make sense in a service in which increasing demands are being made—that is agreed by both sides of the House—if all the professionals who work in it are used to the full. Nurses should not have to waste valuable time that could be spent caring for patients in obtaining prescriptions, for things such as dressings, from pharmacists and then taking them to patients. They are capable of using their own professional judgment on the timing and dosage of drugs that are prescribed by a doctor. Many professional emotions can be stirred up by the use of the term nurse-practitioner, but she exists already. She certainly exists in the mind of the patient.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will note some of the matters that I have raised. I cannot emphasise enough the vital importance of primary health care networks in rural areas such as the one that I represent.

6.48 pm

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): The Bill is part of the Government's overall strategy towards the National Health Service as a whole. That strategy means the imposition of financial cuts under the guise of lofty aspirations that lie behind the NHS. We should be concerned with whether the necessary resources are being made available to meet the needs of the NHS and not with exactly how much more money is being spent upon it. We have a sick service because the necessary resources have not been forthcoming, not a health service. When the required resources are not available there is much more that is adversely affected than patient care. For example, the morale suffers of those who look after the service.

We have the cheapest comprehensive Health Service in the Western world. About 6·2 per cent. of our national wealth is devoted to it, but much more is spent by other countries on their health services. We spend 50 per cent. less than Sweden, Holland, Germany and France.

[Mr. David Young]

My district health authority has managed to balance its books this year, but three out of five district health authorities have run into financial difficulties. However, the Bolton district health authority tells me that next year it will be unable to balance its books, although there is a legal requirement for district health authorities to do so. One of the reasons is the underfunding of pay increases by the Government. Moreover, whatever money the Government may save by this Bill will be lost by the employment of agency nurses. In the last year for which figures are available, Bolton spent £115,000 on agency nurses, and I am told by the authority that it will spend £200,000 on agency nurses in the next financial year.

The Government say that 100,000 NHS patients were treated privately last year, with the result that they came off the waiting lists. Private health service hospitals operate at a profit, but it is a parasite service because it is based on resources that are largely provided by the NHS. Private health services do not contribute a penny towards the training of the doctors and the nurses whom they poach from the NHS. My district health authority, which is a very responsible authority, says that that is intolerable. If one is seriously ill or terminally ill, it is soon made clear that private health insurance will either be offered at a prohibitive premium or that it will not be offered at all. Such patients therefore have to be treated by the NHS.

The Government are actively discouraging eyesight and dental care by literally fining those who want to have such regular eye checks. That will affect in particular young workers. The proposals will discourage them from having such checks. My constituency secretary had glaucoma, but because he had an eyesight test the condition was picked up and his eyesight was saved. Had he gone to his optician two months later, he would have lost his eyesight. My father told me that before the NHS was set up he went to Woolworths where there was a test card that he used when he tried on spectacles. He did that to save the cost of a visit to an optician. We are being dragged back by Government to practices of that kind by the terms of the Bill.

The Government argued that fluoride should be added to water to prevent tooth decay in young people, but the Bill does away with the mandatory requirement to carry out school inspections.

Mrs. Currie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Young: No. The hon. Lady can deal with that point in her speech.

Mrs. Currie: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to deal now with the point that he has made about fluoride.

Mr. Young: Very well.

Mrs. Currie: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. May I remind him that included in the White Paper proposals, and also covered by what we are attempting to do in the Bill, is increased expenditure on fluoridation that will assist areas such as the hon. Gentleman's area.

Mr. Young: Is it not, then, even more necessary to carry out dental inspections in schools? I did not resent the fact that the hon. Lady was trying to intervene, but those on the Front Bench will have their own time in which to reply. I did not think that I ought to take up the time of other Back Benchers by giving way.

As for AIDS, Bolton is in receipt of a Government grant for AIDS training. Largely because of the expertise of Mr. Curtiss and his team, there are 32 HIV patients, 19 of whom are HIV positive and come from outside Bolton: four from Merseyside, 14 from Greater Manchester and one from Lancashire. However, the cost of drugs is about £14,000 a year per patient, which puts further pressure on the district health authority that is trying very hard to balance its books.

Last week I put down a question in which I asked about the cost of employing agency nurses in England and Wales. We shall run into long-term difficulties over that. Bolton is not unique; many of the difficulties that it faces are mirrored all over the country. I got the go-ahead some years ago for the building of a general hospital in Bolton. The building was delayed several times, but at last that hospital is about to be constructed. However, my district health authority tells me that it will not be able to employ sufficient nurses to run it.

In Bolton, 36 per cent. of its nurses are on part-time contracts. It is 186 whole-time equivalents below the funded establishment. The psychiatry department is short of 18 whole-time state registered nurse equivalents and it is short of eight whole-time state enrolled nurse equivalents. The cost of agency nurses in some departments is very high. That is particularly true of the elderly and the acute services. In Bolton there is a shortage of 60 whole-time equivalents for those services.

We must plan for the long-term provision of nurses. Apart from pay, status and fringe benefits are very important. Many nurses prefer to be agency nurses, not just because of the pay but because they have families to look after and can choose the hours that they work.

At the moment, 25 per cent. of student nurses are girls who have left school with four or five O-levels. By 1995, partly because of a falling birth rate, we shall need 50 per cent. of girls with that kind of qualification. We must ensure that, apart from a good salary, nursing is looked upon as a long-term career by both men and women.

At the moment our problem is not one of recruitment, although we are running into difficulties. Our problem is wastage, and we must stem that. It is no good saying that we could bring in people from the youth training scheme, which is one of the ideas that is being considered to solve the backlog. We must make nursing a career as attractive as Marks and Spencer makes its business to its employees. That company does not deal with its employees as simply so many pairs of hands. I use that expression because it was used to me by one of the senior officers of my health authority when he was talking about what we are doing in psychiatric nursing. He said that auxiliaries were brought in simply on the basis of "pairs of hands", but that they were not experienced and trained staff who could do the job that is required. That is the battleground on which we are fighting.

Finally, the whole problem was summed up in yesterday's newspapers in which attention was drawn to the palatial premises that the Ministry will occupy at Richmond terrace. I do not know whether what was written was true, but if one compares the descriptions of the bathrooms and the chandeliers with the conditions in which the nurses in my authority work, one can see why they feel that morale is at its lowest-ever ebb. True or false, it is typical of the way in which the Health Service works. I justified the Ministry because I am not a vindictive man. I said that, like Lady Macbeth, Ministers may feel that

constant ablutions would salve their consciences. Perhaps I am mistaken but I have never thought that the Government lacked a heart. However, sometimes I wonder whether, in dealing with my constituents, that heart has been bypassed.

7.1 pm

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): There is much that I welcome in the Bill, especially those parts that are aimed at encouraging health screening and preventive medicine. Therefore, I particularly regret that I shall be unable to support the Government in the Division Lobby tonight. However, by deciding to charge for dental examinations and eye tests, which have hitherto been free, the Government will directly undermine their claimed objective of encouraging more people to go for checks. Indeed, the reverse will be the case.

I am foremost in acknowledging that no Government have done more for the funding and staffing of the National Health Service than the present Government. The Government have undertaken the greatest capital spending programme that has ever been seen in the Health Service in the post-war years. I should like to thank my right hon. and hon. Friends for the improved investment that has taken place in my Davyhulme constituency at Park hospital, where we have an excellent £5 million new geriatric unit and a £1 million coronary and intensive care unit, as well as massive improvements in community care facilities. All that is of enormous benefit to my constituents.

Opposition Members are in no position to criticise this Government's actions on health. No Government imposed such constraints on the funding of the Health Service as did the Labour Government in the late 1970s. No Government treated the nursing profession more shoddily. Therefore, we do not need any sermons from the Opposition's Front Bench, let alone their Back Benches.

The demands on the National Health Service are colossal and seemingly open-ended. In many ways, we have become the victims of our own success. It is rather like building an urban motorway into the centre of the city. No sooner is that done than one finds that more traffic has been generated and that the jams are worse than ever. A similar situation confronts us in health care today. At the moment we have 750,000 more pensioners than a decade ago. What I would describe as "new technology operations" impose an enormous cost burden on the Health Service. Hip replacements have increased 50 per cent. compared with 1978-79. Heart bypass operations take place at four times their rate in the late 1970s. Babies today have a greater chance of survival. All that is due to the expensive care, techniques and equipment that have been developed. The fact that we have a far greater throughput in the Health Service for both in and out-patients also imposes a great burden. On top of that, the cost of high technology equipment, such as scanners and lasers, is enormous and drugs certainly get no cheaper.

The revenue expenditure for the north-west area has increased from £386 million in 1978-79 to £970 million in the current year, which is an increase of 27 per cent. in real terms. That is undoubtedly a massive increase in resources. It is thanks to this Government, who have got the country's economy moving in such a way as to generate those massive resources. We should not have had those extra resources had the Labour party been occupying the Government Front Bench.

The problems of funding that confront the north-west region as a whole, and Manchester in particular, with its large number of regional specialties in its hospitals, are enormous. In the south Manchester area, which covers much of my constituency, hospitals are told that they are overspending. They are convinced that they are underfunded.

Many of our hospitals in Manchester are second to none in the calibre of their work, the skill of their staff and the efficiency of their operation. The Christie cancer centre, for example, treats twice as many patients relative to its resources as does the Royal Marsden in London. Likewise, the Manchester Royal Eye hospital is twice as efficient in its use of resources as Moorfields Eye hospital. That is all the more reason to regret the fact that we are unable to use those facilities to the full because of lack of funding. The Department recently offered us £450,000 for a new cataract day centre at the Manchester Royal Eye hospital. That would have been backed by a further £350,000 from private industry. However, we had to turn down that £800,000 package because we did not have the revenue funding to operate it. Understandably, such facts cause enormous alarm and concern. The waiting lists at the Manchester Royal Eye hospital have trebled since 1983. So far as I am concerned, that is a wholly unacceptable state of affairs.

We have been told that 220 acute medical and surgical beds at Withington and Wythenshawe hospitals in the South Manchester area health authority are threatened with closure in the coming months. Work at the excellent lung cancer unit at Wythenshawe is also under threat. I must say to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State that those threatened closures and the threat to patient care which they imply are unacceptable to my constituents and me as their representative in Parliament. I will not stay silent while damage is done to my constituents' interests.

The wild spending of the loony Left council in Manchester has done nothing to help. The total rates bill in Greater Manchester district health authority has increased from £3·2 million in 1979-80 to £9·3 million in the current year—a £6 million increase in rates on our hospitals. It is no wonder that we shall have to close wards and get rid of nursing staff if those sorts of increases are implemented by local government. I look forward to the introduction of the community charge and the unified business rate which, I hope, will moderate those impositions on the Health Service.

My right hon. Friends have made an error of judgment on the optical and dental charges. Naturally, many people can well afford a tenner, but for many others £10 will not be an insignificant sum. Indeed, for some of my elderly constituents it represents more than 12·5 per cent. of their total weekly income. My fear and belief is that the Department will save little in cash terms and what it will save will be at the expense of the health of those who feel that they cannot afford the new charges and so neglect their health.

I fully share the anxieties expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who spoke so eloquently earlier, that if these charges are implemented, a significant number of people will not have those tests which give early warning of so many diseases, including glaucoma. It is wrong to charge for such examinations and I hope that in the coming weeks

[Mr. Churchill]

my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench will reconsider this provision, which damages a Bill that in other ways is so commendable.

New sources of funding must be found urgently for the NHS. Part of the solution may be a national lottery. Why not? I would certainly have no objection to that. Part may be to encourage the expansion of private health insurance still further. Those who take out such insurance undoubtedly take an enormous burden from the shoulders of the NHS because in effect they are contributing twice to their health care — once through private insurance and once through taxes. But part of the additional resources must be found from the Exchequer. The Treasury must be told in no uncertain terms that it cannot and must not look to the NHS as a source of funding.

I plead with my right hon. Friends to be rather more imaginative and radical in their approach. Our objectives must be, not to ration demand, but to satisfy it. Under the present system that desirable position will never be obtained. I urge my right hon. Friends seriously to consider introducing the system which seems to work so well in France. There NHS patients have a choice. Yes, they have a choice. What an unthinkable idea in the British NHS! Yet in France NHS patients have the choice whether to seek treatment within an NHS hospital or from a private clinic or hospital at the expense of the NHS, providing that the private clinic's charges are within the scale approved by the health ministry. That is an important proviso. There is no extra cost to the patient.

The consequence of introducing such a freedom in Britain would be twofold: first, waiting lists would be slashed and, secondly, although in the short term the volume of operations would undoubtedly increase, in the long term there would be a reduction in the cost of individual operations. Clearly, anything that can be done by a nationalised organisation can be done far more efficiently and at less cost by the private sector. That would lead to an increase in the effective and efficient use of resources in the interests of both patients and taxpayers.

I strongly urge my right hon. Friends to examine that proposition closely. It would give greater freedom of choice to patients, while securing the most cost-effective use of NHS resources for taxpayers. Both aspects are in line with our party's philosophy. Our people are entitled to a more efficient Health Service in which they do not have to suffer the agony of queuing and in which they can get the treatment that they need when they need it.

7.16 pm

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): We are both imaginative and worried. We do not have to be members of the medical or legal profession to understand that the Bill is not about health or medicine, but is about profit and greed. Moreover, it takes the first steps towards privatising the NHS.

The meat of the Bill is in clauses 4 and 8. The Minister said that the Government had decided to increase dental charges from £115 to £150 because they had not been increased since 1985, but he did not say that since 1979 there had been more than a 350 per cent. increase. That provision should obviously be removed from the Bill.

The Minister spoke about the half billion pounds that should be spent on the Health Service, but he did not emphasise that nurses were dealing with an enormous number of cases which they had never dealt with previously; for example, hepatitis A and B, non-hepatitis A and B and the human immuno-deficiency virus. If the Government refuse to spend money on that new problem, we shall have an AIDS epidemic on our hands. The disease is spreading, and the Greater Glasgow health board gives reports every month on the problem and the Government must take heed. Last year the BMA warned the Government that to keep the Health Service at a standstill it would need an increase of 7·8 per cent., not the 6·5 per cent. which the Government were proposing.

The Minister also said that £170 million would accrue from dental charges, which would resource some other need, but he forgot to admit that £1,700 million is needed to bring our hospitals up to acceptable standards.

The Minister spoke about cervical cancer. I am most concerned about it, as my constituency is one of the most deprived areas in Britain. A report by the Greater Glasgow health board talks about the standardised mortality ratios for previous health districts within its boundaries. The mortality rate in the Greater Glasgow health board area in the age group of 40 to 69 years is 70 per cent. higher than it is in Japan, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. It is on places such as my constituency that we should be spending money.

I read the epitaph of somebody who had passed away from a very deprived area when I listened to the Minister speaking about the extra money that was spent on fluoridation of the public water supply. That really concerned me, because the Bill contains only one clause about medicine. I wonder whether the Minister realises just how many medical products go into the market without passing through the Committee on Safety of Medicines. Hon. Members should consider the amendments to the National Health Service Act 1946 and section 130 of the Medicines Act 1968 which defines a medicinal product. I wonder whether it will be legal for the Government to give money to every health board throughout the country to fluoridate its public water supply. Fluoride in its raw state becomes fluoroacetic acid as soon as it hits water, and I am concerned about that.

It is time that we looked at some of the medicines that are coming on to the market, and at some of the pharmaceutical companies that produce them. There is Temarcpam which is known on the streets as the yellow peril, and Librium, Valium and Pethidin are making their way on to the streets. There is also that famous drug that the doctor prescribes when patients tell him that they have had a bout of depression—Ativan—which ensures that they are depressed for life. The Committee on Safety of Medicines should consider such drugs.

The National Health Service has had crisis after crisis. We are losing 30,000 nurses a year because of low pay, as the Minister said earlier this afternoon. It is nonsense for him to say that £600 million will deal with the Health Service's problems, since £280 million was needed for the nurses' pay increase last year. There are about 668,000 people on waiting lists in England and 81,000 on waiting lists in Scotland. We must do something about that. In Scotland we have lost 750 nurses and 1,600 people who work in the National Health Service. I hope that the Government will invest more money and will realise that we need a Health Service for deprived people living in poverty who can ill afford to pay for any of those services. We know about prescription charges, which have seen a twelve fold increase since the Government came to power.

We want a Health Service that is free for all and paid for by the taxpayer, whose shoulders are best able to bear the burden.

I hope that the Minister for Health and the Under-Secretary of State will examine my constituency, where there is great poverty, where people live in squalor and where the environment is so deplorable that Prince Charles talked about it for 10 minutes on the radio. Those are the problems that the Government should try to solve, and one way of doing it would be to spend more money on the Health Service.

7.25 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I wish to strike a new note by talking about clause 13, and specifically the reimbursement of general practitioners for their practice expenses. I shall home in on the use of computers in general practice. Some hon. Members—perhaps many—will have invested a great deal in new technology, including computers, in their constituencies. Some hon. Members may even have used their computers. Perhaps fewer have used them effectively. I do not know how many pieces of hardware there are in constituency offices — there are probably 57 varieties or more, all doing their own thing — but the real power and dynamism of new technology comes from, to use rather trendy words, inter-operability and interactivity. The dramatic synergy that one can get from new technology comes when computers talk to each other and talk back to their users. There is a new realisation of that in Conservative central office. There is, too, in the European Community, with the INSIS programme. There may even be a realisation among the cloth caps of Walworth road—if they have not yet been made redundant.

Only two paragraphs of the White Paper that gave rise to the Bill are devoted to that important point. The White Paper believes that new technology is a good thing and it notes that

"a variety of computer-based systems already exists."

That is as far as it goes, except to say that in Scotland things are rather more advanced, as they usually are.

General practitioners are ready and willing to use new technology. They are already discovering the value of new technology in their practices, in making up practice accounts and repeat prescriptions, in setting up call and recall systems for immunisation and in noting visits. But the quantum leap that they could achieve has yet to be perceived by the health authorities and by the Government simply because they are all doing their own thing. We must have some pre-planning if we want the radical change about which I am talking. I envisage a data network linking general practitioners, chemists, family practitioner committees, health authorities and hospitals. That would have great advantages in speeding the process of clinical trials, so that the process of getting approval for a drug can be telescoped. It would be of immense benefit to our pharmaceutical companies.

I envisage many other advantages. A general practitioner could discover immediately whether beds were available in the local hospital or further afield and thus make use of unused capacity in the system. That could have a dramatic effect on waiting lists. A patient visiting his doctor could go to the nearby chemist and find his prescription already made up and available simply because of the exchange of information. A general practitioner could obtain immediate information on the cost of drugs, on their side-effects, and on their administration. Family practitioner committees and health authorities could have timely warning of the build-up of epidemics quicker than we have under the notification system. General practitioners could report much more speedily the side-effects of any drugs, and this could replace the creaking yellow card system. New technology could achieve all this and more.

But there is one condition. We must begin to move away from an ad hoc response to our problems to an overview of the position. Only the Government can do that. It is no good leaving it to general practitioners, family practitioner committees or health authorities. To obtain the overview, the Government must take the lead. They could use clause 13 to do that by reimbursing general practitioners for expenditure on equipment that is interoperable and interactive. It need not be expensive. There is a parallel with urban regeneration, where the Government have the vision and provide the pump-priming funds, and then the private sector responds and we obtain a multiplying factor of the public sector funds involved. In this case, the private sector could be the pharmaceutical companies. They would benefit from being on the inside track of such a data network. I hope that we shall make the correct choice between muddling along as we are and the quantum leap that I have described.

Of course, the debate today and all debates on the matters that I have mentioned take place against a backdrop of pressure for more resources for the NHS. The British Medical Association has asked for more. It said:

"For some years now the money allocated by the Government for the service has been quite inadequate to meet the demands made upon it by the public."

That is strong stuff. That was the evidence of the BMA to the Merrison committee, which reported in 1979, after five years of Labour Government. What was the response in that report, which was commissioned by a Labour Government? It was:

"Whatever the expenditure on health care, demand is likely to rise to meet and exceed it . . . To believe that one can satisfy the demand for health care is illusory."

A signatory of that report was the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who is not here today. This is a tightrope that Governments of all colours must tread, and it ill behoves Opposition Members to have the screaming abdabs about us when their performance was so clearly inferior to ours.

7.33 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): To keep up the latter points made by the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), I think that it is a cheek for Conservative Members to try to ignore the fact that without a Labour Government after 1945 we would not be discussing a National Health Service. The establishment of the service was opposed by many Tories. Indeed, the late Sir John Anderson thought that welfare was likely to be a running sore in our economy. Conservative Members probably believe that it is a running sore in the economy now.

The Government have missed a golden opportunity when introducing this Bill. They had a marvellous opportunity to address important problems facing the National Health Service. The Bill could have encouraged recruitment of more nurses, particularly intensive care unit nurses, about whom much discussion has taken place in

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

recent weeks. It could have improved the position of other staff in the Health Service, such as speech therapists and medical laboratory scientific officers. It could have addressed the problem mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) regarding the dangers of dry Lorezepam, still popularly known as Ativan, which is regarded as mind-bending and about which we now have ample evidence. I asked questions about that drug in October 1984, but the Government have done nothing serious to exercise adequate control over the drug and to prevent its over-prescription, which creates doctor-induced drug addiction among people.

I wish to deal mainly with the charges for eyesight testing which was not mentioned in the Tory party manifesto. Conservative Members need not fear being called to account by their local Conservative associations on the grounds that they were elected on a manifesto which embraced this idea, because it was not there. It could be argued that this is a mere detail, but I can assure the Minister for Health and his colleagues that it is not a detail to those thousands of people who, each year, require attention to their eyesight. The Government have committed yet another fraud against the electorate by introducing this measure. They would not have introduced it just before June 1987. They had every opportunity, but they did not introduce it then. I shall refer to the time when they had the opportunity to do so.

The Government set great store by competition. Free market forces and competition are the gods worshipped by the present Administration. In the White Paper the Minister for Health said that the reason for abolishing free eyesight testing was that

"The Government had decided . . . to extend the principle of increased competition to sight testing".

The Minister argued that we should be discussing whether or not that charge will deter people from visiting an optician for a consultation and an eye test. The report of the Select Committee on Social Services, which took the evidence of the General Optical Council, stated:

"The evidence we have received has not been so ebullient. The BMA is worried by the lack of reference to Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners' (OMPs) invaluable support service to hospital ophthalmology departments, reflecting the opinion of their Ophthalmic Group Committee that OMPs are 'a sadly underused and undervalued resource in primary health care'."

The important section states:

"The General Optical Council are keen to draw a distinction between a full eye-examination and a sight-test. The former would pick up many defects and abnormalities which a simple sight-test would not be able to detect, enabling the optician to prescribe corrective or ameliorative treatment. Thus waiting lists are kept down in hospital ophthamology departments, and the examination can also be used to monitor diabetes and screen for glaucoma. The GOC claim that there is a growing trend towards the quick eye test as a result of commercial pressure on registered opticians and the employment of unqualified sight testers by unregistered sellers of spectacles."

I would argue that that is precisely the kind of scenario that we shall see on a much larger scale if charges are introduced. The Minister for Health in his speech in the House on 25 November referred to the fact that opticians can still provide a free test. However, there seems to be a difference in attracting custom to an optician by providing a free test or by issuing free stamps. Commercial profit is uppermost in the Minister's mind, not the better health of the people. He is applying a commercial criterion.

Of course, an optician can offer a free test and hope that the person being tested will come along as a patient and purchase spectacles from the optician. We could almost call this a loss leader. The optician may make a loss on the sight test, and hope to gain through the sale of spectacles. What is really uppermost in the Minister's mind? Is he primarily concerned with commercial profit or people's health?

Again on 25 November, the Minister referred to the need to secure additional resources for development

"by asking those who can afford it to pay for sight tests and to meet somewhat more of the overall cost of dental care."—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 260.]

He referred to NHS sight tests remaining free for children and certain others on low incomes. He has not adequately answered the question from the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) who asked how low an income would be before tests were free. Will the exemption be confined only to those who qualify for income support? In the opinion of most of us, many people of meagre means would qualify for free treatment.

All that is intended to save a mere £170 million. Of course that is cheese-paring, but that is all of a piece with other Government legislation. The same thing is happening in the Social Security Bill in regard to the decision to reverse the Moran judgment on attendance allowance. That will save precious little, but it all adds up to enable the Chancellor of the Exchequer to meet the promised tax cuts for richer people come next April.

There can be no justification in denying a free eye test to poor people simply to help those who can well afford to pay more in tax. We are always told that the Government want those who can well afford it to pay for this and to pay for that. They can pay higher taxes and the Government have the option next April to ensure that public opinion in this country, which is overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining our National Health Service free at the point of treatment, is unchanged.

The stance of the Secretary of State for Social Services is different from the stance adopted by some Tory Ministers in the past. The present Minister for Health was a member for Standing Committee A which considered the Health and Social Security Bill in 1984. The Committee was responsible for going clause by clause through the Bill. The Minister may well recall that his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), one of his predecessors as Minister for Health, stated when the Government were scrapping free NHS spectacles for most people:

"It is the health of people that we are, above all, prepared to, and must, protect. The desire to protect the health of individuals is the only legitimate interest of Government in what otherwise is a free transaction between the optician on the one hand and the client on the other".

The right hon. Gentleman was talking about free eye tests. The Minister went on to say:

"We have continued to provide, under the NHS"—

and I want to emphasise this—

"the most important service, an eye test available to everyone free of charge."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 24 January 1984; c. 13.]

On 26 January the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe returned to this point:

"We have retained all the essential requirements that we think that the public need—in particular"—

and I emphasise this again—

"the free eye test for everyone and the legal prohibition on anyone selling glasses unless there has been a recent eye test,". —[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 26 January 1984; c. 53.]

What has changed between January 1984 and December 1987? Should it not be fundamental to health that people should have the chance of a free eye test?

The Minister for Health has argued that the eye test will not cost all that much and he cited a figure of £10. Indeed, he has said that it might be less. Who knows? Who can say? After all, the Minister also said, when challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), that opticians can charge any price. The Government will not put a maximum price on the tests. There will not be a ceiling. The sky could be the limit. There will be no Government control because they believe in market forces. Market forces means the free play of demand and supply. The price is at the point of equilibrium, not at the maximum amount of demand.

In other words, some people will not be able to afford the price. The Minister for Health may not believe me, but not everyone carries the price of a particular type of medical service in their heads. Many people would not be able to tell us the price of a prescription. After all, prescription charges have gone up about 20 times under this Government, so people can hardly be blamed if they cannot remember the price of a prescription. That charge may be £5, £10 or whatever, but many people, knowing that they will have to put their hands in their pockets—very often there will be little in those pockets—will be deterred simply because they know they will have to pay a sum of money for the test and follow that up by paying for the spectacles. Not everyone is a civil servant from the Department of Health and Social Security capable of carrying statistics around in their heads. Ordinary people do not act in that way.

The result of the proposed changes will be that far more people will be put off going for treatment. The Bill will not necessarily mean that public expenditure will be reduced. Many people who would go for a free sight test today and who would perhaps be the one person in 20 who, after that test, is referred for medical treatment will miss such medical treatment at that time. The result will be that they will be pressed into eye hospitals or into the eye departments of general hospitals at a later stage. There will be a knock-on effect and waiting lists, already high for many conditions in many places, will increase. The result will be more public expenditure and not less. It is not a pun to say that, in terms of public expenditure and patient care, this measure is short-sighted. In terms of savings it is likely to be counter-productive.

The police tell us that many driving accidents are due to bad vision. Such people are in need of eye tests and should go often to have their eyes tested. However, even under the present system of free examinations, they have failed to go for such tests and, as a result, have caused accidents on the road. I suggest that there will be more road accidents as a result of people not having those examinations because they are no longer free.

This is not the first time the Conservative Government have come forward with proposals to introduce charges for eye testing. It was proposed in a new clause presented by the Government when we were considering the Health Services Bill in 1980. At that time, the then Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), withdrew that clause because there was considerable pressure from both sides of the Chamber and from outside of the Chamber. It would be rather interesting to know—perhaps the Minister for Health or the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will be able to tell us — how many letters have been received since 25 November when the Minister announced the proposed charge. How many letters of support has he received? How many letters opposed that measure? I suggest that he has had none from the medical profession supporting the proposed charge. However, if I am wrong I should be interested to hear.

In 1984 when the Minister and myself served on the Standing Committee to consider the Health and Social Security Bill my hon. Friends argued that the Oglesby report was likely to be the basis for Government health policy in the near future. That report advocated all sorts of charges for people who may be attending hospital, attending the doctor and so on. At that time we were told that the Government had no intention of implementing that report. However, in 1979, when the Conservative party took office, a document was published by the Adam Smith Institute that said that patients should pay for their spectacles, for the eye tests, dentures, dental examinations, for attendance by a general practitioner, and should pay to be in hospital. All those things were advocated by the institute. I suggest that the people likely to be in favour of the present Bill are perhaps the crackpots of the Monday Club and also members of the Adam Smith Institute. Certainly most ordinary, decent people are not in favour of this Bill.

The Bill appears to be the thin edge of an extremely dangerous wedge. Unless certain political events take place as a result of public action—by-election defeats or the defeat of Conservative candidates in local elections—I foresee the day, before the next general election, when the Government will introduce charges for attendance at hospital and for attending the GP. They will get us back to where they really want us to be, in the days before the NHS.

I hope that the Minister can prove me wrong. I hope that he will join with all in this House who have expressed their reservations about this proposal and do as his predecessor did in 1980: withdraw the clause from the Bill. I promise him that the Labour party, and, I suspect, one or two others elsewhere, will fight this clause every bit of the way and publicise what takes place in Committee after the Bill has unfortunately been read a Second time. I can only hope that there are people with guts on the Conservative Benches who will see that the Bill does not reach Committee. However, experience tells me that I am expecting far too much.

7.57 pm

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) has predicted a disaster if the charges for eye tests — he concentrated on those, but I assume he also means the charges for dental checks — are introduced. Such predictions are based on the assumption—he did not spell it out in great detail—that the charges will act as a massive deterrent to patients seeking eye tests and dental examinations.

All the evidence that we have shows that when charges are introduced or increased there is a check or even a temporary reduction in the number of patients seeking

[Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory]

such examinations or treatment, but soon the position recovers and the upward trend is resumed. The hon. Member for West Derby will know that from the experience of his own party. In 1951 the Labour party introduced charges for false teeth and spectacles. Ever since then, every Labour Government have found it necessary to increase charges to patients of one sort or another. If the hon. Gentleman considers the history of his party, he will discover that, yes, there is a temporary fall-off, but the trend generally recovers. I am certainly confident that after the Bill has been enacted and the charges have been in operation for a short time he will find that the number of people seeking eye tests and dental examinations will resume an upward trend. The numbers will certainly remain very much higher than they were eight or nine years ago when his party was last in office.

Charges for these examinations are wholly right against a background of constantly increasing expenditure on the Health Service in general and on primary health care in particular. As the Green Paper made clear, we are set to see a further substantial rise of about 11 per cent. in real terms over the next three years. This money must come from somewhere. Three sources can be identified: first, from internal economies; secondly, and overwhelmingly, from the public sector by way of the taxpayer; and, thirdly, but significantly, from private sources by way of patient charges. People who can afford it should contribute directly towards their health care. I have noticed that very often the most vociferous critics of this principle turn out to be those who are now better off than ever before, whose wages and salaries have risen in real terms over the past few years and who have seen substantial reductions in their income tax.

I have always supported the concept that people should be allowed to retain more of their own money, but the other side of that coin is that we should, and have a right to, expect those people to provide more of the health care and security of themselves and their families. People whose standard of living has risen and whose disposable income has gone up should contribute towards this very substantial increase in expenditure on the National Health Service, the increase that we have seen in recent years and the increase that is planned for the future.

Charges also involve the patients more closely in the efficiency and value for money of the Health Service. What we pay for, we value. Any service — and the Health Service is no exception — is likely to improve if lots of people using it also contribute directly to it out of their own pockets. They form an on-the-spot audit every day of the week of the effectiveness and efficiency of the service that they are getting. If we really want a responsive and patient-directed Health Service, charges such as are outlined in the Bill have a part to play.

Let me strike a note of caution, however, on costs because clauses 12 and 13 of the Bill open the door to some increases in staff. Family practitioner committees will have additional powers to pay for training and education of primary health care staff and also directly to reimburse additional categories of staff — interpreters, computer operators and so on. I have no doubt that these offers will be taken up enthusiastically by general practitioners, and I am sure that most of the staff will be properly employed; but this could quite easily become another engine of expenditure unless we find offsetting economies. Here I identify a very large area of potential waste which the White Paper discussed but about which the Bill is comparatively silent, wastage in pharmaceuticals.

Some doctors still have extravagant prescribing habits. It is conservatively estimated that as a nation we throw away about £160 million worth of drugs a year. The nation's pill cabinets are groaning with pills and medicines which have been prescribed but which are surplus to requirements. Some doctors — and they are not wholly to blame themselves — prescribe two, three or even more months' supply at once. It is not just financially wasteful; it is also unsafe because when the treatment ends or is changed or when the patient dies or whatever it may be, those pills remain in circulation to become muddled up with other pills or out of date, swilling around in the nation's bathrooms and pill cabinets. I would like to go for a 28-day mandatory limit for the supply of pharmaceuticals——

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has spoken very much as someone who has never had to worry about the cost of anything in his life, but he is clearly unaware that many doctors now prescribe larger amounts because so many patients can ill-afford to pay prescription charges; as pharmacists can testify, even in these circumstances many prescriptions are not fully filled.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The hon. Lady flatters me — I must look more prosperous than I really am. What she says does not invalidate the point that I make because, as she should know, there are many exemptions from prescription charges, and anyone who is genuinely unable to pay them is exempt. I agree that I am not one of those people.

Mrs. Beckett: Rubbish.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Moreover, what she says does not invalidate my point that we are not just financially profligate but we also endanger patients' health by doing it. Some say that we should go for generic substitution. The White Paper skirts around that. I am attracted to it and have always felt that if pharmaceutical companies need a longer period for paying back their massive investment in new drugs the patent period should be extended. Instead, the White Paper draws attention to the problem and points to a greater role for family practitioner committees.

There still remains, however, a confusion between the regional medical services of the Department of Health and Social Security, which, by and large, hold the information on their computers, and the family practitioner committees which hold the contracts with the doctors. The two should be brought together, and the FPCs should have not just the information but the duty, the responsibility and the power to follow up and take action against that minority of doctors who are unsafe and extravagant in their prescribing habits, because the potential saving here dwarfs anything else discussed in the White Paper, and there are these additional health benefits.

I approve of the overall tone of the Bill. Prevention is certainly better than cure. In passing, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench do not forget the libertarian tradition in our party, to which I subscribe, which says that responsible adults, if given the right information, are capable of making their own choices. That includes the right to make their own mistakes.

Of course, it must be right to point out to people incontrovertible links between, for example, smoking and lung cancer; but I hope that we do not go way beyond that and adopt a hectoring and disapproving attitude towards things which medical fashion may from time to time decree are excessively unhealthy. A balance must be struck. Let us not have too many bans and prohibitions. Let us instead rely on persuasion and education.

The Bill introduces provision for additional medical training of ancillary staff, but there is a bigger training challenge ahead. Increasingly, medical technology is pushing back the frontiers of what is possible, on the one hand, but, on the other, we know that resources are limited and that doctors are in consequence being forced all the time into making implicit judgments when having to allocate priorities. That would remain true even if we doubled expenditure on the NHS. It would be possible to design an NHS that would bankrupt the country, but patients could still be found who could claim legitimately that they were being denied a course of treatment, a wonder drug, an operation or a bit of machinery that they heard or read about and was available in some country.

Therefore, it is inescapable that choices must be made. We must try to maximise the health and happiness of patients with the resources available, which, by definition, are always limited. We must make difficult cost-benefit calculations. My point is that administrators alone are not capable of making them. We must train doctors and other medical staff so that they appreciate the problems involved and share the management burden.

I welcome the Bill and believe that it can be a springboard, so that we can face the challenges ahead, to guide us not just towards a more expensive Health Service — that would be easy — but, much more difficult, towards a better Health Service.

8.11 pm

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): When I listen to the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), I wonder whether he perceives that today there are people who are not enjoying an increased standard of living and whose disposable income is not gaining appreciably. Millions of people find the day-to-day and week-to-week grind to maintain and build up standards for their families a real problem.

The hon. Gentleman said that people might temporarily become consumer resistant, but that things will start to level out. Let me tell him what the first test will be when a mother with children is confronted with having to pay the £10 charge, or when a husband who is working out the week's expenditure finds that there is no £10 left at the end of the week for a dental or eye test. Those people will decide their priorities and, as a result of the charges, might neglect to do what is suggested by the Government and not go for a test. If they do not go for a test, their health may deteriorate and give rise to additional costs on the NHS. I suggest that the charges will prevent many people from taking the course that we know is in their best interests and, in the long term, of the NHS.

The Bill cannot in any way inspire confidence in the claim that the NHS is safe in the hands of the Conservative party. Indeed, it does just the opposite. As has been said by many hon. Members, great opportunities have been missed which could have been taken in the Bill.

The great arguments on the major issues involved in the NHS were effectively dealt with and the myth demolished in our debate on 26 November. The arguments were demolished equally by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and by the right hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe), who showed clearly what has happened over the past few years to our Health Service and where the myths have arisen, and we shall hear them again tonight. We know that all is not well with our NHS.

I am privileged to represent Wolverhampton, South-East. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), said a few days ago that the Black Country had "nothing to moan about." At the moment in the Black Country, in Wolverhampton, Birmingham and throughout the west midlands, as the Minister knows, there is a mounting crisis in the NHS. It is not doing that word an injustice to say that it is a crisis. Over the past few months, in my district health authority, three people have died. They lost their lives because they could not be admitted to any of the hospitals in my area, when they were in a serious health condition. Over the past 12 months, 400 people who were seriously ill have had to be refused admission. They were turned away because no beds were available.

In all our acute bed specialties, with the exception of ophthalmic, there are bed shortages, and in some the figure is the equivalent of 50 per cent. General practitioners in Wolverhampton tell me that the heartache and ordeal of picking up the telephone at 5 o'clock at night to try to find a bed for a seriously ill patient is distressing. General practitioners spend hours trying to find a bed.

We have a renal unit, where the machines are provided by the community. Trade unions and voluntary bodies raised funds, doing it in the way that the Conservative party says it likes it to be done. The funds have all been made available externally. However, the unit is housed in small, makeshift accommodation. We were promised capital expenditure to provide proper accommodation in the near future. Each time that we have asked about that, our request has been turned down. We understand that the Secretary of State has said in the past fortnight that he will reconsider that, but we all know that reconsideration may not mean that that provision will be made.

When I look at my district health authority and listen to the arguments of Conservative Members tonight, a clear message comes through. There is a standard pattern of delivery by Conservative Members. First, quite rightly and defensively, they say, "We appreciate all that the Government have done to assist the Health Service. They have done a marvellous job." They duly give a pat on the back to all and sundry. However, in the second phase of their delivery they say, "But in my constituency I shall stand up and describe all the inadequacies of the service. I shall articulate the needs of our patients, doctors, nurses and the service in general. In that context, the Government are not doing a very good job at all." That is said in enough constituencies to make the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary a little concerned about the vibes on the state of the Health Service that are genuinely coming from their own Back Benchers.

I believe that for some Conservative Members the Bill is the final straw that will prevent them from going into the Lobby and voting with the Government. That is another sign of how bad we all know the position to be under the surface. It is no good saying that a certain amount of money has been injected, when we know about

[Mr. Dennis Turner]

the serious day-to-day problems. I have given instances of those from my own community in Wolverhampton. Our community health council, our medical practitioners committee and my district health authority all tell me of their bad day-to-day experiences, and they are joined by the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority in saying that there is a need for greater resources to be injected into the National Health Service, in the west midlands and throughout Britain.

It was clear from our debate on 26 November—it will be so in future debates—that the people of this country regard the situation more in sorrow than in anger. However, I give a warning: one can see that sorrow welling up in our communities and turning to anger. Sensitive men and women are identifying as insensitive a Government who fail to respond to the unassailable case that has been presented. Many Conservative Members should vote against the Bill. Let us provide the resources that are needed to start building a better Health Service for all our people. After all, is it not the test of a civilised society to move forward, rather than to introduce legislation that takes us back?

8.22 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate. For the past 15 years it has been my privilege and pleasure to advise members of the dental profession on the financial arrangements and management of their practices. That experience has given me a unique insight into their way of life and the way in which their affairs are financed. I hope to share that insight in a helpful way with hon. Members this evening, as we address the difficult problem of our National Health Service.

The Bill must be seen in the context of recent trends, especially in dental health. Since 1978-79 there has been a 20 per cent. increase in the number of dental practitioners and a corresponding 20 per cent. increase in the number of courses of dental treatment. There has also been strong evidence of improving dental health, to which the work carried out by general dental practitioners has contributed admirably. However, the need for change in the general dental services has become more and more obvious.

Looking back over the past 15 years, one can see that patterns of treatment and dental care have changed dramatically. The need for change was initially reflected in the Government's Green Paper and admirably dealt with in the British Dental Association's response—"Opportunity for Change"—and was further addressed in the White Paper proposals. There is also a continuing dialogue between the British Dental Association, and its general dental service committee and the Department of Health and Social Security on the need for a new dental contract, with which I shall deal later.

We should also reflect on the fact that the need for increased resources for the Health Service and the requirement for increased charges have obscured—indeed, eclipsed—the many good things that the White Paper contains and that I greatly welcome. Nevertheless, it must be said that the announcement earlier by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health that the proportional charge that we will introduce will be as high as 75 per cent. will be a grave disappointment to many dentists. Equally, I am sure that there will be some relief at my hon. Friend's announcement that there will be a ceiling of £150 on the total amount payable. A real fear has been expressed throughout the debate by hon. Members on both sides, that removing the free examination will lead to reduced attendances. I have some sympathy with that point of view, but the issue that must be addressed—it has not been tackled so far in the debate—is what dissuades patients from attending dental practices more regularly.

A study is now being done jointly by the Department and the British Dental Association into "Barriers to Dental Health Care". When that report is published, I suggest that there will be several possible explanations in it of why there is not more regular dental attendance. Cost is one; fear of pain is another; the possibility that people cannot find a dentist who is prepared to treat them on the National Health Service is a third. But I suggest that perhaps the greatest reason for non-attendance is lethargy. There is no perceived need to see a dentist. It will be interesting to see what the report has to say about the image of dentists and dental practices.

Much has been said in the debate about costs and charges, but the fact remains that almost half the population do not attend a dentist regularly in spite of, not because of, the free dental examination. I venture to suggest that it would be interesting if my hon. Friend the Parliamentary-Secretary of State looked into what proportion of the population do not attend regularly, and, of those, how many would be entitled not only to a free examination but to free dental treatment on remission if they went more regularly. More regular dental attendance takes place in the southern half of Britain, where the vast majority of adult patients pay a substantial proportion of the cost of their treatment. So, while it would be easy for me to stand here and say, on behalf of all my friends in the dental profession, that I could not possibly support the idea of phasing out the free examination, that is not my conclusion.

There are two reasons why I say that. First, the proportional charge is lower as a result of the phasing-out of the free examinations. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health accurately elucidated the fact that patients who attend dental practitioners the most regularly will pay slightly less under the proposed arrangements. The message must be got across to the public that if they attend their dentists regularly and keep in contact with them they will be spared large bills for dental treatment.

The second point is that it provides an opportunity for us to concentrate more on prevention. More and more patients when they go to a dental practitioner regularly need less and less treatment. Where did my hon. Friend the Minister for Health first encounter the phrase about a continuing care contract that he used in his speech? That phrase is very much on the lips of many dental practitioners. The general dental service committee has proposed to the Department that there should be a change from the present contractual arrangement and a much greater obligation placed on the relationship between the dentist and his patient by way of a continuing care contract. A proposal has been made for an annual registration fee. This annual arrangement would, one presumes, require funding at a much higher level than the present examination fee of £3·90.

One interesting point arising from the debate is that there are a great number of requirements, and of possible illnesses and diseases, for which the dentist looks when he is examining a patient. Has any hon. Member thought that

what we should be addressing is not whether we should ask patients who can afford to do so to contribute towards the cost of treatment, but whether we should ask what is a proper amount to pay a dental practitioner for the work that he does in screening and monitoring dental health? That is the purpose behind the proposal for an annual registration contract. Much research has still to be done about this, but that is the framework within which we can promote much more prevention in dental practice. Dentists have the opportunity and a great obligation to teach their patients more about oral health and about how they can preserve their teeth.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): The hon. Gentleman glibly talks about working people paying. In my constiteuncy in the north-east, unemployment is about 20 per cent. and people are living on the breadline, or, as we call it, in the halfway house. They are frightened to go to dentists in case they receive treatment that will cost about £30 or £40. The Government are proposing to promote some sort of advertising campaign to advise people caught in the poverty trap, not only in the north-east, but all over the country. The hon. Gentleman says that he has the answer, but so far he has not told us what it is.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman has answered his own question. We want to encourage people to attend dental practitioners more regularly so that they can avoid the £40 bills. Much of the hysteria that we have heard in the debate will not encourage people to go to their dentists because they think that they will have massive bills. That will not be the case if they go regularly, and it is not the case now.

No costing has been proposed for the annual registration contract, but one assumes that the arrangement would take care of all the screening procedures, X-rays, and possibly even the cleaning of teeth. It would be unrealistic in the present climate, given the need of the Health Service for resources, to expect that the patient should not contribute to that contract. There is an opportunity here for us to do a great deal of good to encourage patients to go to a dentist more regularly.

I shall now deal with the timetable. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health said that the Government hope to introduce a proportional charge arrangement in April, with fixed fees for those items that require primary legislation. He said that he would seek to introduce the proportional charge for the examination at a later stage. Will he seriously consider the possibility of bringing in a new contract for a continuing care arrangement at the same time as the proportional charge for the inspection is introduced? That would allow people an opportunity to absorb the major change of emphasis and would allow the positive proposals in the White Paper on dental health promotion to take effect.

I was delighted, and I am sure that members of the dental profession will have been delighted, to hear the Minister say that he is proposing to undertake a major advertising campaign for dental awareness. That is the great priority, because we must increase the priority that the public give to dentistry and dental health. Attitudes must be changed, and I warmly welcome the Government's commitment to promote health education. This must be pursued with vigour and if the funds raised from charges can be used to this effect the money will be well spent.

There are many other aspects of the Government's proposals, especially those in the White Paper, that deserve warm support. Extra resources for fluoridation will contribute greatly to preventive policy. More post graduate and vocational training will also help. It has been my privilege to be involved in dental vocational training for 10 years since the Guildford experiment started in 1977. There is a need for that, and for more resources to be devoted to it, and I welcome the Government's commitment to provide them.

We must also review the best means of achieving a more even distribution of dentists. I support the proposal in the White Paper that this should be done, and the review should consider how to make available information to help dentists decide where, when and how to invest in practice projects. We need information about local problems to be available nationally in order to encourage redistribution in a controlled way, so that local practitioners already in place are not unduly and adversely affected.

The constitution of the General Practice Finance Corporation is also being changed by the Bill. The Government should consider whether to take the opportunity to include dental practitioners in the provision of finance for the newly constituted body.

I know that I have touched only on matters affecting dental practice. The Government's plans for family doctors and health promotion generally offer a better deal for patients and greater opportunities for doctors to improve and widen the scope of the health care that they provide. The Government's plans represent, not just a radical shake-up of the family practitioner services, but a long-awaited and much-needed opportunity to create a system of primary health care that the nation will need, not just in the 1990s, but into the next century.

It is outrageous hypocrisy for the Opposition to say that the Government are not doing enough for our Health Service and then to refuse to support the imaginative initiatives that are contained in the White Paper.

Finally, I pose one question: what sort of National Health Service will we have in 20 years? Some hon. Members who have just come to the House may be fortunate enough to be returned in future elections, and some of us may have a long and distinguished career. I shall tell the House what sort of National Health Service we will have in 20 years. Unless we pursue a policy of encouraging prevention, and unless we educate the public to the effect that they can avoid preventable illnesses, we will not be able to afford a National Health Service beyond the year 2000.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: We will not have one if the Conservatives are in power.

8.39 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): We agree with and welcome some proposals in the Health and Medicines Bill and the White Paper. However, like many hon. Members, for all the reasons cited in the debate, we are totally opposed to the introduction of charges for dental checks and eye tests. The proposed changes make a mockery of the Government's announced intention to improve preventive health care. The proposals were not part of the consultative discussions and document and will prove to be more expensive to the NHS in the long run. Diseases and illness previously detected by opticians and dentists

[Mr. Ronnie Fearn]

will remain undetected and in the long run patients will go into hospitals, thus increasing hospital waiting lists. I quote from the document "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion", in April 1986. At page 32, under item 4, "NHS Services", it says:

"Free NHS sight-tests and prescriptions are maintained for everyone who needs them. The sight-test can identify health problems as well as a need for spectacles, so it is important that skilled sight-testing should remain readily available."

We shall not have that when the Bill goes through.

We are concerned also about the removal of the duty placed upon the Secretary of State to provide dental checks and treatment, where necessary, to schoolchildren. We are even more concerned from our reading of the relevant legislation that the Secretary of State's discretionary power to provide those services extends only to children in schools maintained by local government. If the Education Reform Bill becomes law, children in schools that have opted out will be left without a safety net. Is that what the Government intend, or is it a drafting error? I hope it is the latter, but perhaps the Minister will clarify the point.

Like much enabling legislation, the Bill leaves many questions unanswered. The proposal to privatise the General Practice Finance Corporation did not form part of the consultation process. The Government obviously envisage some problems with loans being provided in deprived areas. Do they see other problems arising from the constraints of finance and commerce? For instance, will young single or married women doctors be seen as a good financial or business risk? How do the Government intend to monitor the distribution or refusal of loans? Are there plans to require reports to safeguard against maladministration? We must have more details before we can approve the proposal.

Whether one agrees with the principle of the controversial clause 4, in practice it is not as easy as it looks. It will create administrative and managerial headaches and will add to the overheads and costs, with a corresponding reduction in the income generated. Most importantly, do the Government guarantee that any extra income from those activities will not be offset against allocations by the DHSS? Unless the proposals generate genuine extra cash, they should not be implemented. Does the Minister realise that the subsections of this clause that give him the power to issue directives cover bodies such as the community health councils, and that this may go against the spirit surrounding the setting up of those bodies?

Much has been said against the introduction of cash limits on family practitioner committees, and we add our voice to those concerns. The Bill does not tell us how they are to be allocated. The House should be aware that such limits could be extended to cover all services provided by family practitioners. We know that funds for training are to be cash-limited, but we do not know what form the training must take before it will qualify for reimbursement. That is important. The training should be of a high standard and should have some uniformity.

We support some of the Government's proposals, but some should be removed from the Bill and others require far more investigation. My major worry relates to the Government's real objective behind the Bill and the White Paper. Is it the beginning of the slippery slope to the reduction of family practitioner services supplied by the NHS in favour of some form of privatisation of the services, an objective that they hope to realise without the true and real consultation to which the electorate has a right? I fear that it is the beginning of the end to a truly national health service, which at one time was for all the people, but as we look at it now will not be for all the people.

8.44 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): I had hoped that in the debate we might have gone beyond the normal exchanges across the Floor of the House, with the Opposition saying that if only there were more money and people it would be all right, and our saying that there are many more people and more money so it must be fine. I should have thought that if Opposition Members believed that only more money and more people were required, they would admit that the hospital and GP services are much better now than they were under the Labour Government, because there is self-evidently much more money and many more people. I should also have thought that they would not turn down any suggestions or good ideas for raising money and bringing more resources into the service, which is exactly what the Bill and White Paper suggest: yet more resources for the service to meet growing patient demands.

Why is it that with all the extra resources there is still unhappiness and patient demands are not being met? Part of the problem lies in the structure of the very large, top-heavy Health Service that we inherited and are living with. The layers of management are legion. Why do we have one group of civil servants at the centre arguing with another group who run the National Heath Service management board? Could there not be unity and a single organisation? Why do we need over £100 million of regional administrative structures and inter-regional co-ordinators to carry the word down and up from the region to the centre? Why have another level of bureaucracy and administration at the district level before getting to the people who run the service and other things for patients in hospitals and general practice clinics?

Why is it, also, that in a money-oriented culture the answer is always more money? If the administrative structure does not accept its responsibility to run the service in the interests of the patients, from a senior level, the answer will always be more and more money because it is the easy way out, avoiding difficult management decisions. Conditions should be placed on the granting of new money to the Health Service to develop a sense of responsibility within it, so that senior people in the Health Service management feel that if a baby is going without an operation, that is their problem and their responsibility. They have £20,000 million to manage their affairs, so such things should not become matters for the national press and the House of Commons but should be dealt with at the local level.

It ill behoves people in the Health Service to grumble about recruiting nurses and other skilled staff when very often the labour organisations oppose the flexibility on pay which is needed to get nurses into the places as required. Why has there been so much delay in getting regional divergencies in pay and extra pay for special skills? Much of the problem lies with the Opposition and the unions, not with Conservative Members.

Who answers for the National Health Service? Managers must have powers and responsibilities to answer for the service delivery. I feel that within the administrative structures of the NHS there lies a deep hatred of the small hospital. Why does the NHS always go towards the large and the new, never supporting small community hospitals which are much loved by all hon. Members? It is not a matter of money; it is a matter of management style and it is high time that they were told that the small hospital is valued——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Redwood: I do not have time to give way. It is not a matter of money and resource; it is a matter of management. We need the Bill, which is an important step on the road to providing a service with choice, management responsibility and a variety of sources of money and resource.

I welcome clause 4, which gives hospitals the opportunity to raise money and provide better services by bringing in private capital and skills. Why should patients and visitors not have the chance to get access to a different range of retail activities, types of food and drink and other necessary services? It is high time that hospitals were modernised, and we should encourage private capital and management to do it.

We need a system at general practitioner level to ensure that referrals to hospitals are made on good information about where waiting lists are shortest and where the patient can go, if he chooses, to have his operation performed quickly. There are glaring anomalies and a huge range of differences in standards of patient care that are entirely unrelated to resources and completely to do with management.

It is time that the GP had the power at his desk to help the system and the patient by reducing queues and waiting times by knowing where the shortest waiting lists are to be found. Why are out-patient clinics about the only places left where one can arrive for an appointment only to find that 30 or 40 others have been given the same time? It is not cuts that cause that to happen. That is the result of administrative decisions, and it is a disgrace. It is high time that out-patient clinics had sensible appointment times and that consultants adhered to them. That would greatly improve the standard of service and people's perceptions of it.

Throughout the service we need an ethos that is friendly to patients and marshals the huge resources of the NHS in the best interests of its patients and for no one else. We do not wish to see a producers' cartel. Nor do we wish to see a huge amount of resources going in at the top, and leading to expensive management games, endless rows and pieces of paper passing between regions, co-ordinators and the centre shifting the blame. We want resources to be directed to the bottom. The White Paper and the Bill offer choice and scope for additional funding. The Bill should be warmly welcomed. I hope that it is the first step of many.

8.53 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I was not surprised by the contribution of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who is one of the whizz kids of the Conservative party. He was working outside the House——

Mrs. Currie: Of course.

Mr. Haynes: I do not need the Minister to say "Of course". The hon. Gentleman was working outside the House on behalf of the Conservative party before 1979 when the policies that the Government are now putting before us began to be formed. I well remember what the Tories were saying during the pre-election period in 1979. I remember also what they did after the 1979 general election. It seems that all Conservative Members in the Chamber are laughing except one or two who were Members before 1983. The great majority of them are new boys.

During the 1979 election campaign the Conservatives were saying that if they formed a Government they would reduce public expenditure. They won that election and they have reduced public expenditure.

Mrs. Currie: That is right.

Mr. Haynes: I do not need the Minister to confirm or deny what I am saying. I am making a speech, not the hon. Lady.

The Government have made across-the-board cuts throughout the land. All services have been cut — *[Interruption.]* This is no joke; it is a serious matter. Before 1979 the Under-Secretary of State was implementing Conservative policies as the leader of the Birmingham health authority and cutting services. It is no wonder that the Health Service is in a mess when people such as the Minister were involved in health authorities. The hon. Lady is now a Minister and the actions that she is taking these days are even worse than those that she took when in Birmingham.

The Government have imposed cash limits and told health authorities that they cannot exceed them. They are warned that if they do they will suffer the consequences in following years. The message is, "Save your money and cut services." Everyone is scrimping and scraping within the Health Service to provide necessary services for the people, who are our constituents. We hear Conservative Members criticising some of the cuts in the NHS—some of them agree with the criticisms of Opposition Members—yet they vote to support the Government. I do not know how they get on when they return to their constituencies. They probably say that they did not vote to support the measures of which their constituents complain. I do not know what they say, but I know that the Government have created a begging society.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Quite right.

Mr. Haynes: I wish the Minister would keep quiet and listen. I never interfere when the hon. Lady is on her feet, so shut up!

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) interjected.

Mr. Haynes: There is evidence of the begging society in my constituency. The state should provide a heart scanner and yet the people of Ashfield and Mansfield have had to beg on street corners for donations to provide this necessary piece of equipment. There are people in desperate need who cannot afford the private sector, unlike so many Conservative Members. I have received a letter from the mayor of Eastwood town council in my constituency in which he refers to the Nottinghamshire kidney fund. I know of a chap who has worked his soul case out for 15 years to provide money for the fund. Tony

[Mr. Haynes]

Higgins has begged on street corners and worked like a Trojan to raise money for kidney machines. Good luck to him, but this equipment should be provided by the NHS. In other words, it should be provided by the state.

When people are in work they contribute to the NHS by paying their national health stamp. The more one earns, the more one pays. There are billions of pounds being paid into the Government that should be used through the NHS to provide kidney machines and other vital items of equipment. Unfortunately, the money is not being used in that way. It is being used to pay for the advertising of share offers when public undertakings are being privatised. It is used to acquire weapons of destruction. By gum, we shall change all this when the Labour party forms the next Government.

It is sometimes necessary nowadays for individuals to lodge appeals when they need social security benefit. Benefit is often denied to them because of the regulations that the Government have introduced. Some of my constituents are on appeal because they say that they are entitled to benefit and the Department says that they are not. The hearing of an appeal can take as long as eight months. This is shocking. This has happened only since the Conservative Government—that lot on the other side of the Chamber — came into power. Under the Labour Government, those who were entitled to benefit received it. The present difficulties are related directly to public expenditure cuts.

We have been told by a Conservative Member that individuals value that for which they pay. That is true, but we are paying through the nose for the NHS without getting the value to which we are entitled. That is the problem, and that is what we must put right.

Every year the *Nottingham Evening Post* runs a scheme to raise money to keep the elderly warm. This leads to begging on street corners. The front page of the *Nottingham Evening Post* carries a headline which asks readers to contribute to enable the elderly to keep warm during the winter, and copies of it are sold by lads on street corners. It is the Government's responsibility to keep the elderly warm, but they are denying that it is. More and more people die each winter under the present Administration. Why is this? They are dying of hypothermia.

The end result is that we get kicked in the constituency and asked, "Why are you not doing something about it?" We are doing what we can in this place, but the Conservative Government have a majority of 101. They can get anything through. Conservative Members say that they do not agree with some of what the Government are doing, but they troop through the Lobby to approve it and to put it on the statute book.

Nottinghamshire county council and my district health authority are falling over backwards to try to provide additional chiropody services, but the county council—which, incidentally, does a marvellous job—is hampered by rate support grant cutbacks, and the chiropody services are suffering as a result. Not so long ago, the Minister talked of providing a decent service in the community, but what happens? People simply do not receive it.

Many doctors tell a retired man who has given a lifetime of service to industry to keep himself active. However, if that person requires a chiropodist—which is often the case in my constituency—he will not be able to get about, because of his bad feet. He sits in a chair, day after day and week after week. Of course, such people can obtain a chiropody service if they pay for it, which is what Conservative Members want. However, because of rate support grant cuts and Health Service cutbacks in my district, a proper, full chiropody service cannot be provided.

It goes on and on. The poll tax is coming next. People will be asked to pay more and more — in particular, many of my constituents who are in the lower income bracket and who cannot afford chiropody in the private sector. They will be told that they must pay 20 per cent. of the poll tax. That means more and more money coming out of their pockets or their purses—if they can find it. That is what the Conservative meant in 1979—"Let us have cutbacks in the public sector. Let us make them pay." And, by God, that is what they have done. Well, once we are given the opportunity to sit on their side of the House and put things right, we shall really look after the people of this nation.

9.1 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said at one point in his speech that Whips should keep quiet. All that I can say after the high-decibel hellfire sermon that we have just heard is that he is one Whip who certainly cannot be said to whisper his message.

What the hon. Gentleman said was more or less what we have been hearing from Opposition Members throughout the debate, although it was delivered at a rather higher volume and in a more declamatory manner than most of the other speeches. On the face of it, it fits in with the strongly expressed criticism from the eminent presidents of three senior medical colleges which was announced today.

Surely, however, the point is this. By its very nature, the National Health Service will always be short of resources. It will always be up against an ever-expanding demand. I am sure that, at any time during the 40 years since the NHS was set up, we could have found three eminent medical men to come forward and declare it to be in a state of crisis. We could also have found, on either side of the House—depending on which party was in power at the time — hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Ashfield declaiming the state of the NHS in pretty violent terms.

The fact is the better that the NHS does, the greater the expectations that it raises. The wider the range of treatments that it introduces, the greater will be the pressure on its resources. Forty years ago, for example, hip replacement operations simply were not available. Today, the NHS not only provides those operations, but provides them in ever-increasing numbers. Does it receive the credit for that improvement? It does not. Still less does the Government of the day. Expectations have been raised; the demand for such operations increases; the waiting lists are attacked as outrageous. That is likely to continue for as long as the NHS exists.

Obviously, taxation is always likely to play an important part in the funding of the NHS. I, for my part, hope that, in the years to come, insurance will play an increasing part in funding medical treatment. However, it is absurd not to look at other ways of raising finance. In particular, it is absurd for Opposition Members to dismiss

charges out of hand as a means of raising finance. If medical services are provided free — indeed, if any services are provided free — there will be waste, and where there is waste less money is available to be used where it is most needed. Charges have a very important part to play in making sure that such waste does not occur.

Mr. Morgan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Irvine: I should like to give way, but I know that another Opposition Member wishes to speak after me.

Charges reduce waste. Resources can then be better applied in other directions. My hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) made the point that an important merit of charges is that they involve patients much more in improving the efficiency of the National Health Service. If we pay for something, we try to ensure that we get good value for it. Furthermore, charges provide a useful additional source of finance.

There is scope for argument about exactly what the level of charges should be and exactly how and on what items charges should be applied. There is also scope for argument about the level of income above which charges should become payable. If sensible charges are imposed on those who can afford them, they are not merely unobjectionable; they are positively desirable.

The other main way of raising money is embodied in clause 4, which to my mind is the most encouraging part of the Bill. It is high time that hospitals were encouraged to make greater use of their commercial potential. There are large numbers of staff, patients and visitors in hospitals. This makes hospitals very attractive as premises to retailers.

There is other commercial potential too. I do not wish to embarrass the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), but he highlighted one of the other revenue-raising elements that, apart from the attraction of hospitals to retailers who might want to set up shop there, is available to hospitals. He referred to commercial deals with drug companies. In exchange for research and assistance, hospitals could strike advantageous deals with drug companies. That is specifically provided for in clause 4(1)*(e)*. The potential is enormous.

During the opening speech of my hon. Friend the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) in an intervention highlighted the fact that each hospital or at any rate each regional health authority must be allowed to retain the benefit of its commercial success. That must be right. It would be absurd and counter-productive if the benefits of the commercial success by individual hospitals and regional health authorities that is made possible by clause 4 were to be nullified by a subsequent corresponding reduction in central funding.

The Bill has met with much undeserved criticism. By and large, it is a very good Bill. I shall vote for it with enthusiasm.

9.8 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine). He claims a special interest in practically every debate. He last spoke in a debate on Scotland, which is strange for a Member who represents a constituency in East Anglia.

Conservative Members have made great play of the fact that they are seeking to reform the Health Service. Indeed, one Conservative Member posed the question: "What sort of Health Service will exist in 20 years?" It is obvious, not only from the Bill but from the debate that was held two weeks ago, that in 20 years' time we shall have a private health service because the National Health Service will have ceased to exist.

Some comments, especially those by the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), who has now left the Chamber, are based on fantasy recollections about the natural consumers of the Health Service. When one considers that the hon. Member for Wokingham happens to be a former investment consultant for N. M. Rothschild, one realises that such Conservative Members have no understanding of the needs of the people who seek medical and dental help. Indeed, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), seems to operate on the basis that if the Ministry issues a directive to tell people not to be ill, they will cease to be ill, and that if a directive is issued telling everyone in, for example, Leicestershire that they do not have any health problems and have no need to seek a dentist or optician, suddenly, by some miracle, all their problems will disappear. Of course, the reality is quite different.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-East (Mr. Turner) referred to the state of the Health Service in his area. I should like to give briefly some statistics relating to the Health Service in Leicestershire. About 8,300 people are on the waiting lists in Leicestershire and about 1,300 are waiting for urgent operations—that is almost 13·6 per cent. of the total.

Even before the provisions of clause 4 become enacted, we have been operating a jumble sale Health Service. The Lord Mayor of Leicester recently launched an appeal for support to build a special unit at the Leicester general hospital. The appeal reached £50,000 but everyone has now discovered that an extension will not be built at that hospital in which to put the new endoscope unit. When clause 4 becomes law — if it becomes law — we shall indeed have a jumble sale Health Service in which the managers of health authorities will, no doubt, hold television game shows and jumble sales to raise funds.

A recent report in Leicestershire stated that the Towers hospital, which is a regional hospital that helps patients with mental disorders, is recommended for closure. I raised that in a question to the Minister, but she has not even seen the report. However, we have been told that it will close in five years. I understand that consultants in Leicestershire are furious about what is happening and about the fact that beds that are needed for operations are not available. Those consultants are to lead a delegation to the Minister in the near future.

We have heard reports in Leicestershire that funds from the National Health Service will be allocated to private hospitals. Indeed, there has been rumour that £240,000 of National Health Service money would be spent on private services in Leicestershire. That is the state of the Health Service in Leicestershire and it is wrong for the hon. Member for Wokingham to say that everything is all right with the Health Service and that it is getting value for money.

In a recent article in a local newspaper, Mr. Paul Bates, the administrator of the family practitioner committee, quite controversially for an administrator in the Health Service, criticised the Government because of the cuts that will be made in the local FPC. It is being told that it cannot circulate vital information to doctors and dentists, that it

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should slash £50,000 from its budget, that it should not write to 60,000 people a year to tell them that their doctor has retired or died, and that it should not write to 13,000 "season ticket" holders to tell them that their annual permit for regular drugs has expired. It is not allowed to send out annually updated drugs lists to doctors, which give them vital information when they need to prescribe for their patients.

At present there is so much scope to introduce a Bill which will provide resources and a more efficient NHS. No one is pretending that the operation of the NHS is perfect; obviously, there are tiers and layers of management which need to be examined carefully. It is fundamentally wrong that the Government should be allowed to appoint managers from Sainsbury's or other high street firms to become general managers of acute hospitals. That practice must be stopped.

I should like to see a Health Service in Leicestershire, particularly in Leicester city, which provides for the outer estates, such as Netherhall, Thurnby Lodge, Rowletts Hill and Northfields, where there are large council estates and no general practitioners. During the past year, there has been a campaign in Rowletts Hill to set up a baby clinic because mothers cannot take their children into the city centre to have them treated. Recently, a campaign was started to try to provide general practioner facilities in the neighbourhood centres that have been provided by the Labour city council.

We are talking about the erosion of fundamental rights.

Dame Jill Knight: I was fascinated and wondered what significance there was in the fact that the hon. Gentlemen removed his shoes before he made his speech. Is he having problems with the chiropody service in Leicester?

Mr. Vaz: If the hon. Lady were to visit Leicestershire health authority she would discover that there are severe problems with the chiropody service and that people cannot get the treatment that they need. But that intervention was not particularly relevant to what I was saying.

During the past 20 years, there has been a consensus that the NHS should be supported by both the Government and the Opposition because it is a fundamental right. That right was accepted by the previous Conservative Administration between 1970 and 1974 under the previous Conservative Prime Minister, who is now attacked and humiliated by Conservative Members. We believe that the Health Service is a fundamental right, free at the point of entry and available for all.

The end of the long road on which this Bill embarks is people being charged for a visit to their GP, just as it is proposed that they will be charged when they visit their dentist or optician. The Bill is appalling. It does not serve the needs of local people and those who rely on the NHS, and I hope that it will be opposed.

9.17 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The Bill is introduced by a Government whom no one in the Health Service trusts any more. That is not surprising because they are presiding over an awesome restriction on our health services, but they do not even have the integrity to admit that that is the case. Therefore, people will, rightly, not take at face value the suggestions and powers in the Bill, including, for example, the supposed additional powers for financing the Health Service.

The Minister said that the legislation was about bringing extra funds into the Health Service, but it is absolutely clear from our remarks that we simply do not believe him. The Government's dogged refusal to recognise that there is a problem of underfunding is also absolutely clear. Less than two weeks ago they tabled a motion congratulating themselves on the adequacy of their NHS funding. They do not believe that it is underfunded, and they have shown great anxiety to bring about a major reduction in public spending. That is what the Bill is about. It should have been introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not by health Ministers. It is shameful that health Ministers are, in practice and in fact, doing the dirty work of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, because the Bill is about reducing further the funds to health authorities.

The Minister said that health authorities must take time off from easing suffering and curing diseases, and must set about the task that the Government think is much more important, which is making money. Health Service managers are rightly cynical about the proposals, and they are convinced that any money that they raised in addition to their existing budget would be clawed back by the Government. They believe that the reward for raising an extra £1 million would be that the following year they would have £1 million taken off their budget by the Government. They believe that, if they raised £2 million, the Government would take back £2 million the following year. Worse, they fear that the Government will make some sort of arbitrary assumption about how much money it is appropriate for each district health authority to raise, and will cut their budget in advance irrespective of whether they raise that amount of money.

It is not just that we fear that the Bill will not involve extra resources for the Health Service. It will also provide a considerable distraction from the job that the Health Service should be doing. Health Service administrators will have to set about leasing Health Service land for camping and caravan sites, running shopping malls and health clubs.

The Minister should make it quite clear tonight what the Government will ask the Health Service to do to try to raise that money. Will they really ask district health authorities to sign deals with undertakers and to set up hotlines for bereaved relatives? We should like to hear the answer tonight in the House. Will he force district health authorities to put up the prices of welfare food? We should like to hear about that tonight as well. Will they make health authorities put up the price of meals in staff canteens and make staff pay for car parking facilities? If they adopt that measure, they will further undermine the standard of living of nurses which will lead to a greater exodus of nurses from the Health Service.

Will the Government ask health authorities to insist on charges for relatives who stay with a sick child in hospital? I should like a specific commitment that the Minister will not ask district health authorities to do that. It is important that, when a child is in hospital, parents are encouraged and enabled to stay with the child to assist the speedy recovery of that child. It would be quite wrong to implement charges for relatives of children in hospital. If there were already charges for relatives, David Barber's

mother would be receiving a bill from the health authority in two weeks' time. We must have an assurance from the Government that they will not introduce such charges.

Perhaps the Minister will inform the House which of the 75 suggestions in the leaked report in *The Independent* they will approve and which they will not be going forward with. It would be helpful if a copy of that report, which was leaked to *The Independent*, were placed in the House of Commons Library so that Members could scrutinise it. Tonight, we need to know exactly what district health authorities will be forced to do to raise money. Instead, district health authorities should be directing their energy and initiative to improving health care. Already there is a considerable diversion of energy and initiative towards basic fund raising. We want consultant paediatricians to be treating sick children, not spending hours on fund-raising committees or telephoning round local companies trying to raise money for basic services.

We are talking about fund raising for basic services, and not just for some additional extras. For example, I received a letter from a consultant at Haringey hospital which was sent to all local organisations asking for money for the appointment of a senior registrar in the microbiology department. That is a department in Haringey hospital, in north London, which obviously has a key role in preventing the spread of infectious diseases such as hepatitis B and AIDS. It is scandalous that, when its work is increased, it has to write to local organisations to try to drum up the £20,000 needed to fill that post. The letter states:

> "I think it is imperative for this community to benefit from such a post and I am therefore writing to appeal to you to seriously consider whether this might be a possibility with your assistance. We are looking to find the sum of £20,000 a year ongoing."

That is how the Health Service is having to operate already. If district health authorities have to put even more effort into trying to raise money in that way, the position will deteriorate even more.

The Bill talks about extra resources for the National Health Service, but the underfunding of the Health Service is already choking off and having a chilling effect on voluntary and charitable fund raising. What is the point of spending all one's spare time raising funds to buy the local hospital a special care baby cot if it lies unused because of the nursing shortage? What is the point of raising money to establish a kidney unit if the hospital in which it is to be based is later closed?

The efforts of hospital leagues of friends to raise thousands, hundreds of thousands and even millions of pounds are increasingly swallowed up in the widening black hole of NHS underfunding. That is demoralising them and undermining their will to help to raise funds for the Health Service. Charities are becoming angry. The fact that the Government are undermining existing opportunities to raise money——

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The hon. Lady said that she wants better and more equipment in the National Health Service, more money for staff, more staff and more buildings. How many billions of pounds would a Labour Government invest in the Health Service?

Ms. Harman: The British Medical Association, the Institute of Health Service Managers and the Royal College of Nursing have said that, to escape from chronic underfunding, the Health Service needs an extra £200 million a year. Later in my speech I will discuss how the Government are wasting Health Service assets.

Mr. Redwood: Does the hon. Lady accept that £200 million a year is a small sum? Is she aware that next year the Government will put an extra £700 million into the Health Service? Why is that inadequate? If she means billions of pounds, why does she not say so? But how would that agree with the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who said that a few hundred million pounds would do?

Ms. Harman: Those organisations say that we need £200 million on top of what the Government have said that they will put into the Health Service.

Charities are becoming angry that the Government are increasingly pulling out of key areas in the Health Service and leaving charities to carry the can. Last week, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund bitterly attacked the Government, saying that charities must increasingly prop up the Health Service and that money intended for research into cancer is being sucked into supporting basic services. The fund is sustaining the children's ward at St. Bartholomew's hospital. That should be funded from the mainstream budget; it should not be left to a charity to fund. The fund is supporting most of the cancer treatment, not just the research, at the unit being set up at the Churchill hospital. The shortage of funds is delaying new treatment for cancer patients.

But all this does not seem to bother the Government. Indeed, 10 days ago the Under-Secretary gave the game away when she complained that every new medical treatment created a new waiting list. The Government sees this as a problem. They would be much happier if medicine had not much progressed beyond Victorian times, so that they could say to people, "I am sorry, but we can do nothing for you. You will have to go home." In that way, they could save a great deal of public money.

The Government's obsession with cutting public spending has led to their being the enemy of progress. It has led to their being the enemies of life-saving treatments and of the medical breakthrough. Like most normal people in this country, we want to see medical advance. We see the Health Service as a marvellous asset towards that end. The Government see the National Health Service as a greedy obstacle in the path of their plans to cut public spending.

The Government speak of selling spare capacity to the commercial medicine sector. We see this in clause 4. They talk about it as a way of bringing income into the Health Service, but my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) is right when he says that we must scrutinise this notion of spare capacity being available for selling to the commercial sector. The cheerful talk of spare capacity will cut no ice with the 162,000 people who have waited over a year for medical treatment and who continue to wait. Spare capacity is not a concept which would be understood by the parents of David Barber or by eight-year-old Emma White who waited eight months for an operation. When she finally came to the head of the queue and went into hospital, she waited 17 hours and was sedated for her operation in the Royal Berkshire hospital, only to be told, "Very sorry. You'll have to go home. Your operation can't go ahead." It is odd for a Government who like to talk of the insatiable and

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escalating demands of the Health Service to start talking about spare capacity. They are not really talking about spare capacity. They are talking about asset-stripping the Health Service for the purpose of commercial medicine.

There is in the Health Service not so much spare capacity as much-needed assets which are locked up and underused because of underfunding. The Government urge the Health Service to be more efficient and to cut out waste, but their under-resourcing and underfunding of the Health Service are leading to inefficiency and waste.

The Government rightly talk of their concern about taxpayers' money. We are also concerned about the fate of taxpayers' money in the Health Service. Taxpayers have invested millions of pounds in operating theatres and yet they are used for only half the time for which they could be used. They lie idle for the rest of the time. This is not so much spare capacity as a valuable resource which is underused and lying idle. Those operating theatres are not used, because operations are cancelled in a bid to save money and because there are not the nurses or beds available for people when they have had their operations.

Mr. Churchill: I sympathise with some of the hon. Lady's points, but I fear that she does her case no good by her exaggeration. When her Government were in power, constituents of mine had to wait more than a year to get an X-ray for their stomach. For one of my constituents, the notification that he could go for his X-ray came the day after he died.

Ms. Harman: I am not exaggerating. The statistic about operating theatres being used for scarcely half the time comes from a report written by the National Audit Office which was published the week before last.

Taxpayers also invest millions of pounds in training doctors and paying their salaries, but they are then banned by the district health authorities from operating on patients on the waiting list for fear that the budget might be overspent. All the resources and taxpayers' money that go into training doctors and keeping them on the NHS payroll are then underused as they remain idle and frustrated.

Millions of pounds are being lost to the Health Service through theft and underfunding of security measures means that easy pickings are available. Millions of pounds are also lost to the Health Service through the exodus of nurses. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young) was right in his explanation of the problem.

The replacement cost for nurses to the Health Service is something like £100 million a year. Another £40 million a year leaves the Health Service with the nurses who do not complete training. The Minister has said that that has nothing to do with resources. It has everything to do with resources. Who thinks that we would have an exodus of 30,000 nurses a year from the Health Service if they were better paid, if there was a sensible grading structure, and if they were offered flexible hours and child care provision for pre-school age children? If nurses had better conditions such as those, they would stay with the Health Service and that would be a much better return on taxpayers' money. It would also mean that the nurses could be where we want them to be, and where they want to be—at the patient's bedside instead of leaving the Health Service in frustration and desperation.

With regard to nurses, the Government have much in common with first world war generals whose attitude was that it did not matter how many soldiers did not return from the front, because there would always be more recruits. But there are not enough nursing recruits. The Government's attitude is a huge drain on the training and investment on nurses.

Millions of pounds are invested in beds, wards and equipment which are wasted because they lie idle as a result of service cuts. In any hospital in any town or city, equipment is piled up and lying idle. That is a shameful waste of resources that could be utilised. The Government are also generating inefficiency. Doctors are involved increasingly not so much in treating patients, but in spending hours on the telephone trying to find beds for patients. That is not what they were trained for or what they should be doing in the Health Service. Towards the end of every day doctors scour the wards looking for any patient who appears to be perky enough to be sent home so that they can free a bed. That is not how we should be running the Health Service. There is also a booming administration industry. Letters are sent to patients booking them in for operations, and letters are then sent cancelling the operations.

Great inefficiency is also generated as a result of the recruitment freeze which is now beginning to bite in district health authorities. Providing health care is team work. There must be a complete chain to make the system work properly. If there is a freeze on the recruitment of nurses, the doctors and lab technicians will not be able to do the jobs that they were trained for and that we need them to do. If there are not enough lab technicians, the doctors cannot do the work that they should be doing and the nurses will not be able to do their work.

The irony is that, because of the district health authorities' underfunding, many district health authorities have to implement recruitment freezes. We have not heard a squeak from the Government about recruitment freezes. Are the Government unaware of the present position? Are they unaware that many more district health authorities are threatening not only to introduce recruitment freezes in an attempt to meet their budgets, but to extend that recruitment freeze to nurses? The Government have remained absolutely silent on that matter.

It is also clear that the Government's concern to improve services in primary health care takes second place to their anxiety to cut public spending. They say that they want to gear the service to prevent ill health and promote good health, yet they cast a shadow across those objectives by planning to introduce charges for eye tests and dental treatment. The hon. Member for Birminham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was absolutely correct when she set out those arguments. It is obvious that there will be a reduction in screening and preventive treatment.

The Government are also taking powers to cash-limit the family practitioner committees. The BMA echoed the fears of many when it called for the relevant clause to be removed from the Bill. It said:

> "GPs know only too well the consequences of the application of cash limits to the hospital sector and the difficulties created for their patients."

If the clause is included and if the Bill is passed, we will see the same crisis hitting the primary care system as we see developing in hospitals.

The Government's plans to improve GP services are also undermined by their failure to fund the family

practitioner committees, which should represent a powerful watchdog to plan and supervise an improvement in services. Unless there is proper planning and supervision of such improvements, the improvements that the committees seek in the GP services will not occur. The committees' attempt to argue for such improvements will be nothing more than a pious hope.

The Government are distorting our hospitals and blighting our primary care system by their desire to pull the plug on the Health Service. However, a growing number of people are working together to try to prevent the Government from doing so. Doctors are worried. We have seen the report issued today from the three royal medical colleges. Nurses are angry and are demonstrating. In Cornwall 1,000 nurses have been demonstrating on the streets against the cuts that face a hospital in that region. Health Service managers are growing hoarse from complaining and predicting dire problems. The Government are not listening to any of those people.

The Opposition are listening to the doctors and nurses and to patients who are waiting anxiously for treatment. We will be working to try to prevent the deterioration of the Health Service that is represented by the Bill. It is a pity that so many Conservative Members are afraid to stand up for their constituents by trying to defend and protect the Health Service in their areas.

9.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): This has been a thorough, wide-ranging debate on primary care and the provisions of the Bill.

Large parts of the Bill have received a fair measure of support. I am most grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham), for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) and a number of others. I am sure that they will understand if I do not answer all their points in detail.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) asked a number of questions, especially regarding the items in clause 4. I must tell her that we have no such plans as she has outlined. The hon. Lady asked that we place the internal report that we have received in the Library, but the answer to that request is no. Quite simply, the reason for that decision is that the report contains some batty things—which she has described—with which we do not agree, such as a hotline to funeral parlours. The hon. Lady also asked about the price of meals in staff canteens. I must confess that one of the things that I did in Birmingham when I was chairman of that health authority was to investigate the biggest subsidy of all for staff dining—the consultants' dining room at the Queen Elizabeth hospital. I tried to do something about that.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made a most interesting speech. In many ways it was an excellent speech for a different purpose—an excellent speech for the deputy leadership of his party. It was a pity that so few of his Back-Bench colleagues were present to hear it at 5 o'clock. We counted 12 of them and we wondered what had happened to the other 200. I listened carefully to his comments, especially those concerning the General Practice Finance Corporation and his comments regarding clauses 4, 8 and 10. I do not know who is advising the hon. Gentleman, but he is not very good. The GPFC will have a much easier time in future when it will be able to raise money outside Government funding. In any case, many GPs already raise a substantial amount of money to fund their activities. That has been done exceedingly well in Stratford where the GPs are only too pleased to show off what they have done.

The hon. Members for Livingston and for Peckham gave us quotes to show that the British Medical Association does not like the proposals in the Bill. I wonder whether they saw the letter from Dr. Wilson, chairman of the general medical services committee, of the BMA, printed in *Today* on 4 December. That article was headed:

"Doctors had the best ideas first."

I will not quote the whole letter but he clearly stated:

"The BMA committee which represents all general practitioners proposed most of the innovations which the Government has put forward."

I am more than happy to accede to that. The hon. Member for Livingston asked whether clause 8 will allow charges to be made in respect of general practitioners. If he is asking whether clause 8 will allow for the imposition of a charge for a GP's consultation, the answer is no. Similarly, there are no powers in clause 4 to make patients pay for basic health care. We are concerned with income generation, not income replacement. That answers the point raised by another colleague. What it will allow for is charging for special services, just like the old amenity beds which the legislation is to replace. But nothing will get in the way of giving basic health care, and that is clearly set out in both the Bill and the White Paper.

I note the remarks of the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). I will try to do what the doctor tells me in future. He asked me about payment for domiciliary visits and merit awards for doctors. I will convey his views to the British Medical Association. Whether it will take any notice is another matter.

I also note his comments about drug companies and whether we should charge them for the research that we do on their behalf. I take his point, but will merely say that all their research is done on our behalf because we do not fund pharmaceutical research in this country. The Health Service, the Government and the public benefit considerably from the research and the trials that are done under properly controlled conditions in our hospitals.

The hon. Member also asked about charges for private patients in private hospitals. He and his colleagues ought to read clause 4 a little more carefully; I think that they will find that they agree with it. The whole idea is to free our hospitals through clause 4 to enable local managers to charge whatever they like. At the moment, they cannot make a profit and are not allowed to charge for some of the services which Labour Members identified. So we hope that they will vote for the clause. This applies also to the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young), who called private patients parasites. One of the reasons is that we cannot charge them as much as we ought to.

Mr. Galbraith: I thank the Minister for taking my advice. If she sticks with me, she will be all right.

I obviously did not make my point clear. I was talking about the situation in which the patient is seen privately and then comes into the National Health Service as a National Health Service patient, or someone who is in a private hospital and then moves to a National Health Service hospital. Such patients are not charged at the moment. I do not wish them to be charged—they are as

[Mr. Galbraith]

entitled as anyone else to National Health Service treatment—but I want the private company which puts them into the National Health Service hospital to be charged because we are giving a cross-subsidy to that private company. Will the Government look into that?

Mrs. Currie: I could not agree more. I assure the hon. Gentleman that clause 4, for which I hope he will now vote, will give us the power to do much of what he wants to do.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) raised a number of points. She said that capitation fees should be adjusted to avoid reducing the time allowed for patient consultation. It is proposed in the White Paper to extend the number of hours that a general practitioner makes available for direct consultation to the patients, which will confer the entitlement to the full basic practice allowance.

Mr. Young *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: This, together with the provisions to improve consumer choice and to make it easier to change doctors, should increase competition among doctors and lead to better services for patients. In other words, if patients are not given enough time by doctors they will now be able to do more about it.

If the hon. Lady has any further concerns, may I just refer her to an important book written on the subject in 1976, in which it says:

"The key to the future lies in sensible and realistic planning to ensure that revenue and capital resources are allocated on the basis of objective criteria, that capital developments proceed at a pace consistent with a realistic revenue projection and that revenue costs and manning levels are kept to an essential minimum . . . No one who works in the Health Service can avoid the need to examine their practices and attitudes with a view to seeing if the overall cost-effectiveness of the service can be improved".

I could not agree more. That was said by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), when he was a Labour health Minister, at this Dispatch Box. I would refer the hon. Lady to her leader, if she can find him; he does not seem to take as much interest these days in these subjects.

That also answers the point made by my very dear—may I call him Friend?—the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who wanted to know what I was getting up to in Birmingham before 1979. The answer is that I was doing my best to resist carrying out the policies of the then Labour Government on the Health Service, when it was being cut to shreds.

A number of my hon. Friends have raised important points. As usual, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) made a thoroughly sensible and distinguished contribution. He asked about average list size. I should just caution him on this. We are keen to reduce the average list size, as he knows, but large numbers on lists are most common in the inner cities, where we also have a high percentage of doctors who are over 70, and many small lists of fewer than 1,000. So we see major changes here, and it is hard to tell exactly what effect the retirement provisions will have on list size. In the end, we are also interested in the output and results that we get. As I am sure my hon. Friend realises, list size is an input.

We are also keen about the commitment to extra resources. I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that some negotiations are going on. We shall have more discussions, particularly with the doctors, so I am a little reluctant to put our negotiating position on the table just yet. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that.

Several of my other hon. Friends made points, which I shall deal with as I make my speech.

Various hon. Members drew attention to the division between the family practitioner committees and the district health authorities. I have some sympathy with that, but we are stuck with it. The arrangements were confirmed as recently as 1985. I hope that hon. Members will understand that I am reluctant to reorganise the Health Service all over again. I think that it has had enough for the time being. I can see virtue in having the services outside the hospital run by separate bodies, especially as some district health authorities seem to have difficulty running what they have. The aim is to make the family practitioner committees as effective as they can be, so that they do a proper job of monitoring health and the family health services. That is what we intend to do through the Bill.

Nobody can say that we have been stingy with these services. [HON MEMBERS: "Yes, you have."] Opposition Members cannot say that. I am talking about the family practitioner services, which have been given less attention in the debate than they should have received. In 1978-79, gross current spending on the family practitioner services under the Labour Government was about £1·75 billion. It has trebled since then in cash terms and is over £5 billion now. In real terms, that is an increase of 43 per cent. That expenditure represents 24 per cent. of total Health Service spending, which is an increase on the years under the Labour Government.

Since 1979, the number of family doctors in the United Kingdom has risen by nearly 4,000 and now stands at over 30,000. Similarly, the number of staff employed by family doctors in England alone has risen to nearly 30,000, and that is in whole-time equivalents. That is probably about twice as many people.

The number of dentists in the United Kingdom has increased by nearly 3,000 to over 17,000. The number of retail pharmacies in England and Wales has gone up to 10,500 now, and we have 38 per cent. more ophthalmic opticians in England and Wales—around 6,000 of them. I shall come back to them in a moment.

Mr. Morgan: Before the Minister is overcome in a paroxysm of self-congratulation and requires medical attention herself, does she accept that there is genuinely a problem of incentive in the NHS, for surgeons and other medical practitioners who attempt to eliminate the waiting lists and find themselves up aganst the cash limits? When they are trying to do that, their general unit manager tells them half way through the financial year, "Sorry, you have done enough operations now. You've got to stop."

Mrs. Currie: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but we have been increasing the incentives for general practitioners, dentists, opticians and pharmacists. As a result, we have many more of them. That is what happens when one gives incentives.

Similarly, the number of courses of treatment has risen dramatically. The number of eye tests now stands at nearly 11 million. The number of courses of dental treatment has gone up in the past 10 years from 26 million to over 31 million, of which 10 million are children. Nearly 3 million pairs of spectacles were issued last year, 209 million visits

were made to doctors, and 34 million visits were made by doctors to the home of the patient. Nearly 1 million women went to ante-natal classes in 1985 and the same number of pregnant women had their teeth done at an average cost of nearly £32 each — free to them, of course. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) is right. There is no evidence that teeth deteriorate in pregnancy, but women tend to get gum disease. Therefore, we have no proposals to change that.

There have been some reductions. There are fewer holes in children's teeth. Half of our children start school with their teeth intact, compared with only a quarter of them when my daughter was born in 1974. About 40 per cent. of those aged 65 to 74 — I am looking at the hon. Member for Ashfield—have their own teeth and expect to keep them. In 1985, 1·7 million pensioners received dental treatment.

Hon. Members on both sides talked about charges. I share the sadness—the hon. Member for Ashfield is not showing his teeth now—of several hon. Members who said that charges for sight and dental checks have obscured discussion on a wider range of worthwhile proposals. However, I have several points to make in this regard. First, for many people, such checks are free and will continue to be so. No one will be denied the service because he cannot pay. About 15 million courses of dental treatment are free—about 45 per cent. of the total—and 2·25 million vouchers for spectacles were issued last year —25 per cent. of the total—and we have no plans to change the exemptions. The proposed charges are hardly high — less than £3 for the dental check-up every six months. That is less than the price of two packets of cigarettes — not every day, but once every six months. Even after the charges are brought in we reckon that more than 2 million courses of dental treatment will be cheaper than they are now. Of course, the idea is to help those who look after their teeth, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale pointed out.

As for the eyesight test, we are convinced that people will not have to pay a fee of the order of £10. The opticians' service is profitable and competitive. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should have a look at *The Optician* magazine. With the permission of the House, I shall read out some of the recent advertisements for opticians working in the private sector. This one comes from Haywards ophthalmic opticians in Derby, Oadby, Thornaby-on-Tees, Bournemouth, Gateshead, Shrewsbury and Coventry. It offers a salary package in excess of £30,000 for a four-day week, a company car, a pension and a private health scheme. A similar advert earlier in the year states that the private car is a "new 2 litre petrol injection Sierra."

An advertisement for an ophthalmic optician in Exeter offers a salary package of £35,000 plus. I can well understand——

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mrs. Currie: —that under these conditions opticians do not like what we are up to. I am sorry if my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston thinks that we are being offensive; but we think they will manage somehow.

Mr. Cook: The Minister will appreciate that we are concerned not about optometrists who earn in excess of £30,000 but about the 6 million pensioners existing on much smaller incomes, who will be faced with a charge to which the hon. Lady is exposing them. Will she admit that she is leaving them open to whatever the market charges them?

Mrs. Currie: The hon. Gentleman was not here for most of the debate. If he had been, he would have heard some of the answers to that.

I am prepared to extend the hand of friendship to the Opposition and to invite them to stand by their principles — that they care about prevention and good health, women's health, more women doctors and the inner cities —and I invite them to vote with us tonight. If they join us in the Lobby, they will show that they know what they want and what we need for primary care, and are willing to pay for better-trained staff in doctors' surgeries, for interpreters and link workers for ethnic minorities, for staff working with the housebound and the disabled and for the health of our own people. If they do not, one can only conclude that they are more interested in playing politics with the sick than in supporting change to improve health. That is our policy. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 318, Noes 220.

Division No. 106] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Butcher, John
Alexander, Richard	Butler, Chris
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Butterfill, John
Allason, Rupert	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Amess, David	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Amos, Alan	Carrington, Matthew
Arbuthnot, James	Cash, William
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Chapman, Sydney
Aspinwall, Jack	Chope, Christopher
Atkins, Robert	Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Atkinson, David	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Baldry, Tony	Conway, Derek
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Batiste, Spencer	Cope, John
Bellingham, Henry	Cormack, Patrick
Bendall, Vivian	Couchman, James
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Cran, James
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Curry, David
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Body, Sir Richard	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Day, Stephen
Boswell, Tim	Devlin, Tim
Bottomley, Peter	Dickens, Geoffrey
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Dorrell, Stephen
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dover, Den
Bowis, John	Dunn, Bob
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes	Durant, Tony
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Evennett, David
Brazier, Julian	Fairbairn, Nicholas
Bright, Graham	Fallon, Michael
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Farr, Sir John
Brooke, Hon Peter	Favell, Tony
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick	Fookes, Miss Janet
Buck, Sir Antony	Forman, Nigel
Budgen, Nicholas	Forth, Eric
Burns, Simon	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Burt, Alistair	Fox, Sir Marcus

Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John

Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot take a point of order now.

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed by paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates &c.), to put at that hour.*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1987-88

Resolved,

That supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,196,459,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray charges for Defence and Civil Services which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1988, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 123.

ESTIMATES 1988-89 (VOTE ON ACCOUNT)

Question put,

That a sum, not exceeding £47,440,004,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for Defence and Civil Services for the year ending on 31st March 1989, as set out in House of Commons Paper Nos. 94, 104 and 105.

The House divided: Ayes 320, Noes 1.

Division No. 107] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip

Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Max Madden, and
Mr. Graham Allen.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing Resolutions by the Chairman of Ways and Means, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Major, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. Peter Brooke and Mr. Peter Lilley.

CONSOLIDATED FUND (No. 2) BILL

Mr. Norman Lamont accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31 March 1988 and 1989: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 60.]

10.28 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have just voted through £47 billion of expenditure, plus a further £1 billion on the Supplementary Estimates. According to Standing Order No. 52, it would be in order for the House to refer the expenditure in the Bill to a Select Committee for further consideration.

This afternoon the Leader of the House said that that would not be possible because the Select Committees had not yet been set up. However, under Standing Order No. 53 there is a deadline of 6 February for committing a Bill to a Select Committee. This would allow this third of public expenditure to be properly scrutinised by the Committee and a report to be made to the House on a substantive motion.

Will you, Mr. Speaker, give us your opinion on whether the Standing Orders could still be so interpreted, so that this vast sum, instead of going through on the nod, is properly scrutinised by the House?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows, because I have told him, that I am bound by Standing Orders Nos.

52 and 53. If this motion is on the Order Paper on any day —and it was on the Order Paper today—I am bound to put the Question at 10 o'clock.

HEALTH AND MEDICINES BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Health and Medicines Bill it is expedient to authorise the following—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in connection with the vesting in the successor company (within the meaning of the Act) of any property, rights and liabilities to which the General Practice Finance Corporation is entitled or subject;

(b) any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in fulfilling a guarantee or indemnity in respect of a loan made in connection with premises used for the provision of general medical services (within the meaning of the National Health Service Act 1977 or the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978);

(c) any sums payable by the Secretary of State by way of compensation under the Act for the removal of a person's name from a list maintained under section 36 of the National Health Service Act 1977 or section 25(2) of the National Health Service Act (Scotland) 1978;

(d) any expenses of a Minister of the Crown attributable to the Act;

(e) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of the Consolidated Fund;

(2) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund. —*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Cinematographs and Cinematograph Films

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I beg to move,

That the draft British Film Fund Agency (Dissolution) Order 1987 which was laid before this House on 27 November, be approved.

The draft order provides for the dissolution of the British Film Fund Agency, once it has completed its outstanding business and, following dissolution, for the application of any surplus moneys of the agency for purposes connected with the British film industry.

The BFFA is the body responsible for distributing the proceeds of the Eady levy on cinema admissions. That levy has already been abolished and the draft order, therefore, is simply a consequential piece of legislation which ties up the resultant loose ends.

As hon. Members will recall, our intention to abolish the levy was announced in the film policy White Paper in 1984, the main aspects of which were subsequently embodied in the Films Act 1985. The purpose of the levy was to recycle money from cinema exhibition to British film production. By 1984 there was almost universal recognition within the industry that it was no longer serving the purpose for which it had been created. It had become a financial burden on what was then a struggling and declining cinema exhibition industry which was providing little money for film makers.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister said that there was universal recognition in the industry that the Eady levy was a burden. Could he say to which section of the industry he was referring? The Association of Cinematographic, Television and Allied Technicians, the National Association of Television, Theatrical and Kinematographic Employees and the Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union, for example, did not hold that view, nor did the Association of Independent Producers. Several individuals of eminence within the industry felt that the Eady fund was playing a useful purpose.

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman will have heard me say that the exhibition industry felt most keenly that the levy had not done its best to encourage the increase in cinema attendance. It felt that the levy was an imposition and involved bureaucracy, and that there were better ways of achieving the objective of the levy. I would not contest the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the trade union views at that time, but I am on fairly safe ground in saying that the levy was universally disliked by the exhibitors.

In view of that, we considered that the levy should be abolished as soon as possible and it was duly terminated from 25 May 1985, almost immediately after the Films Act 1985 came into force. In normal circumstances the levy period would have continued until October 1985.

We recognised, however, that the ending of the levy represented a loss of income to recipients of the funds that it created and, accordingly, provision was made to deal with the impact of abolition on these bodies. Arrangements were made for the National Film and Television School, which received about £500,000 a year from the levy funds to receive £600,000 annually for five years from the cinemas, the BBC and the independent television companies. We also approved special additional support for the British Film Institute production board, from the final, shortened, Eady levy period.

The other film body that received money from levy funds was the National Film Finance Corporation, which received an annual sum from the levy funds of not less than £1·5 million to enable it to support the production of low and medium-budget British films. As hon. Members will recall, the intention to transfer to the private sector the highly valued work of the NFFC was another of the major strands of our film policy announced in the 1984 White Paper. The Films Act 1985 provided for the dissolution of the NFFC, which took place later that year, and for the provision of annual financial assistance of £2 million for five years to its private sector successor, British Screen Finance Limited. With private sector finance in addition to the Government's funding, British Screen has been operating successfully now for nearly two years.

The remaining recipients of Eady levy moneys were the makers of those British films that qualified to receive payment under the Films (Distribution of Levy) Regulations 1982. Each producer received a proportion of the residue of funds available for disbursement in a particular distribution period after the sums to be paid to the NFFC, the BFI and the school had been subtracted. As the order which terminated the levy reduced the final distribution and levy collection periods from the normal 52 weeks to only 32 weeks, we recognised that producers who qualified to receive payment in respect of that period would clearly suffer a loss of income as a result of the timing of abolition. We decided, therefore, that the net assets of the NFFC, after costs of dissolution had been met, should be passed to the BFFA for distribution to those producers, following which the BFFA itself would be dissolved. Accordingly, section 3(3)*(a)* of the Films Act enabled the Secretary of State to transfer the surplus moneys of the NFFC to the BFFA, and section 4 provides for the mechanics of disbursement by the BFFA.

The NFFC was dissolved on 30 December 1985. Winding up the affairs of the corporation raised several difficult legal and financial issues which delayed the transfer of its surplus moneys to the BFFA. However, those moneys are now with the BFFA and have been added to those already held by the agency in respect of the final distribution period. The agency has already made an interim distribution to eligible producers and is likely to have completed its final distribution by the end of January 1988.

During the Report stage and Third Reading of the Films Bill, the former Minister with responsibility for films, my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, announced that it was the Government's intention that payment would have to be taken up within two months of the final distribution being made. Accordingly, I have decided on a cut-off date of 31 March 1988. This will be widely publicised to ensure that those who are eligible to receive payment know that they will forfeit the money if they do not cash their cheques by that date. I do not expect any problems on that front as the deadline for submitting claims for payment has passed and the procedures for verifying claims have been completed.

Once the cut-off date has passed, the BFFA will pass to the Secretary of State any moneys which have not been cashed, together with any of the moneys set aside to meet

the agency's administrative expenses which have not been spent. Section 3 of the 1985 Films Act provides that those moneys shall be used for any purpose connected with the British film industry. At present, we cannot say how large or small that sum may be, and I cannot say how it will be used. I am sure, however, that there will be no shortage of suitors for it.

Finally, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the BFFA members and staff. Under their guidance and management, the agency has performed its functions smoothly and effectively. I am sure that hon. Members will join me in expressing appreciation for their work.

I invite the House to support the order.

10.39 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I willingly join the Minister in congratulating the people at the BFFA on the work that they have been carrying out. I only wish that they could continue to carry out their functions. The list of Government policies that have been imposed against the advice of all sides of the film production industry is now very lengthy.

We are debating in the short time allowed to us virtually the last remaining vestige of any Government support for or intervention in the British film industry. We have already seen the abolition of the quota and the Eady levy. We have also seen the abolition of the Cinematograph Film Council and the replacement of the NFFC with the BSFC and the additional uncertainty about the role of screen entertainment and we have seen the phasing out of capital allowances. The order is virtually the final nail in the coffin.

I want to consider the way in which the Government have abandoned their role as the principal architects or partners in funding or helping to fund what in my view and the view of the Labour party is an essential part of British life—the British film industry.

Successive post-war British Governments have introduced measures to give some support to British feature film production. Those measures are replicated in one form or another in most European countries. However, the Government's 1984 White Paper on the film industry, which preceded the Films Act 1985, presented arguments for the dismantling of the existing support for the industry. We have just heard the Minister repeat that this evening. The White Paper stressed the benefits of a free market policy in the film industry and predicted benefits from aspects of that market that were then being stimulated by technical changes such as videos, cable and direct broadcasting by satellite. The assumption was that the new distributive mechanisms would be beneficial to producers as they would expand the market for films. That was a very attractive hypothesis, but one which I believe confused distribution with exhibition.

In the film industry, distribution is a source of finance for production whereas exhibition is a source of revenue following production. However, the new distributive mechanisms are not yet sources of major production finance and are unlikely to be so for the foreseeable future. They will act as consumers of library material of existing films, thereby getting some additional post-cinema revenue, but that is all. They are unlikely, except in the marginal areas, to make any crucial difference in the provision of feature film finance. Only in the United States are the markets sufficiently developed for pre-sale revenue to be available as a significant element in the production finance.

A year ago the then leading source of film finance in this country, Goldcrest, released three very expensive films — "Absolute Beginners" "Revolution" and "The Mission" two of which received extremely disappointing reviews. The combined effort led to that company virtually withdrawing from production finance for the whole of 1986, with only limited signs of resurgence in 1987. In the same year, 1986, TESE was sold to Cannon which has not been able to live up to its promised commitments to United Kingdom full production finance because it has been plagued by internal financial problems. It has sold the valuable library and there are considerable questions over the future of the studios at Elstree.

It is deeply disturbing that the control of the British film industry has largely passed into foreign hands, particularly given the limited commitment to production shown by the Rank Organisation, the only major British cinema-owning group. That major reduction of finance for film production by leading companies has been mirrored among the smaller backers such as Virgin, United Media and Rediffusion which have also scaled down investments or withdrawn completely from the industry.

The combined effect of the coincidental market shift and Government film policy, has been the virtual collapse of the United Kingdom feature production. Let us consider the years from 1975-85. The average number of feature film starts per year was 49. In 1979, the last year of the Labour Government, the figure rose to the peak of 61. In 1986 that figure had dropped to 37 and this year feature film starts are down to around 10. That is a depressing picture for the British film industry, which has done so well in the past.

The Finance Act (No. 2) 1984 phased out capital allowances. Therefore, by 1985, that Act had stopped the inflow of non-industry money that had become a significant element of the United Kingdom production finance. In 1983 the screen quota was suspended. The Films Act 1985 resulted in the privatisation of NFFC and the Eady levy was phased out. According to the Government's White Paper and the subsequent Bill, those measures were designed to free the industry, but rather than buoying the industry up they have weighed it down. It may be too early to conclude that the present downward trend will continue or will result in a permanent reduction in feature film production, but I am sorry to say that the signs are most discouraging.

I am aware that if my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) manages to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, he will endeavour to contrast our efforts with those of the EC and other countries to support their indigenous film industries. Other major European countries have recognised the link between state intervention in the market place and the health of the national film industry. Britain has not. The recent decision not to participate in a European consortium of cinema and television production has isolated Britain from the rest of our EC partners.

The problem that any United Kingdom Government must tackle is how to encourage original United Kingdom production in the face of the unending flow of feature material from the United States. In addition, there are

[Mr. Roger Stott]

overwhelming cultural reasons for Britain to keep its own voice in the same way that our European partners have kept their voices in their indigenous film industries.

It is ironic that the current recession that the British film industry is suffering has occurred just when film attendance figures are on the upturn. As a result of initiatives and developments in 1985, the British film year, the number of people who went to the cinema increased between 1984 and 1985 by 11·75 million or 20 per cent. The ground was held last year with a further increase of 2·4 million. Therefore, the Government's argument in the White Paper that the decline in cinema-going was irreversible no longer has a basis in truth or logic. When halls have been refurbished, new pricing policies introduced and multi-screen theatres with car parking facilities and restaurants built, people have wanted to see films in the cinema rather than at home on television. Our production companies will not benefit from the renaissance of cinema-going if we cannot maintain the level of British film production.

A well-developed film policy, which of necessity would include an attitude to television — the two are inextricably linked — must consist of financial and cultural elements. There must be adequate provision for training, and adequate system of support for industrial activity and a constructive mechanism for the bridging of training and professional work.

At present we have various parts of that infrastructure in place. However, what is lacking is an overall policy that permits development and expansion — including job creation — without sacrificing the quality that has been associated with British film and television production.

Talent once developed needs nurturing over an extended period. The top foreign film earner in the United States last year was "A Room with a View", which was developed by the National Film Finance Corporation and financed by a consortium which included the NFFC, Goldcrest, and Channel 4. It demonstrates how an integrated infrastructure can work. The NFFC has assisted Merchant Ivory with previous productions, and has also assisted people such as David Puttnam and many other successful British producers. If the BBC and the ITV companies were allowed, as part of the process of admitting independent producers, to invest funds through the British Screen Finance Corporation, which replaces the BFFA, or a central Government-sponsored film agency, such as a British screen authority, in film production, the risk of destabilisation would be avoided and the British film industry would be underpinned to a significant extent.

The whole question of independent access highlights the problem of the policy emanating from the Minister's own Department and from other Departments. It seems to show a classic degree of non-co-operation in the way in which we support our film industry, because Departments as diverse as Trade and Industry, the Office of Arts and Libraries and even the Home Office are all technically concerned with the film industry. I say "concerned", but I do not believe, on the evidence so far, including what we have heard tonight, that they are really concerned.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to a document produced by the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians. It organises within the film and television industry and its members have a great deal of experience. They work in that industry, they are extremely talented and able and they perform a very good job for Britain in the artistic sense. So they can be said to have a vested interest, and I do not doubt that for one moment. What they have been doing for a number of years is putting to Government a creative strategy for the film industry, and what we have seen from the Government is their refusal to consider any of the ACTT's suggestions.

The ACTT has put forward a whole series of suggestions, such as tax concessions, and being able to have 30 per cent. written off during the first year of release, 10 per cent. during the second year of release, 60 per cent. from the commencement of production to first release—a whole range of financial packages which would help stimulate British film production. Unfortunately, the Government have been utterly unreceptive to any of those suggestions.

Government intervention is required if we are to achieve the objectives of an integrated films policy that I have listed. It would not be pouring funds down the drain of an extinct industry to maintain a work force; it would be investing in the expansion of a highly successful one in achievement at all levels of enterprise. The industry is handicapped only by external forces. Such intervention would allow it to reach a plane of stability which it has never reached hitherto. It would enable it to play a most important role as the major proponent of British culture at a mass level, both at home and abroad, with all the export potential that that implies.

My hon. Friends and I and the ACTT are proposing a policy that will dynamically regenerate the British film industry, with enormous benefits not only to the workers in the industry, but to the viewing public as a whole, to the Government and to the country, increasing revenues both at home and abroad, and increasing Britain's status throughout the world.

The British film industry has huge potential. The men and women involved have a highly developed expertise and a worldwide reputation for technical excellence. What we do not have is a Government who are prepared to assist it, and that is a profound disappointment to me and my hon. Friends.

10.55 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which I chair, has drawn the attention of the House to the instrument. I should like to refer to the instrument itself and its merits, and I should be grateful if the Minister would answer my questions when he winds up the debate.

He will appreciate that the Joint Committee does not consider the merits of an instrument, but considers only the powers that the Minister has used.

The House will be interested to know that this is the second order because rather a mess was made of the original order. In our report to the House we say that the current draft contains amendments to articles 1 and 5, to take account of points raised by the Joint Committee on the earlier draft. The date when article 1 came into force was less than clear. Article 5, covering the powers of the Secretary of State in applying the residual moneys, was couched in such a way that it might be thought that the Minister might be able to dispose of the moneys in connection with the British film industry, whereas the legislation requires him to do so. Those points were

recognised and a fresh draft laid. The Joint Committee is grateful to the Minister for taking that action, but it was necessary to do so.

The Minister has close at hand a former member of the Joint Committee, the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker), who appreciates its work and the fact that it is not exactly the most glamorous part of the activities of the House of Commons, but that it is necessary. I hope that the Minister can give us all an assurance that civil servants in his Department will draft instruments in future with more care than in the past.

I should like to refer to the merits of the instruments, but not in the context of the Committee's report. I am sure that the Committee would not want me to give other than my own views about the merits.

It is sad that the order is being presented. It concerns the last vestige of state intervention in the British film industry, which goes back to the 1920s and 1930s. The reason why it goes back that length of time is that the idea of the market place does not work. The biggest market place is the United States. Not surprisingly, the United States film industry dominates that market and gives it a secure home base from which to export to other countries, such as the United Kingdom.

The Interim Action Committee said in 1979:

"What should be the object of government policy for films? To stimulate an industry for the normal economic reasons — to create employment, encourage productive investment and increase exports? Or to aid an art form? Or to encourage the making of films which reflect British life? We believe that all three objects are valid. We also believe that the barriers between industry and art in relation to film are largely artificial and subjective, and that government policy should cater for films as a whole."

That committee is saying that it should be regarded as an industry for employment and as one of the major mass art forms that our civilisation has achieved.

In every case it has been recognised over the years that Government intervention, through assistance of one form or another, has been necessary to offset the enormous power of the United States industry, which can invest more in production values and in finding the elusive formula that produces feature film success, as well as to counter the power of the duopoly in the United Kingdom, which the Minister did not mention. The duopoly owns the studios and major exhibition circuits. Rank and Cannon —formerly Thorn EMI—have such commanding power in the industry that if they refuse to show a film it cannot possibly obtain even its costs of production in the United Kingdom. That is why, from the 1930s onwards, it has always been felt that the Government should have some sort of power.

It is sad that the Minister should place such weight on exhibitors only. Exhibitors need the production of films, and the Eady levy was designed to remove some of the revenue from exhibitors, to ensure that there was a continuous production of indigenous British films. The removal of the Eady levy places that in great peril.

The Government are concerned about violence in society, but the private sector will finance films of sex and violence. It will not so easily finance films that reflect the aspirations, the cultural advantages and the development of ordinary people. It sounds rather highbrow, but I am talking about the way of life of our nation. Such films are less likely to meet with favour from the private sector, which can make a fast buck out of "The Lusty Vicar" and the soft — increasingly hard — porn films that it has financed in large numbers in the past few years.

The policies that the Government have foisted on the industry have been shown in what has happened to Pinewood Studios, for instance. Until recently that was a proper studio, employing 500 people full time and able to sell its services to the rest of the world. It sold them to the United States, for example, for the production of all the Superman films but the last one, which was partly produced at Elstree. The Bond films, too, were made there. The studio provided standards of excellence and production that were unequalled anywhere in the world. Pinewood Studios is now a four-walls operation, in which a handful of people are employed. That means that the apprenticeship system, in which people learnt their craft so as to provide those standards of excellence, has been eroded at one fell swoop because of the uncertainty engendered by Government policies.

It is ironic that a visit by the Parliamentary Labour party films industry study group in 1983 received assurances from Pinewood management about providing an employed service, which film producers found of advantage because that employed staff represented the level of crafsmanship that had gained an enviable reputation throughout the world. The National Film Finance Corporation provided finance for films that might otherwise have been lost. They included "Gregory's Girl", a runaway financial success, produced for £350,000, about a local lad in a modern town in Scotland going to a local comprehensive school. What sort of private sector entrepreneur would respond if presented with that sort of script? He or she would reject it out of hand, but the film was an enormous success. It made a great deal of money and brought credit to British film producers and the British film production industry.

The National Film Finance Corporation is now defunct, as the Minister correctly said. The order winds up its residues. However, it produced controversial films such as "Britannia Hospital", "Local Hero", "Babylon" and a whole range of films, including "The Europeans", which was a cultural landmark. Although it did not receive big audiences, it was still an important production. All that has gone.

The Eady levy was successful—not completely, but to some extent—in eradicating the problems that genuine film producers who wanted to make films about our way of life faced in obtaining money so to do. The "Hot Wheels" syndrome was eradicated by the publication of the Eady levy returns when my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was at the Department of Trade and Industry. That meant that producers could no longer add rather mediocre shorts to successful feature films and buy up the Eady returns in advance.

That was the "Hot Wheels" syndrome. I do not have time to go into the details, but "Hot Wheels" was a modest production about skateboards and it earned a lot of money because it was coupled with a good feature film. Publishing the returns and putting an upper limit on the amount of Eady money that could be earned on a film helped to eradicate some of the problems.

The Minister says that he will spend any residual amounts on purposes connected with the British film industry. Will he spell out in a little more detail what that means? He may have some money in his hand, but if, because of his policies, he were to launch a gigantic wake

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

for the British film industry, that would be purposes connected with the film industry. I hope that he has the serious intention of helping British film producers and that he will provide seed money for scripts. Perhaps he could help the National Film School or do something like that. I am sure that he will say something about what the money should be used for.

This is a sad debate, but I am sure that the British film industry has a residual will to survive. It is an important mass art form, both in its theatrical form and in satisfying the voracious appetite of television. After the next general election the Labour Government will have a policy to ensure that British films about our people will continue to be made.

11.7 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I shall not detain the House because many of the observations that I would have made have been forcefully made by other Opposition Members. It cannot be contentious that the British Film Fund Agency falls to be dissolved by this order, because that is a necessary consequence of the abolition in 1985 of the Eady levy. In the last few minutes that levy has enjoyed some support, but prior to its abolition it is fair to say that, at least in some quarters, it had become discredited. Criticisms had been advanced against it that frequently most money went to films that already had substantial earnings and that frequently money went to foreign companies that qualified by using British casts, crews and facilities.

It is contentious that nothing effective has been put in place of the Eady levy which in 1983-84 raised about £4·6 million. On the figures of the Department of Trade and Industry, investment in the United Kingdom's film industry fell by about 20 per cent. between 1985 and 1986. It is no understatement to say that now the United Kingdom film industry is in a critical condition. It is an important industry that employs over 20,000 people, and it contributes substantially to export earnings. Perhaps more than that, it plays a central role in our cultural life, both popular and, perhaps, exclusive. It is an important measure of how we and our society are seen abroad. In recent years the successes of British films and British film makers, of whom Mr. Bill Forsyth is but one, are eloquent testimony to that.

The support that the Government presently offer to the British film industry is poor in comparison, for example, with France where the annual amount is £30 million, Italy where it is £26 million, and Canada where it is £16 million. There is an urgent need for the Government to take action to preserve the United Kingdom industry. Any funds that may be realised as a result of the effects of article 5 of the order will hardly be sufficient for that purpose.

A number of measures might be considered. First, there should certainly be stronger and effective action against piracy. Secondly, further consideration sho:uld be given to a levy on blank video tapes, the proceeds of which could be used to assist our film industry. Perhaps more substantial and more radical, it is time for a thorough rethink on the nature of Government support for the United Kingdom's film industry. If those or similar measures are not swiftly taken, irreparable damage may be done. The Government have an obligation to act now, before it is too late.

11.9 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): When the Films Bill was being debated in 1985, some hon. Members warned the Government of the likely consequences of the abolition of the Eady levy and the abandonment of any realistic support for the production of British films. Sadly, those warnings are now being proved correct. The Minister, in his opening of the brief debate, emphasised that the exhibitors were in favour of the abolition of the Eady levy. They would have been, as it was a levy on their takings. During the passage of the Films Bill, the entire production section of the industry — not just the trade unions, but producers and managers—banded together and, in a unique statement, condemned the Government for their proposals to withdraw all support for the production of film. It is sad that the predictions made at the time are now beginning to come true.

The year 1986 was one of the worst ever for British film production. According to *Screen International*, only 37 theatrical features were made in 1986, compared with 55 in 1985 and an average of 48 over the past decade. There is only a slight improvement in 1987. The seed money generated by the activities of the various organisations charged with distributing the Eady levy, which acted as a catalyst for private enterprise to seize the initiative and take off on production, is now no longer there.

It behoves the Government, now that we are in the closing stages of their support for British films, to start thinking about what will be put in its place. If nothing is put in its place and the Government rely entirely on the private sector, which seems to be their intention, I do not see any future renaissance for the production of British films, no matter how much talent, enthusiasm and desire for production may exist.

The old nitrate film stock, which exists at the moment, may not exist for very much longer. Before 1952 much film was made on nitrate stock, which deteriorates. If the film is not copied on to safety stock, it will be gone for ever. Much of our history and heritage is contained on film taken before 1952, which has not yet been copied on to safety stock from nitrate. During the passage of the Films Bill I asked the Government to take this problem seriously and to establish a scheme of support to save the film on nitrate, but they refused to take up that issue.

The Nitrate Project 2000 has now been established, on a cross-industry basis, which is making the Government and the private sector aware that only 13 years are left in which to save the existing deteriorating and highly unstable nitrate stock. The cost of saving it will be about £13 million —£1 million a year — and in terms of Government expenditure that is not such a great deal. That expenditure would save much of our heritage, history and tradition. It would save much of the wealth of the early years of British film making.

I hope that the Government will take this initiative on board. I hope also that they will respond positively to the proposals that are being made by those who are involved in the Nitrate Project 2000. If the Government cannot see a way of using any of the residue of the Eady levy for such a purpose, they might consider other possibilities. For example, they could use a greater proportion of the national heritage memorial fund than hitherto to support the saving of nitrate stock. The Minister might persuade his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to

bring forward proposals in the Budget for tax deductibility for support for the saving of nitrate film stock. There are mechanisms available to the Government, which I hope that they will use, to save that which is part of our heritage.

If, by introducing this measure, the Government cannot support the future of the British film industry, and it would seem that they do not want to do so, perhaps they can play some part in saving its past.

11.16 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I had not intended to intervene in the debate this evening. However, having been a member of the Committee that considered the Films Bill 1985, and having heard certain comments made this evening, I wish to make a contribution slightly longer than you would tolerate in the form of an intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker.

When we discussed these matters in Committee in 1985, it was clear that exhibitors wanted the Eady levy abolished. As my hon. Friend the Minister has said, from the other side of the Chamber we hear the cry, "They would, wouldn't they?" It was the small, independent exhibitors, not those who have been referred to as the big two this evening, who wanted the levy to be abolished. That was their wish because it was placing a tremendous burden upon their margins.

Had any Opposition Members been present late at night a couple of weeks ago—they with their burning interest in the industry — they would have heard a discourse between my hon. Friend the Minister and myself on film exhibition. They would have heard my hon. Friend commit himself and his Department to a review of the barring contract. They would have heard him say also that by the end of January the matter would be resolved, with the result that many more small, independent cinemas would be able to show many more films. It is the outlet for such films—small films that used to be supported by a subsidy—that is so important. It is that which has been denied to them.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: I trust that the hon. Gentleman will make his own speech. I shall not give way. I have only a little more to say.

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mr. Gale: No, I shall not give way. I am sure that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) will wish to make his own speech.

I wish to develop my argument slightly further—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central finds it unpalatable. I thought that he might.

Mr. Fisher: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: No, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not giving way. I hope that I have made that clear.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) has made it clear that he is not giving way to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher).

Mr. Gale: When we discussed these matters in considering the Films Bill 1985, some of us, including my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and I, suggested that one possibility might be a levy imposed on the films shown on television. We felt strongly that although the Eady levy was placing an intolerable burden upon the independent exhibitor, it was raising only little money. The hon. Member for Rugby (Mr. Stott) has referred to the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians. I am glad that he did so. I believe that I am the only paid-up member of the ACTT in the Chamber this evening. I do not recall the ACTT making any proposals to abolish the restrictive union practices that destroyed the British film industry. Not only that, but I do not recall the ACTT lending its weight to our suggestion that there should be a levy on films shown on television, the money from which would go to independent production. The reason is that the ACTT has a vested interest in in-house productions made by the major television companies.

Some common sense had been spoken on both sides of the House this evening. However, I suggest that any pretence that the Eady levy was making any realistic contribution to film production in this country when we decided to abolish it, or that it was doing the film distribution industry, in terms of the independents, any good, is sheer humbug.

11.20 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The House would have been spared humbug in tonight's debate, had it not been for the speech that we have just heard. I, too, was a member of the Standing Committee in 1985, and I do not recall—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has the Floor.

Mr. Clarke: You are absolutely right, Madam Deputy Speaker. If this were a cinema, people would be stamping their feet because of the problems with the sound quality.

I, too, was a member of that Standing Committee, and I do not recall — even from his hon. Friends — of the sort that the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) has just made. Nor, when we think of the real crisis in the British film industry, and when we hear of criticisms from producers such as David Puttnam, can we put our hands on our hearts and say—for instance—that when he fled to America he blamed the trade unions. He did not: he blamed the Government. He said that they were not providing the financial incentives, and he was right. The order that we are debating tonight underlines that view.

Perhaps I should have declared an interest at the start of my comments. I am an unpaid governor of the British Film Institute, and for many years I was an assistant director of the Scottish Film Council — although, in truth, I was not paid all that much more there! Tonight, I should like to say a word or two about some of the points made by my hon. Friends.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) made an excellent speech, as did my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury also served on the Standing Committee.

I should like to take up two points. One is the issue of training, which I think is crucial. Secondly, the Government have no strategy for the British film industry.

[Mr. Clarke]

Because of that we are facing many problems, not least in Scotland. Some of those were mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell).

This debate is important, and it is particularly important at the present time, when the Scottish Office is apparently considering seriously the amalgamation of the Scottish Arts Council and the Scottish Film Council. I know—and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) will agree—that very few people in Scotland consider that there is any merit in that proposal. I am glad that the Minister of State, Scottish Office is present, and I hope that he will convey my views to his ministerial colleague the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). The Scottish Film Council would be smothered, and would not be free, for example, to fight for proper training within Scotland.

As this instrument refers to the right of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to deal with surplus funds, we should remind the Government that some of those surplus funds could reasonably be spent on training, and might be invested in the National Film and Television School. In spending the money in that way, the Secretary of State might remember — let me put it gently but firmly—the discrimination against Scottish students that is taking place at present. That is not because the National Film and Television Council wishes it, but because honours graduates in the United Kingdom outside Scotland are able to complete their studies after three years. However, the Scottish course lasts for four years. Scottish students are thereby penalised during the first year of their studies at the National Film and Television School. For all students, their last two years at the school are considered to be part of the postgraduate course. Why should Scottish students be discriminated against?

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) referred to Bill Forsyth. Ministers and Conservative Members pay tribute, quite rightly, from time to time to "Gregory's Girl", "Comfort and Joy" and "That Sinking Feeling" among other films from Scotland. I pay tribute to Mike Alexander and Charles Gormley who produced "Heavenly Pursuits", despite the fact that there is discrimination against Scottish students. We ought to fight so that the potential of every young man and young woman throughout the United Kingdom can be realised. There might be a young man or a young girl in Benbecula, Glasgow, Edinburgh or Coatbridge who has the same potential as those successful film-makers. We have no right to stand in their way. Unhappily, this Government's policy is reflected in the decisions of the Scottish Education Department. It has the discretion to contribute to the first year of study but it has refused to use its powers to do so.

I initiated an Adjournment debate on the film industry on 25 May 1984. The present Secretary of State for Education and Science used words that are now part of the mythology that is connected with the film industry. He said:

"It is not too much of an exaggeration to describe it as a renaissance."—[*Official Report*, 25 May 1984; Vol. 60, c. 1409.]

We have heard of the so-called renaissance of the British film industry, but what is the truth of the matter? The truth is that after the passing of the 1985 Act the Government's policy has been absolutely disastrous. My hon. Friends have reminded the House of what happened to Goldcrest and Pinewood Studios after the abolition of the Eady levy.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): How many cinemas were there then? How many are there now?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member has something to say he should rise and seek to intervene.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, especially as the hon. Member appeared to be making a valid point. He is not always so modest. He referred quite rightly to the decline in cinema audiences. There has recently been a small increase, but since the war there has been a dramatic reduction in cinema audiences.

In Committee we argued that the principle of the Eady levy was right, but many hon. Members would have no objection to change. The levy was introduced to encourage those who enjoy films to make a contribution to the producers that they could make even better films. If that principle were to be applied to today's use of films, television would make a sizeable contribution. We should also consider the impact of video films. Very few newspapers now have a film column, but all of them have a video column. Those who are using video films should be asked to make a contribution to future investment and future productivity.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) forgot to remind the House that his hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Mr. Gorst) persuaded the Committee to accept the introduction of such a levy.

Mr. Hanley *indicated assent*——

Mr. Clarke: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees. The Committee agreed, but when it came before the House on Report the Government used their majority to vote down the logic of that argument.

The truth is that, far from the expanding film industry that the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) had promised the House, we are witnessing an unnecessary decline. That decline is tragic and worrying because the fall in investment, and in the commitment to free enterprise in the film industry — even when it is not succeeding — betrays the tremendous talent and ability that we have in Great Britain among producers, those who work the cameras and actors and actresses.

That is a tragedy and the British people will not let the great variety of talent in our film industry be squandered. In the meantime however, that talent is being betrayed by a Government whose idealism and commitment to the free market does not reflect that talent. That is a betrayal of the British film industry.

11.30 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): As my hon. Friends have eloquently said, this is a black Monday for the British film industry. In winding up the British Film Fund Agency, we are leaving our film production industry without any form of Government support. The House will understand that the Minister has not held his responsibilities for very long, but the House will have been amazed and depressed by the complacency with which he introduced the order and the lack of historical perspective in which he put it. He did not seem to understand the significance of what we are deciding. He did not seem to understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) made clear in his trenchant speech—I hope

that the Minister listened to him—that this was the last of the stripping away of all Government support. The quota has gone, the Eady levy has gone, the capital allowances have gone and all tax incentives have gone. They have all finished and our British film industry is left with absolutely no support.

Our quarrel is not with the removal of all those specific forms of assistance. I have some sympathy with the comments of the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)—and my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) who said that there were imperfections with the Eady levy. I suspect—no, I am certain—that I am the only hon. Member to have been a beneficiary of the Eady levy. I know very well that the films with which I was able to benefit were possibly not as distinguished artistically, or in any other way, as some of the films that have benefited from the levy. The "Hot Wheels" system, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South referred, saved some small producers, such as myself, and allowed us to go on to make other films. It was by no means a perfect system. We recognise that, and my hon. Friend with his great experience and knowledge of the industry, put that into a clear perspective.

If we are withdrawing all forms of support, it is important that there is some other way in which the country recognises the importance of the industry and gives it some financial assistance. However, the Government are neglecting it because of an ideological commitment and determination to the concept of the free market. In this industry, in which our small production base must compete with the United States' north American production base, there is no free and equal market.

The Minister told the House that the only support that the Government now give the industry is £1·5 million to British Screen and support through his right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts for the excellent National Film School. It is not surprising that, with that level of support, and contrary to what my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South suggested, investment is declining catastrophically. Whereas production was held at about £300 million in 1985 and 1986, it looks likely to be down to only £115 million this year.

The decline is accelerated by the Government's fiscal policies. Indeed, they have perhaps been the crucial element in the devastation of our industry. If the Minister can understand only one thing as a result of this debate, it should be the significance of the Chancellor's fiscal policies and their destructive effect on the British film industry through withdrawal of capital allowances, his exchange rate policy and through withholding tax.

The Finance Act 1984 ended 100 per cent. capital allowances. We went to a cost recovery system, which made it possible to recover only 75 per cent. of the cost of a film over five years. The Minister may maintain that that does not make any difference because the receipts from films usually come in slowly. He should understand that "A Room with a View" grossed £70 million in the first six months. He may say that that proves that it is possible to recover the money quickly, but if he takes the trouble to ask British Screen, he will understand that it was an equity investor in "A Room with a View" and was not paid for two years.

The abandonment of capital allowances has made an enormous difference to investors and producers. The Chancellor has thus done a disservice to the industry, but the effects of that are not perhaps as great as those resulting from the imposition, from 1 May 1987, of witholding tax. There was no consultation with the industry and there is confusion about how it will work. In the first six months of operation, it is clear that film companies are not coming here because of uncertainty about our Inland Revenue. It is clear that it is not worth their while coming here. It is not worth important cameramen, producers, directors and actors risking battling with and perhaps falling foul of the Inland Revenue. That process is hardly helped by the Chancellor's new foreign entertainers unit of the Inland Revenue not understanding what it is doing or, if it does understand, applying the rules extremely harshly. There is no fiscal uniformity with other territories. We have a far harsher regime than any other territory.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Now that he is talking about other territories, the hon. Gentleman is going very wide of the order. Perhaps he will bring his remarks back to the subject of the debate.

Mr. Fisher: I apologise. I was trying to impress on the Minister the importance of his understanding that some form of assistance is needed. If we persuade him of that, he may reconsider the order.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan said, other territories provide support such as the Minister is withdrawing by winding up the BFFA. It is possible to amortise a film by 70 per cent. in one year in France; by 90 per cent. in the first year and to write off from the second year on in West Germany and by 100 per cent. in the first year in southern Ireland. We could continue through Europe. Every other country has fiscal incentives to write off losses. We simply do not have the facility.

The alternative to fiscal assistance is direct investment, but the United Kingdom is withdrawing that form of support, too, and replacing it with nothing, thus leaving us disadvantaged. We put £1·5 million into British Screen. Australia invests more than £18 million, Canada more than £17 million and West Germany £15·7 million a year. Spain, in an interesting combination of fiscal and direct investment at both regional and national levels, invests well over £20 million a year to the benefit of its industry. France, again in a curious combination of incentives, guarantees and deductions, invests more than £70 million a year. I ask the House to contrast that with our £1·5 million a year, at a time when audiences are increasing and the industry has the skills and the production expertise.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North sought credit and referred to his recent Adjournment debate. I pay tribute to him for his skill in raising the debate on barring. But he should understand that the Minister is not yet following up the recommendations of the report; I wish he were. The letter makes it clear that submissions are requested between now and the end of January and I hope that at that stage the hon. Gentleman will give full backing to the ending of the barring system because the whole industry would benefit. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that that is not what the Minister is saying; the Minister is being indecisive. I hope that, together, the hon. Gentleman and I can encourage the Minister to press on with that.

We are not meeting to bury the BFFA; we are here to bury the British film industry, which is a far more serious matter. The collapse from £300 million a year production

[Mr. Fisher]

to £115 million in the first year of the new regime is a disaster. Add to that the exchange rate between the dollar and the pound, and withholding tax and we are seeing the fast decline, indeed death, of our film industry.

The Minister is new. He will learn. I urge him to read the BFTPA's report on fiscal incentives, to talk to independent producers, not just in the exhibition industry, but throughout the industry, and to listen to what they say about the realities of tax incentives, withholding tax and the lack of Government support. If he listens and learns, he may join us in trying to persuade the Chancellor of the Exchequer that his obsession with fiscal neutrality and uniformity will be the death of the industry. If he does not persuade the Chancellor, the industry will die.

11.43 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): The Minister is a little anxious, but I assure him that I shall not take long. I apologise for having spoken in the Chamber twice today, but I feel that I must speak on this subject. I know that I am getting on in years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] —but I have been interested in the silver screen since I was a lad and that interest has continued year on year.

This evening's story has been about what is happening to the British film industry. It is tragic, bearing in mind our genuine interest in the industry, and I speak, not merely more for myself, but for other hon. Members. The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) has appeared on the silver screen. His father made a marvellous contribution to the British film industry, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), who usually sits at the back of the Chamber making a bit of noise sometimes.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman should not forget my mother.

Mr. Haynes: I must not forget the hon. Gentleman's mother. In this speech I shall not mention the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I often talk to my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East, because many of his films appear on Channel 4. That was the real British film industry, but over the years it has deteriorated. It is tragic. I wish that I had some power to do something about it, because I am very worried about what is happening.

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who is also interested in the British film industry, and I joined my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) in the parliamentary film group. We visited many studios and met many actors, and we have seen the studios fall by the wayside because the industry has been run down. A few years ago we visited Pinewood and met Albert Broccoli, who produces the "007" films. He said, "I will play my part in saving the British film industry", and he has kept his word. Had it not been for him, Pinewood would have closed by now.

I cannot understand why the Government have not grasped the nettle. They know that the industry is being run down and that it will soon be producing only B films. Following that will be the complete closure of the British film industry if we are not careful.

Britain produces the finest actors in the world——

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): In here.

Mr. Haynes: My hon. Friend is right, but we are losing those actors to America. Training in the industry is also falling by the wayside. The rundown in the film industry means that training too must go. They go together. With the little training that will be available, all that we will be doing is producing actors and technicians for the Yanks. In the coal industry, where I worked for many years, we trained electricians and fitters who flitted over to private industry after public industry had paid for all their training. The same will happen in films.

In a previous debate on films I named the actors who had left our shores for America and filled their pockets with gold over there, at the expense of British films. However, many British actors stood by the British film industry and made some marvellous films. I want to see the day when the British film industry does that again.

The industry is running down and cinemas have closed right, left and centre across the whole country, but slowly and surely they are re-opening. We must give them support. They must come back. We need the film industry to grow back to what it was. It must grow so that it can provide more of the kind of entertainment that I have enjoyed for many years, especially when I was a young lad.

11.50 pm

Mr. Butcher: With the leave of the House I will reply to this debate.

There is no lack of unanimity in the Chamber tonight that we all want to see a healthy British film industry and a healthy British production side to that industry. I very much enjoyed the tour d'horizon of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher). However, he went a little too far when he implied that the ending of a defunct levy through the BFFA would mark, to paraphrase the hon. Gentleman's comments, the death knell of the British film industry. That is surely not the conclusion to which the hon. Gentleman wanted to lead us when he began his speech. Perhaps we should understand that the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric got the better of him and that the excellent analysis in the earlier parts of his comments did not lead to an appropriate conclusion when he went over the top in the way that he did.

The abolition of the Eady levy can be used to prove anything. If one were to take an exclusive set of phenomena and apply a particular conclusion to them one could state that while the Eady levy was applied, attendances went down, and since it has been abolished attendances have been moving upwards. I do not claim that the trend occurred simply because the levy was or was not there. However, Opposition Members have over-played the levy's role. I want to show, in the few moments available to me, that not only have they over-played the levy's role, but that there were a number of major errors in fact when they implied that there was no help for the industry in training—and that is a very important issue —or by way of production support, whether one is talking about the so-called artistic section of the industry or that part of the industry referred to with a capital "I". The dichotomy was debated by Michael Winner recently as the debate between the "gentlemen and the players".

For the record I should state that my Department gives support for the screen film industry through British Screen Finance Limited by providing, as was accurately reported by Opposition Members, an annual grant of £1·5 million for five years for the production of medium and low budget films, and a further sum of £500,000 each year for

project development work and the production of short films. With that financial support, British Screen has been able to invest in 18 feature films, 13 short films and support 19 applications for project development assistance in less than two years. I have a selection of the films so supported and I am bound to say that they reflect a variety and quality that anyone interested in the cinema would find wholly commendable.

The Government also provide assistance to support the artistic and cultural aspects of films. My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts who has been in his place throughout the debate has recently announced a three-year programme of arts funding which will result in increases of about 50 per cent. for the National Film and Television School over three years — the sums being £1·13 million rising to £1·7 million, an increase of nearly 20 per cent. for the BFI over the same period, rising from £10·03 million to £12 million.

I cannot accept that the commercial film industry needs wholesale subsidy in spite of a fall in exports for British films from £260 million in 1985 to £209 million in 1986. Our overall export performance in films has remained strong in recent years. That is primarily due to the widely acknowledged — it is recognised on both sides of the House — excellence of our film-making talent coupled with the industry's continued ability to make films that sell overseas. The English language confers a major advantage to British film-makers in the important North American market.

I have had discussions with most parts of the film industry—the distributors, exhibitors, producers, studios or whatever — and I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting those various representatives. It is to the credit of all of them that they have focused on the production question. A number of common themes emerged when representations were made to me. Let me say straightaway that even without the hon. Gentleman's seminar——

Mr. Stott: Which one?

Mr. Butcher: I am referring to the seminar given by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. I shall come to the seminar of the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), which was equally enjoyable, in a moment.

I accept that the question of the withholding tax does cause a difficulty. Without prejudging the issue, that will be one of the items of discussion that my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts and will have with our right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

I understand that the difficulty is that agents on the east and west coasts of the United States may be tempted to say to some of their leading artists that they should not go to the United Kingdom because they may be liable to a taxation rate of up to 60 per cent. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central and I know that the withholding tax is levied at the rate of about 27 per cent. When difficulties arise or clarification is required, a unit, set up within the Inland Revenue, does its best to deal with anomalies or any lack of certitude that may cause visiting American artists reason to feel uncomfortable or nervous.

I wish to satisfy myself that the current system is working correctly. In my discussions at the Treasury I will also seek ways to re-introduce some incentives for the British production industry. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central will understand that, tonight, I cannot debate with him what my comments may be in any subsequent conversations. We are agreed that the fall in production is significant. We are agreed to try to find ways to encourage the reversal of that trend. However, I believe that the hon. Gentleman and start from different philosophical and practical premises. I am not prepared to go to see my right hon. Friend at the Treasury and say that we want to introduce industry-specific schemes. That has not been the thrust of my right hon. Friend's policies in the past few years. I have no intention to try to persuade my right hon. Friend to reverse that policy trend. In the past, industry-specific schemes, no matter what the industry, have tended to feed on themselves and produce more and more anomalies.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister confirm that all the people he has spoken to on the production side of the industry have told him that every other country in Europe has industry-specific tax incentive schemes and that the Government are leaving our industry at a fiscal disadvantage compared with other territories?

Mr. Butcher: In answer to the exact terms of the hon. Gentleman's question I cannot confirm that they said that every other European country operates positive discrimination, that is industry-specific. I can confirm that there is a great deal of concern about the level of production. However, the analysis of cause and effect is something that we could debate for a long time.

For example, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the movement of currency. If, for example, I am a big American production company and I am looking at the blandishments which are now coming in from places like Mexico, Spain, Canada and every state in the United States, all shopping for film production work, offering incentives and so on, could the hon. Gentleman tell me —and I am not inviting him to intervene—for example, the impact of the movement in the dollar against the pound, compared with, say, the removal of capital allowances, when one is looking at a location on which one wishes to produce a major film? It is excruciatingly difficult to extract from all the representations made to me those which are, firstly, within my power to do something about and which are significant and, secondly, those which are not. I suspect that anyone standing at this Dispatch Box tonight, or the previous films Ministers, will have gone through exactly those same dilemmas.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted Business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft British Film Fund Agency (Dissolution) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 27th November, be approved.

Offshore Fabrication Industry (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

12 midnight

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am pleased to have an opportunity to bring to the Floor of the House the important question of the crisis facing the North sea oil construction industry in Scotland.

It would be easy merely to criticise the Government's industrial record in Scotland, which is appalling and shows little sign of improving. It would also be easy in this type of debate to concentrate on the construction yard in my own constituency, RGC Offshore in Methil. But I should like to widen the debate and talk about the crisis facing the whole industry in Scotland. That embraces seven major construction yards, which are facing immense difficulties. They are Highlands Fabricators, Kestrel Marine, Lewis Offshore, McDermotts, RGC, Scott Lithgow and UIE Scotland.

It is often said that winning oil from the North sea is very difficult in such a hostile environment, but increasingly in Scotland winning work related to North sea activity is also becoming very difficult in the kind of hostile environment that the Government are creating. Before getting into the substance of the debate, I should like just for a moment, to take hon. Members about 400 miles from here to my constituency on the shores of the Firth of Forth, where, in Methil, we have a major construction yard.

Just to give hon. Members some indication of the type of project that we are talking about, let me give the dimensions of the order currently being constructed in that yard. It is a £52 million contract for the fabrication of a jacket for the Tern oilfield which has been placed by Shell and Esso. To illustrate the scale of such ventures, this jacket will weigh 21,500 tonnes, it will be 587 ft high, its base will measure 328 ft by 262 ft and at the top it will be 239 ft by 95 ft. I say that by way of introduction, because we are not talking about small-scale developments but about significant steel structures.

The context for what I will say next is that, at present, the structure dominates the skyline, and it is hoped that it will be floated out in April 1988. The problem is that in the run-up to Christmas people in this area of high unemployment look at the yard, see the structure and think that it may be the last fabrication order to be floated out, after a distinguished 10-year period.

That brings me to the crisis that grips the North sea offshore construction industry. The crisis is real and immediate and could lead next year to the collapse of one of the most efficient and productive areas of North sea-related activity. I will argue that the activities of the Department of Energy and of the Scottish Office have been characterised by neglect, complacency and a lack of interest, leading to the squandering of enormous potential for creating jobs and consolidating the long-term future of the offshore construction industry.

Let me start by revealing to the House that just two years ago, those seven construction yards employed nearly 12,000 people. We now find that after April 1988 when most of the current orders will be floated out, employment could be less than 1,000. By any standards, that is a dramatic reduction in manpower.

That is complemented, and, indeed, caused by a slump in investment. If we look at the investment in what we call top sides and jackets, we see that a total UK share of £1,077 million in 1984 slumpd to £48[illegible] million in 1986. Indeed, the UK Module Contractors Association Ltd. predicts that capacity utilisation for the industry could be less than 20 per cent. in 1988, with the prospect of those yards being unable to respond to the upturn in North sea activity that is expected in the early 1990s.

The overall picture is one of gloom and despondency, and great regret that such an industry, still in its infancy, has been ignored so much by the Government that we are talking about a terminal decline in construction capacity rather than looking forward to the next 20 or 30 years when billions of tonnes of oil will come out of the North sea.

More important, the impact will be devastating in three areas. The first is the jobs and skills of the men who produce such sophisticated structures. Secondly, local communities will be devastated. Those yards are mainly located in areas of high, significant and continuing unemployment. But probably more important for the future is the devastating impact on the strategic capacity of the offshore construction industry to deal with demand if an upturn in North sea activity is translated into orders.

If that is not bad enough, I am greatly concerned that the Government have been repeatedly warned about the impending crisis. The third report from the Select Committee on Energy, Session 1986-87, entitled, "The Effect of Oil and Gas Prices on Activity in the North Sea", was a major report which included representations from the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association Ltd., the United Kingdom Module Contractors Association Ltd., major oil companies, such as British Petroleum and Shell, the Scottish Trades Union Congress, the Trades Union Congress and the Scottish Development Agency. They all had one compelling message, which was to highlight the development gap in the years 1986, 1987 and through to 1988. They also asked the Government to take action to avoid the crisis, which, sad to say, we are now experiencing.

The collapse in the oil price has merely worsened an already difficult situation. It would be both unreasonable and unfair for the Government to respond by saying that everything could be laid at the door of the market place and the resultant oil price collapse. Despite all that, the Government have been complacent and irresponsible in refusing to take any action that would stabilise the situation in the short term and help build medium and long-term prospects.

In blaming the Government, I should like to mention some factors. First, the Treasury has maximised royalties, petroleum revenue tax and corporation tax at the expense of any serious priority being given to long-term industrial development. Secondly, the Government have relied entirely on the price of oil to sustain development. When the oil price collapsed, the Government had nothing to fall back on. Thirdly, they have ignored advice on the strategic necessity of having an efficient construction industry with enough capacity to respond to changing demands.

Fourthly, the Government's obsession with free market economics has meant that we have no effective energy policy, unlike most of our competitors who see energy as an important resource to be used for long-term industrial development. We have used oil for short-term financial

expediency. Few countries, developed or undeveloped, have such contempt for natural resources and the potential that they offer for jobs and investment.

Fifthly, the Government have argued in the past that overcapacity in the offshore industry was the problem. That problem could reasonably be dealt with. We are now, however, moving towards no capacity, with skills, commitment and knowledge all being lost. That is a tragedy for the communities that I have mentioned and for the nation.

Sixthly, the men working in the yards, from the north of Scotland to the central belt, are frustrated, angry, and bitter, and deeply resent the way in which their jobs, communities and futures are being destroyed by a Government who, by surrendering to market forces, have betrayed the national interest. Despite claims by Ministers over the past few months about the anticipated increase in North sea activity in the medium term, prospects for the next 12 months are frighteningly bad. With the exception of a number of major developments, the only one that will be translated into an order is likely to be the Kittiwake field, operated by Shell. The Government have approved a number of others, but the development gap problem will mean no significant orders. That will facilitate the gradual rundown of the industry in the early part of the next year.

When the Government have allowed this crisis to develop, we shall hear that nothing can be done. They will talk of the market—the same old excuse for inactivity. Is it not possible, even at this eleventh hour, to decide on a reasonable notion of where the industry should be going in the next two or three years and in the run up to the year 2000?

I want to suggest some positive actions that the Government should take. First, we need a package of industrial and financial assistance that will allow existing yards to restructure their operations, with a planned approach to rationalising their capacity. We accept the need to rationalise overcapacity. That does not mean that we should kill the industry, as will happen if the present neglect continues. We also need Government assistance to diversification. Ministers speak long and eloquently about the need for the fabrication yards to diversify. They want to, but they need assistance. It cannot be done overnight. The Government can help.

Secondly, the Government need to carry out a construction audit of orders that are likely to emerge from the North sea over the next five years, to ensure that everything possible is done by the Department of Energy to avoid delays and minimise technical problems. The annex B procedure that is required for approvals could be speeded up without affecting safety, and I commend that suggestion to the Government. Thirdly, as we decline from peak production, we must also form an energy policy that will result in the planned development of oil and gas fields, to ensure the maintenance of a suitable size of construction industry in which abandonment programmes and technological modification schemes provide the maximum possible amount of work.

Fourthly, we need Government support to help to maintain an agreed size of industry. When the Government talk about Shell and BP, saying that they cannot do anything about this or that, I must remind them that the people of the United Kingdom did not elect Shell or BP. They elected the Government to intervene on their behalf when they feel, as they seem to now, that their interests are being neglected.

Fifthly, we need radical change in Government fiscal policy to encourage investment in Government-sponsored research and development to stimulate new field development. Minuscule progress was made on that in the Budget of March 1987. Much more could be done, and I suggest the Government examine the submissions of the UK Offshore Operators Association Limited and the Select Committee on Energy, which made some excellent proposals about the way forward in fiscal policy.

Sixthly, we must try to ensure that our construction yards are not exposed to unfair competition from European and Scandinavian yards when we bid for foreign orders. There is evidence—it is difficult to quantify—that that is happening already. Why do we have the fifth most productive oil field in the world, lying two or three miles off the Scottish coast, yet seven major fabrication construction yards without work? The public perception is that it is inconceivable that that could be a reality. The basis of my submission to the Minister is that that is indeed the reality facing Scotland and the yards in the next two or three months.

Surely it is not beyond the wit of a Government, even one committed ideologically to a free market, to say that we have a unique one-off oil and gas resource that will not last forever. A balance must be struck between exploitation of these reserves for jobs and industry, community welfare and prosperity and, on the other hand, the massive Exchequer funds gained as a result of the efforts that people in Scotland are making in the industry.

I wish to highlight the need for change and to identify how the offshore construction industry has shown realism and an ability to change to survive. With Government encouragement and support it is willing further to adapt in the years ahead. Over the past few years it has responded to the more difficult commercial conditions that have applied. It has improved its efficiency and has met the "weather windows" for the installation of North sea products. Higher standards of quality control are being achieved, and market forces are ensuring that lower prices are offered while quality is maintained.

In a submission to the Select Committee on Energy the United Kingdom Module Contractors Association Ltd., among many others, highlighted the continuing problems. Those include a lack of work, poor overhead recovery due to intermittent and low-volume work, difficult commercial conditions, and higher standards required by oil companies leading to higher costs for the fabricator.

The offshore industry can survive and adapt only if the Government provide the stability and financial support to see the industry through an extraordinarily difficult period. Workers, managers and customers require the Government to change course and to provide them with the right industrial and commercial environment in which they can all benefit. I am not making a special plea on behalf of one yard. I am making a special plea on behalf of the offshore construction industry. It needs support if it is to maintain a presence in the six to 12 months that lie ahead. More important, we must ensure that in the year 2000 we have the industrial capacity in this very sophisticated business not only to deal with the North sea but to work from there and to have the export potential for which the Government are always arguing.

12.17 am

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I am glad of the opportunity afforded by the Adjournment

[Mr. Ian Lang]

debate of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) for the House to consider the prospects of the North sea offshore fabrication industry in Scotland. It is, of course, impossible to do so without looking at the oil industry generally, since the yards depend on continuing activity in exploration, development and production of the North sea oil and gas potential.

We are all conscious of the important role that the oil and oil-related industries play in the Scottish economy. I am pleased to note that all the signs are that they will continue to be major employers in the Scottish economy for a number of years. It is estimated that in mid-1987 over 50,000 people were employed in companies in Scotland wholly related to North sea oil and gas. That figure does not include people working in firms partly involved in supplying the North sea market or those engaged in short-term projects. When these extra jobs are taken into account, along with the effects on consumption, the overall level of oil-related employment in Scotland in mid-1987 is estimated to have been approximately 78,000, which is around 4 per cent of total employment in Scotland.

The majority of oil-related jobs are in the Grampian region, but many other regions also benefit. Throughout Scotland high levels of employment in certain sectors result directly from offshore activity. In Fife, approximately 1,600 jobs in wholly oil-related firms and 350 jobs in partly oil-related firms have been identified. While a proportion of these jobs are at the RGC yard at Methil, there are some other oil-related firms in the region.

With the downturn in oil prices, no one can pretend that the last 18 months have been other than tough for the oil industry and, therefore, for the fabrication yards. This resulting falling off in activity was of course, not limited to Scotland or to the North sea. It has to be recognised that the oil price collapse was a worldwide phenomenon largely influenced by OPEC's attempt to recover its major share of world oil supplies. As we know, this action brought the oil price tumbling from about $34 a barrel to under $10 a barrel. Therefore, it was not a localised problem that could readily be solved by simply seeking a market elsewhere.

The North sea industry was less quickly affected, and this contributed to such problems as a surplus of rigs in United Kingdom continental shelf waters, because some had been moved there from areas which had felt the effects of the fall more rapidly. There was an understandable tendency during that period for operators to retrench and to look for methods of economising in their undertakings. While production was not greatly affected, it is clear that development and exploration have slowed and that orders for new rigs have dropped.

My ministerial colleagues and I readily appreciate that in a period of slim prospects it is understandable that there should be calls for the Government to step in and somehow create work for the yards, but this is simply impractical as a solution to the immediate problem. The nature of the industry is such that there is inevitably a fairly lengthy lead-in period in the consideration of development before fabrication orders can be placed, as the hon. Member for Fife, Central will appreciate. In normal circumstances the oil companies are able to pace development to ensure a reasonably consistent flow of work. The suddenness and the extent of the oil price fall created a hiatus which has to work through the system, and there is simply no practical way of short-circuiting this. Clearly, however, I would look to the oil companies to reduce this period in so far as they reasonably can.

I do not accept the argument that the current downturn in activity should materially alter the Government's general approach to North sea development. The Government's decision to leave the pace of development to the market has proved extremely beneficial to the Scottish economy and the offshore industry, and, in particular, to the fabrication yards. There were few complaints about the pace when development was at its peak and the demand for fabrication was high. While I understand the concern from which it stems, it is less than realistic to demand a new approach because we are now faced with a temporary lull in activity.

It is arguable that because until now we have experienced only the good times, the offshore industry did not anticipate, and has been so hard hit by, the present bad times. As I have said, for many in the North sea support industry this was the first experience of the cyclical nature of their undertaking. The tailing-off in demand came as a shock, and I would not attempt to minimise how traumatic this has been for those who have found themselves out of work as a result. Howard Doris at Loch Kishorn and Kestrel Marine at Dundee have gone into receivership, and I am well aware of the difficult situation in which a number of other yards find themselves at present.

Fortunately, most of the other yards have some work at present. For example, Hi-Fab has recently completed a rig conversion for Amerada Hess and is working on a jacket for Shell's Eider field. Lewis Offshore has also some Eider work, and McDermott's has an order for Shell's Tern field. In general, most yards have work of some description which will keep them employed until early or mid-1988. This is also the case with RGC at Methil, in which I appreciate the hon. Member for Fife, Central has a particular interest. As the hon Gentleman said, RGC has work on Shell's Tern platform and platform jacket. I can readily understand the concern of workers such as those at RGC who, although they have a yard which is equipped to handle a wide range of services for North sea clients, from jackets to modules and other offshore structures, have seen their work force gradually depleted from some 1,200 men to about half that number — with the prospect perhaps of even further cuts. It is a concern shared by some 4,000 workers in the fabrication sector of the industry.

Employment in the oil-related sector in Scotland was hardest hit during 1986. However, the underlying rate of decline in employment in wholly oil-related firms would appear to have slowed considerably this year. The 1·4 per cent. reduction in such employment in the six months to June 1987 was a considerable improvement on the 16·1 per cent. reduction over the previous six months. It would therefore seem likely that the worst effects of the oil price fall on employment have now been felt.

From my contacts with the oil industry I know that over the past few months there is increasing evidence of a pick-up in activity, with a general air of optimism that the greater stability in the oil price will continue. There are solid signs of this. Of course, of particular interest to the yards is the increased level of rig activity, which is now getting back to its pre-price drop level, and there is every sign of it continuing throughout next year.

After the depressing sight of rigs stacked in many of our firths it is encouraging to have 49 active rigs, against a low of 21 in February. This is all the more encouraging given that the going rate is some $17,000 a day compared with $14,000 in late 1986. Planned schedules indicate that drilling activity could be up soon by some 40 per cent., taking levels back to pre-1986, and there is every prospect of further rises over the next five years. Analysts forecast that by 1992 rates may have risen sufficiently to produce a demand for new rigs and the conversion of semi-submersibles into production vessels for some of the more marginal fields.

Despite the then depressed state of the market there was an encouraging response to the 10th round of offshore licensing, when 75 applications for 61 of the 127 blocks on offer led to 51 awards. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is currently considering the possibility of an 11th round, with awards in 1989, which would maintain the accustomed two-year licensing cycle. The Government have approved four major projects so far this year. In addition we have before us plans for the development of 11 offshore oil and gas projects, including six new oilfields, most of which should be approved within the next few weeks.

BP is pursuing the development of the Miller field, the largest and most significant North sea development for some years. This £900 million development, involving expected reserves of 300 million barrels of oil and 300 billion cu ft of gas, will create an estimated 6,000 offshore construction jobs prior to first production, which is estimated at the end of 1991. I need hardly say what this will mean to hungry yards, or point out that the competition for orders will be extremely fierce, but I would fully expect that those Scottish yards which gear themselves for survival during the lean early months of 1988, will show their capabilities to be leading contenders in this competition. The development plan for Miller is currently under consideration by the Department of Energy and I understand that signs are hopeful for a decision at the beginning of the year. There will, of course, be the added benefit of an estimated 400 jobs on a permanent basis when the field is in production.

Shell-Esso are also pressing on with their Kittiwake development, which gained approval in September. The construction of the Kittiwake platform and its equipment is estimated to provide a total of 2,500 jobs. The 7,000-tonne deck fabrication order is now out to tender. The order is expected to be placed early in 1988, with work starting in late summer. It will take two years to complete and employ up to 200 workers at its peak. The 6,000-tonne jacket order is due to be placed later in 1988, with work starting in 1989. This work should take about 15 months and at peak employ about 600.

There is also a range of proposals for gas-gathering in the central North sea, including possible further development at St. Fergus. I cannot anticipate what the outcome of these will be, and it is not certain that the successful transportation scheme itself will necessarily involve any major call for new structures. What is important, however, is that when in place it will make much more viable the development of these smaller fields for which a separate transportation system would have been uneconomical. The exploitation of these resources will clearly involve some structure fabrication, which will inevitably improve the longer-term prospects for the yards. All these should have spin-off implications for the offshore supply industry and the fabrication yards.

Mr. McLeish: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lang: No, I would rather not. I am running rather short of time.

The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I am not suggesting that these developments will mean a sudden return within the next few weeks to full employment at the fabrication yards. I wish only that they did. By the nature of the industry there will be an inevitable time lag before orders for new structures emerge. The market for such orders as do emerge will be highly competitive. The operators will of course be looking for the most cost-effective arrangements that they can get. This means that it is essential that if Scottish yards are to make the most of their opportunities they must be in a position to produce top quality work, based on the most modern techniques.

I recognise that some yards have invested heavily in preparing themselves for the new market conditions. Indeed, it is one of the long-term gains of this lean time that the industry has been obliged to react by seeking new cost-cutting technology and adopting new practices and innovative procedures. Many of these changes represent valuable assets which can be exploited in other aspects of industry both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere to the great benefit of the economy.

Good examples of such modernisation can be seen in yards such as McDermott's, where a three-year investment programme of some £22 million has provided a stockyard gantry crane for handling plate, an advanced plate-cutting facility, a pipe-mill and spool fabrication facility and a computer-controlled warehouse with automatic storage and retrieval facility.

I realise how difficult it is for some yards to gear themselves in this way when they are striving to stay in existence with a very uncertain order book beyond early 1988. The next few months will be critical for them. There are no immediate short-term solutions to this. The hard fact is, as I have said, that the Government cannot conjure up work for the fabrication yards. That must continue to lie with the operators.

What the Government can do, and have done, is to ensure that the right fiscal climate exists in which operators can continue to develop the North sea's resources. In autumn 1986 we took action on the early repayment of advance petroleum revenue tax, which was expected to inject more than £300 million into the oil economy. In the 1987 Budget my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed two further concessions affecting the development of new fields and oil-related research, which were expected to benefit the industry by over £100 million a year. Much of this is aimed generally at encouraging companies to proceed with projects which would otherwise have been delayed, and this is clearly having the desired effect. In particular, it is encouraging that the industry is increasingly looking at how to extract oil and gas economically from what had previously been looked upon as marginal fields.

The Government will continue to play their role by ensuring that a propr fiscal climate is maintained, and we expect to see a gradual improvement in the fortunes of the fabrication yards as activity in North sea developments increases. I know that the oil companies appreciate that

[Mr. Lang]

the continuing existence of a variety of modern highly competitive yards is not only important but vital to the cost-effective development of the industry's interests generally.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 8 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the number of European fighter aircraft the Royal Air Force requires.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): It is too early in the project to forecast with certainty the eventual size of a United Kingdom purchase of European fighter aircraft. The work-sharing agreement for development is, however, based on the declared requirement for 250 aircraft.

Mr. Ross: Does the Minister accept that unless the Government give a firm commitment to purchase 250 aircraft, the unit cost of each aircraft might make its eventual cost prohibitive to some of the nation? If the order is to go ahead, it requires a firm commitment from the Government to purchase 250 aircraft. Will the hon. Gentleman say when development work on the EFA is likely to start?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is difficult to give a firm order to purchase an aircraft until there is an aircraft design to purchase. Therefore, it is too early to give such a commitment. I hope that development work will start early next year.

Sir John Farr: Has my hon. Friend any long-term plan for when the aircraft will become operational, and will he say when it will go into service with the RAF?

Mr. Sainsbury: I hope that the aircraft will enter service in the mid-1990s.

Trident

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current and projected number of people employed on the Trident project.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): We estimate that, in the financial year 1987-88, 12,000 direct and 10,000 indirect United Kingdom jobs are being sustained by the Trident programme. The number of jobs will rise to a peak of 15,000 direct and 12,000 indirect over the next few years.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those statistics confirm that the Trident programme is a first-class investment for creating jobs and safeguarding the defence of our country? Furthermore, does he agree with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) that it is high time that the Labour party changed its defence policy?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend that the defence policy, such as it is, of the Labour party is looking particularly unconvincing at the moment. My hon. Friend is correct that Trident is a good investment. No amount of investment in conventional weapons would come remotely near to providing the security and defence that the Trident programme will offer us.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State reflect on the possible implications for the Trident programme of the INF agreement and further deliberations on strategic arms reductions? Will he comment on an article in *The Daily Telegraph* today, which says that the agreement between ourselves and the United States is of a commercial nature, not intergovernmental, and that, therefore, the security of that arrangement is not good in view of the United States' intention to reduce strategic arms?

Mr. Younger: With regard to today's events, the hon. Gentleman may have noticed that last year Mr. Gorbachev said publicly:

> "We decided today to withdraw completely the question of French and British missiles and let them remain as an independent force, let them increase and be further improved."

Thus, that is not in question in today's decision.

As to the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question, we have been given perfectly full assurances by the United States Administration that they will fulfil in full the requirements that we have asked of them on the Trident system.

Mr. Sackville: I thank my right hon. Friend for speaking to my constituents after he visited Barrow last week. Will he confirm that the Trident project is providing jobs for many subcontractors around the area, and that it is vital to the economy of the north-west?

Mr. Younger: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. There is no doubt that the progress that has been made on HMS Vanguard and HMS Victorious at the shipyard in Barrow is extremely good. It is a good job and I have no doubt that it is providing a lot of jobs in the area.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is it not a fact that if the Americans and Russians agree, as is quite likely, to a 50 per cent. across-the-board cut in each other's strategic systems, it will mean that the United State's navy will have 12 Trident submarines? If the Government go ahead with their purchase from the United States, the Royal Navy will have four Trident submarines. Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that, with the Royal Navy having the equivalent of almost one third of the American submarine strategic force, the Americans, let alone the Russians, will allow that position to continue?

Mr. Younger: There are a lot of ifs in that question. The fact remains that the American Administration and the contractors in America have given the firmest assurance that their contractual obligation to us under the Trident programme will be fulfilled, whatever the circumstances.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we will welcome whatever agreements are reached between the Soviet Union and the United States? Even if they agree to a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic weapons systems, the fact is that many of the American weapons systems are

land-based. The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) chose to ignore that. Even if the United Kingdom possessed four nuclear submarines and the United States had 12, the balance would be more than made up by the American land-based systems.

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. The agreement refers to land-based systems, not to submarine-launched systems. There is also the great assurance that I have quoted from Mr. Gorbachev, who said that the British system was in no way involved in the discussions.

Royal Ordnance

3. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications for competitive procurement for his Department arising out of the reorganisation of Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decisions on the internal reorganisation of Royal Ordnance plc are a matter for the company. We do not expect the company's recent announcements to have any effect on the procurement decisions of the Ministry of Defence and we will continue to pursue our policy of maximising competition at both main and subcontract level.

Mr. McWilliam: Following the reorganisation of Royal Ordnance plc, is the Minister entitled to expect some improvement in the level of tender submitted by the company, given the National Audit Office figure of a £37 million discount to British Aerospace on the disposal of Royal Ordnance plc?

Mr. Sainsbury: The price that the Government obtained for the disposal of Royal Ordnance plc was a good one. It was a competitive purchase. The value of assets is clearly what the purchaser will pay for.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I support competitive procurement, but will my hon. Friend note the importance of that major employer to the city of Nottingham? Will he also welcome the custom and practice of the present management in keeping not only staff fully informed of what is going on but, happily, also local Members of Parliament?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am well aware of the importance of Royal Ordnance plc to Nottingham, and I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. I hope that the continuing improvements in efficiency by the company will provide it with wider opportunities to develop its market, including its export market.

Mr. Sean Hughes: In view of the conclusion in the report of the National Audit Office that the Royal Ordnance factories were substantially undersold because of the rush to privatisation, will the Minister comment on the fact that British Aerospace stands to make up to £100 million on the sale of the factory in Enfield alone?

Mr. Sainsbury: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question that the Royal Ordnance factories were undersold. As I said earlier, it was a competitive purchase, and a good price was paid.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: On 2 April this year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that negotiations were under way with Royal Ordnance for the exclusive supply on long-term contracts of propellants, explosives and some ammunition. As other British companies are capable of supplying some of those products, does that covert deal not drive a coach and horses through the policy of competitive tendering?

Mr. Sainsbury: Last year, in the House, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to arrangements for long-term contracts for the supply of propellants, explosives and ammunition. We are aware of the interest of other British companies in the supply of such products, we are in touch with at least one other company, and we are awaiting proposals, which will certainly be carefully examined.

North Atlantic (Naval Strategy)

4. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning Royal Navy strategy in the north Atlantic.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): The Royal Navy's strategy in the north Atlantic was described in the 1987 Statement on the Defence Estimates, at paragraphs 404 and 405, to which I have nothing to add.

Mr. Michie: Will not the Royal Navy's strategy be subsumed by the interests of the United States because of the deployment of sea-launched cruise missiles? Is it not a fact that even the Navy's rules of engagement are being changed to suit the interests of the United States rather than British interests? Will the Minister come clean about this?

Mr. Stewart: The strategy of the Royal Navy is part of the strategy of the navies of NATO, and the rules of engagement, like all other aspects, are resolved within NATO by agreement between all its members.

Mr. Brazier: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Royal Navy's strategic options have broadened somewhat since 1979 in view of three facts: in 1979 we had not a single carrier-borne fixed-wing aircraft—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Brazier: I was asking my hon. Friend whether our strategic options had broadened since 1979, as then we had no carrier-borne fixed-wing aircraft, only one frigate in the Royal Navy with a hard kill anti-missile system and no credible modern torpedo suitable for modern warfare on any of our submarines.

Mr. Stewart: It is our policy to keep the Royal Navy up to date. Indeed, that is why we have been introducing so many new ships. Since the Government came to power in 1979 we have ordered 60 major ships for the Royal Navy, about half of which have still to enter service. Ten of the ships still on order are frigates, and the value of the investment represented by ships still on order is £4 billion.

Mr. Duffy: The Minister said nothing about the need for modern and adequate mine-counter measures, which seems incredible in view of fairly recent developments. Can he assure the House that these will be available by the early 1990s, given the present very unsatisfactory state of the modernisation programme?

Mr. Stewart: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman recognises the importance of mine-counter measure vessels, as do the Government. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we have a programme of introducing Hunter class

and single role mine hunters, and the success of our vessels in the Gulf has shown how very good their equipment and manpower are.

Mr. O'Neill: Will the Minister outline the attitude of the other northern members of the Alliance who are participating in the review of combined maritime policies and tell the House whether they support Britain's attitude of slavish acceptance of United States maritime strategy in northern waters?

Mr. Stewart: The whole maritime strategy of all partners in NATO in the NATO context is defensive.

Stockholm Document

5. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the application of the inspection arrangements agreed under the Stockholm document.

Mr. Younger: Yes. The Stockholm document is concerned with confidence-building in Europe through greater transparency in military activities. The provision for verification of compliance, through on-site inspection by participating states, is a significant way of achieving greater trust and confidence on all sides.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Has he yet considered any challenge inspections or even observation inspections of Soviet military exercises? Does he consider that any of the forthcoming exercises are suitable for a challenge?

Mr. Younger: Yes, we have indeed considered challenge inspections. Looking to next year, we have an indication of notifiable exercises. The figures available to date indicate that there will be seven observable exercises in the Warsaw pact countries — three in the German Democratic Republic, two in Czechoslavakia, one in Hungary and one in the USSR. On our side, there will be nine suitable exercises in NATO countries—seven in the Federal Republic of Germany, one in Denmark and one in Norway—and two in Switzerland.

Ms. Ruddock: Given that we accept that confidence-building is so important, is the Secretary of State aware that last Thursday nuclear warheads were brought into the cruise missile base at RAF Molesworth, that last night that base was put on black alert—which I understand is the highest state of alert—and that, because of the presence of police, we must assume that a convoy run was being planned? Does he really think that that is in the spirit of detente surrounding the signing of the INF treaty today? Will he guarantee that no further exercises of that kind will take place in this country and that, following the INF agreement, to which we look forward, there will be no increase in American-owned nuclear weapons coming into Britain?

Mr. Younger: I appreciate the hon. Lady's question, but I can neither confirm nor deny any of the facts that she has suggested; and, with great respect to her, they bear no relation whatever to the question.

Mr. Conway: Is it acceptable to my right hon. Friend that any inspection teams representing Warsaw pact forces should be comprised of members who have formerly been banned from Britain for alleged acts incompatible with their diplomatic status?

Mr. Younger: I understand that any personnel who have been declared persona non grata would not be acceptable on inspection teams.

INF Agreement

6. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will directly discuss with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ways of reducing minimum nuclear forces following the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

17. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will directly discuss with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ways of reducing minimum nuclear forces following the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Younger: There are regular exchanges between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union on nuclear arms control issues.

Ms. Primarolo: Why cannot Britain enter into bilateral talks with the Soviet Union on nuclear disarmament? Is it the Prime Minister who is blocking the progress of negotiations with the Soviet Union on nuclear disarmament agreements?

Mr. Younger: We do, as I have said, have discussions with the Soviet Union about arms control matters, but negotiations have been through the superpowers. I may add that if the hon. Lady's views, as expressed in the motion to which she put her name recently, were to be carried out, Britain would have no nuclear weapons and so would have no role in discussing and influencing the reduction of nuclear weapons in the world.

Sir Antony Buck: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to welcome the INF agreement and to confirm that it would never have come about if the Opposition's policies had been pursued?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. If I had taken the Opposition's advice, and, indeed, that of CND, there would be no cruise missiles in Britain or Western Europe today and there would be a huge battery of them lined up pointing in our direction from the other side.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Secretary of State have any cause to fear that although the Soviet Union may abide by the letter of the treaty, it may seek to undermine it by further nuclear deployment? Will that fear be more or less likely to be fulfilled if NATO goes about making compensatory adjustments and arrangements?

Mr. Younger: Of course, there is concern in some quarters as to whether both sides will keep the agreement. I can only tell the hon. Gentleman that NATO—and I believe the Soviet Union, too—is determined to keep to the spirit and the letter of the agreement. NATO has no intention to substitute for the weapons that have been removed.

Mr. Mates: I am sure that all will agree that today's agreement is historic in every way, but can my right hon. Friend yet tell us the implications of the agreement for the deployment of cruise missiles in Britain?

Mr. Younger: Yes, Sir. The agreement about to be signed in Washington is fully supported by the British

Government and it has been warmly endorsed by all the United States' allies. Once the INF treaty has been ratified and comes into force, missile withdrawals will start and will be phased over a three-year period. Meanwhile, the normal training pattern will continue. During that time, six operational flights of ground-launched cruise missiles will be withdrawn from RAF Greenham Common and one operational flight from RAF Molesworth. I expect that the Molesworth missiles will be among the first weapons on the NATO side to be withdrawn.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Secretary of State now confirm that, as stated in *The Daily Telegraph* editorial today, there is no formal agreement between the United Kingdom and the United States on the supply of Trident missiles? If a future American President, as part of STAR talks, were not to supply those missiles, the British Government would have no redress.

Mr. Younger: I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman at all. We have had the clearest possible assurances from the United States Administration that they regard themselves as committed to provide what they have undertaken to provide for our Trident programme. That is the end of the matter.

World Peace Council

7. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received representations about the implications for his policy on arms control of the policies propounded by the World Peace Council, a copy of which has been forwarded to him.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The so-called World Peace Council opposes the concept of the nuclear deterrent, which is an essential foundation of our defence policy. Opposition Members and their supporters lose no opportunity of supporting its approach.

Mr. Baker: Will my hon. Friend take a shovelful of Siberian salt to the examination of the so-called Auckland declaration, issued by the World Peace Council, which is, of course, Soviet-backed, although four Opposition Members are members of the British arm? Is it any surprise to my hon. Friend that the declaration does not contain any condemnation of the occupation of Afghanistan? Does my hon. Friend agree that if we had followed the policy of not deploying cruise and Pershing missiles into Europe in the first place we should not be having today's INF agreement?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend does well to remind the House of the sorts of policies that are espoused by the World Peace Council. It is not surprising that it has not condemned the occupation of Afghanistan, because it supported the suppression of the Hungarians, the installation of missiles in Cuba and the invasion of Hungary.

It is clear that there would not be an INF agreement today if the policy of one-sided disarmament, espoused by the Labour party, had been followed, because there would not have been anything about which to have an agreement.

Mr. Heffer: I have never at any time supported the World Peace Council. Nevertheless, is it not clear that the objectives of such a body are in line with the thinking of all sane people in the world—the removal of nuclear weapons from every country? Is it not clear that the people of this country, and, indeed, the world, see the INF agreement as only a first step? Is it not also clear that all of us must continue to work hard to get rid of nuclear weapons, beginning with this country, in line with Labour party policy?

Mr. Stewart: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his non-membership of the World Peace Council. The council's policy of objecting to the nuclear deterrent goes against the interests of this country and of NATO, and should be rejected firmly by all hon. Members.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that nuclear force reductions leave us increasingly vulnerable to imbalances in biological, chemical and conventional forces, especially when the Soviet Union is moving from labour-intensive to capital-intensive forces? Does he also accept that reductions must be achieved on an integrated basis and that, unless we achieve that in our agreements, we should be prepared to pay more for our defence?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend draws attention to an important factor. Although, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said, the INF agreement may be only the first step, it is essential that before long we should tackle the major issue of the imbalance in conventional forces and the threat of chemical warfare which is so strong from the other side.

Mr. Cryer: When the Minister sneers at those who do not believe in and want to get rid of the nuclear deterrent, is he sneering at the 121 nations that have signed the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty? If any of the 121 nations that have renounced nuclear weapons decide to obtain them because they believe that the Government are right and they want such weapons what will he say to them?

Mr. Stewart: Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I do not sneer at anybody. I am merely pointing out that the nuclear deterrent is an essential part of our defence and that of our allies in NATO, and I suspect that it will long remain so.

Falkland Islands (Telephone Calls)

9. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of telephone calls to and from service personnel in the Falkland Islands and Ascension Island.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): The cost of telephone calls from the United Kingdom for a British Telecom call is £2·30 per minute to the Falkland Islands for an operator-connected call, and £1·42 per minute to Ascension Island for a direct dialled call. The cost of cals back to the United Kingdom from both places is £1·50 per minute for a Cable and Wireless Plc direct dialled call.

Mr. Speller: Is my hon. Friend aware that, although our forces on the Falkland Islands and on Ascension Island are well-led, well-paid and all the other good things, communications are bad? One may telephone the United States for 81p a minute and Australia for £1·02 a minute, but our forces have to pay £1·50 a minute during the day, night, weekends and so on. Will he seek some form of concession so that our various forces at least pay a reasonable charge for communicating with their families?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend will appreciate that the rate is commercial and obviously has to be fixed by the

company. I am glad to tell my hon. Friend that over Christmas and the new year there will be a discount of one third on calls back to the United Kingdom. I shall be glad to draw my hon. Friend's comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Defence of the Falklands is clearly reliant on royal fleet auxiliaries. Is it the Government's intention to procure AOR2 before Christmas?

Mr. Freeman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to comment on that matter.

INF Agreement

10. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what enhancement measures Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Younger: The composition and balance of NATO's nuclear forces is being updated continuously. We have to ensure that their credibility and effectiveness are maintained in the light of changing circumstances. As part of that process NATO is currently considering what adjustments, if any, might be required to its remaining forces following the elimination of ground-launched cruise missiles and Pershing missiles. There are a number of possible options, but no decisions have yet been taken.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister supply a full list of the new measures by which he plans to increase the number of nuclear weapons? Will he also give an opportunity for the House to debate such matters, instead of carrying on such things in secret?

Mr. Younger: No proposals have yet been placed before NATO allies. Obviously, we shall have to discuss such proposals with our allies when they are put up. I have given the general background against which we shall consider them. I should have thought that the hon. Lady might have found a little time in her supplementary question today of all days to congratulate the Government on the success of their policy for reducing nuclear weapons, as the treaty will be sealed today.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Will my right hon. Friend also take into account the Soviet Union's intentions to modernise its nuclear forces and, at some suitable time, publish a list of such projects?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. The Soviet Union, as long as it thinks it must have such weapons, wisely keeps them updated all the time. We carefully watch what it is doing. Some useful publications have been produced. I understand that the American Administration will soon produce another publication.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: I warmly welcome the development of the INF agreement. Will the Secretary of State advise whether he is looking at the option of replacing land-launched missiles with sea-launched cruise missiles, which will probably be based on the Clyde? Does he accept that, given the history of Polaris and Poseidon and the advent of Trident, that would be an unacceptable burden for the people of Scotland?

Mr. Younger: I do not agree with any of the points that the hon. Lady has raised. It is no part of my intention to substitute the missiles that we hope will be removed as a result of the deal. At all times we shall have to look at the armoury of weapons that are available to us for our defence and make sure that they make sense, one with the other, and enable us to keep up a credible, flexible deterrent force. We shall have to look at that matter once the deal is concluded.

Mr. Leigh: The figures that have been issued by the International Institute for Strategic Studies—I use the figures precisely because in the past they have been quoted approvingly by the Labour party—show an imbalance in favour of the Soviet Union of 2:1 in tanks and tactical aircraft and 3:1 in artillery. Will my right hon. Friend give a commitment on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that we shall not entertain any reduction in battlefield nuclear weapons unless there is real and verifiable progress on the part of the Soviet Union towards a balance of conventional arms in the north European plain?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is quite correct, and I can give him that assurance. It has been made clear by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my other colleagues on many occasions that before we would be prepared to go further into the reduction of battlefield nuclear weapons we would have to be convinced that there had been major changes in the conventional imbalance and, one hopes, that a worldwide ban on chemical and biological weapons had been concluded. We have none of such weapons, but the Soviet Union insists on keeping a large and increasing arsenal of them.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Secretary of State agree that there is great scope for the German suggestion from Chancellor Kohl that there should be simultaneous talks about the reduction of battlefield nuclear weapons and conventional weapons? That is the way in which we should go forward after the INF treaty, which we all welcome, is signed this afternoon.

Mr. Younger: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the INF treaty. I hope that he will reflect on the reason why it has been possible to conclude it.

Mr. O'Neill: It had nothing to do with you.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman has said from a sedentary position that it had nothing to do with us. I presume that he is referring to the Labour party, because it certainly had nothing to do with it.

As regards the hon. Gentleman's question, I can confirm that the British Government's position has been made clear. We could not contemplate further discussions about battlefield nuclear weapons until we were satisfied that the conventional and chemical imbalance had been dealt with.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is odd to hear Opposition Members talking about the enhancement of weapons systems when, before the INF agreement that we are discussing today, they consistently advocated the unilateral weakening of our defences? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we had followed their advice, and that of their friends, CND, we would not have made these major steps forward?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. If we had followed the advice of the Labour party we would not have had a deal today, and we would have had a whole range of nuclear weapons facing us to which we would have had no answer and which we would have had no prospect of negotiating away.

Exercise Purple Warrior

11. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The estimated costs of Exercise Purple Warrior, additional to those which would have been incurred had the exercise not been taking place, are £7·5 million.

Mr. Nellist: Leaving aside the dubious nature of an exercise that had nothing to do with defence and everything to do with plans for an invasion, presumably of a Third world country, and the fact that the Government had to hire merchant shipping vessels from Denmark and West Germany because of a savage reduction in the British merchant fleet, did the Minister consult his colleagues at the Department of Health and Social Security to discover whether that £7·5 million, properly spent on London and midlands hospitals, such as the Birmingham Children's hospital, might have resulted in fewer deaths in recent weeks because of the non-cancellation of heart operations?

Mr. Stewart: By prudent financial management the Government have been able to increase public expenditure on both the Health Service and defence.

As for the hon. Gentleman's point that bore some relation to the original question—about the vessels hired for the exercise—I am glad in one way that British operators and their vessels were so busy that they had things to do other than take part in the exercise. As far as vessels being hired for the exercise are concerned, we pursue our policy of obtaining them on the best terms of availability, suitability and cost, and if British vessels were competitive, we should be glad to have them.

Sir Antony Buck: Will my hon. Friend confirm that most of us take the view that the exercise represented money well spent? It was particularly good to have observers from behind the Iron Curtain there who could observe how effective our ability to respond to a potential attack would be, and could therefore subscribe to our deterrent posture.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. and learned Friend is right. The exercise was extremely successful in the rehearsal of amphibious landings and evacuation for an out-of-area operation, and in co-operation between the three services, which all took part. The arrangements for Warsaw pact observers were successfully and competently handled, and the inspection and observation of exercises of that sort play an important part in increasing confidence and reducing tension.

INF Agreement

12. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what arms control and disarmament negotiations he expects directly to contribute following the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Younger: INF negotiations have been conducted between the Soviet Union and the United States in close consultation with the NATO Alliance. The United Kingdom participates directly in a number of arms control fora, including the work of the conference on disarmament, which includes negotiation of a global ban on chemical weapons; the first committee of the United Nations General Assembly; mutual and balanced force reductions negotiations between NATO and the Warsaw pact in Vienna; and the conference on security and confidence-building in Europe, under which discussions are continuing on a mandate for negotiations on confidence and security-building measures and conventional stability.

Mr. Corbyn: I thank the Minister for that answer. Since the Prime Minister spent yesterday trying to cash in on the success of the INF talks—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the hon. Gentleman a hearing.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, since the Prime Minister spent most of yesterday trying to cash in on the success of the INF talks, will the Secretary of State for Defence now tell us that the Government are prepared to negotiate the removal of all nuclear weapons and that they are prepared to play a positive role in the disarmament negotiations rather than spend all their time and energy attacking the CND, which has done more to bring about the INF treaty—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The more noise, the more time that is wasted.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was concluding, will the Secretary of State also spend less time on anti-Soviet rhetoric and instead come to a serious discussion about the need to eliminate all nuclear weapons?

Mr. Younger: The object of all arms control reduction talks is to eliminate war and to bring peace by every means possible. The Government can now show remarkable progress towards those things. The hon. Gentleman is remarkably courageous in suggesting that the CND has any credit at all in this matter. If its advice had been followed we would have had no agreement and a much more threatening situation to face in future. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has every reason to be proud of the part that she has played in bringing about the reduction in nuclear weapons, which is greater than any previous reduction achieved under any Administration.

Mr. Forman: Is it not clear that the successful policy followed by Her Majesty's Government in conjunction with our NATO allies and pursued on the basis of the twin-track decision since 1979 has brought the desired results? Is it not also clear that the Government will have a valuable role to play in future in negotiating a verifiable, workable agreement to reduce the threat of chemical weapons?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct. It is the twin-track decision that has brought about the agreement which we hope will be signed today in Washington. It is worth reminding ourselves that the Opposition opposed that decision root and branch and voted against it in the House.

Contract Costs

13. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of contracts are awarded on a cost-plus basis.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1986-87 about 6 per cent. by value of contracts were placed on the basis of cost-plus percentage fee for profit. The proportion has declined

from 22 per cent. in 1980-81 and reflects the aim of introducing cost incentives into defence non-competitive contracts.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What proportion of Marconi's cost-plus contracts are the subject of the fraud inquiries by the MOD police? May I have an assurance that MOD police will not be restrained in any way or restricted in carrying out those inquiries? I can tell the Minister that I am handing the documents about fraud at Marconi that the MOD police also have in their possession to Sir Gordon Downey, the Comptroller and Auditor General, so that the Public Accounts Committee, too, can examine every area that the Ministry of Defence police are examining.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will be aware from earlier replies on this subject that in this matter the Ministry of Defence police are under the direction of the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am glad to hear that if the hon. Gentleman has any documents that he thinks are relevant to these sensitive matters he will pass them not only to the Public Accounts Committee but to the investigating authorities.

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Ministry of Defence policy of changing from cost-plus contracts to tendering has not only saved the Minister of Defence a great deal of money, but that that money has been used to buy other much needed conventional weapons?

Mr. Sainsbury: I am glad to be able to confirm what my hon. Friend has said. The introduction of a greater degree of competition into Ministry of Defence contracts is not only saving the taxpayer money, but is giving the services more equipment for the same amount of money.

NATO (Ministerial Meeting)

14. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his last meeting with NATO Defence Ministers.

Mr. Younger: I met my NATO colleagues collectively at the regular meetings of the Eurogroup and defence planning committee last week. Copies of the communiqués issued after the meetings have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Bradley: Will the Secretary of State tell us what plans he and NATO are putting forward to increase the pace of arms reduction and to get new arms agreements with the Soviet Union, or has he been spending most of his time, on behalf of the Prime Minister, trying to get more nuclear weapons into this country?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. We have given, and are giving, the fullest support to our allies the United States in further negotiations, which we hope will take place speedily, for up to a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic missile systems. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman might he prepared to support that.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Polish Foreign Minister.

Mr. Campbell: Will the Prime Minister tell the House when her Government propose to abandon their vendetta against the BBC?

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of any vendetta against the BBC. The injunction is a matter that will shortly come before the courts again and, therefore, I can say nothing about it.

Mr. Heseltine: If, after her return from the Palace tonight, my right hon. Friend hears that an INF agreement has been signed in Washington, will she convey her congratulations to the American and Russian leaders? Will she also accept on behalf of all Conservative Members congratulations for what she and the Government have done in achieving this unique agreement and will she—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very important matters.

Mr. Heseltine: —continue to remind the British public that if we had listened to the policies of the official Opposition there would have been no agreement, because they would have denied us the nuclear strength from which to negotiate it?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I assume that the intermediate nuclear treaty will be signed today and I shall gladly convey the congratulations of my right hon. and hon. Friends—and, I hope, those on the Opposition side of the House—to the President and the General Secretary on the signing of that treaty, which is a historic event and is good news for us all. I shall also do my best to remind people that, but for the firmness of this country and NATO, that agreement would never have been signed, the SS20s would still have been up and we would have had no means of persuading —*[Interruption.]*—the Soviet Union to take them down.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to ask brief questions and to listen to the answers in silence.

Mr. Kinnock: I welcome the meeting that the Prime Minister had with General Secretary Gorbachev yesterday and concur with her view that the Washington summit is an occasion, as she put it, to plan the way forward to more arms reductions. Will the Prime Minister tell us what contribution her Government will make to that way forward?

The Prime Minister: We have already made a considerable direct contribution with regard to cruise missiles, having been the first to station the cruise missiles and, therefore, have had a great deal to do in bringing about that treaty. Secondly, we have made it clear several times that we are for a 50 per cent. reduction of Soviet and United States missiles. Thirdly, we have been very active in regard to chemical weapons, particularly in trying to find a method of verification. Fourthly, we have made it clear that there should be no further reductions of nuclear weapons in Europe until we are far nearer parity on conventional weapons, and chemical weapons have been

eliminated. Fifthly, we have made the way clear about the anti-ballistic missile treaty and its relevance to SDI, and quite a number of other things besides.

Mr. Kinnock: In addition to various other steps, many of which are welcome, and some of which can be claimed with some justification, and in order to promote that way forward, may I ask the Prime Minister to drop any proposal to replace the intermediate land-based missiles, which will be removed as a consequence of the INF agreement, with sea or airborne intermediate missiles, either by innovation or by some so-called process of modernisation, as that act of replacement would clearly nullify the INF agreement that she so rightly celebrates?

The Prime Minister: The intermediate nuclear weapons treaty is for land-based missiles. With regard to all our other defences, we have a positive duty to see that they are modernised and effective. That is in accordance with the NATO Defence Minister's meeting held in California.

Mr. Kinnock: If that is essential, why should it involve the installation of intermediate nuclear missiles for delivery by sea or by air? Will the Prime Minister tell us why she should inaugurate a new generation of intermediate missiles, especially when she knows that the Soviet Union would respond in kind?

The Prime Minister: All weaponry has to be modernised so that it is effective against the defences that it might meet. That is a very simple reply, even though the right hon. Gentleman cannot understand it.

Mr. Onslow: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is very good to see the Leader of the Opposition, unlike many of his colleagues, expressing his congratulations to Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev and paying tribute to my right hon. Friend for her important part in the negotiations? Does she agree that NATO's next priority must be the destruction of Russia's chemical armoury and the verifiable reduction of the Warsaw pact's conventional forces? That is the first step that we must look to make now.

The Prime Minister: Yes, I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have made it clear on many occasions that the next steps forward must be towards conventional parity, because the Soviet Union has far superior conventional forces to ours and we must try to negotiate those down. It also has a massive superiority in highly dangerous chemical weapons, not only in numbers, but they are all modernised and there are increasing stockpiles. That is the most difficult treaty of all to negotiate, because it is undoubtedly very difficult to verify that no chemical weapons are being produced, particularly when they can be produced in quite different factories in the new binary system, which is the common mode.

Q2. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December 1987.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: I hope that the Prime Minister will be as positive in her reply to me as she was in her replies earlier in Question Time. I asked the Prime Minister a question on 17 November about the National Health Service. I make no excuse for repeating it again. In addition, we have had a report from the Royal College of Surgeons, which includes the Queen's doctor. Will the Prime Minister reply to that positively and tell us what she intends to do? Everyone in the Health Service, doctors, nurses, surgeons and everyone else is complaining and wants the Government to do something positive. Why will the Prime Minister not do something positive now?

The Prime Minister: I think that the question that the hon. Gentleman asked was about restructuring pay for nurses. I think that he got the wrong end of the stick. He thought that it was a cut in nurses' pay. The restructuring arrangements are still being negotiated. We hope that the negotiations between the management side and the nurses will be completed this afternoon. In that case, the matter will be referred to the review body. I want to stress that the National Health Service has gone from strength to strength in the number of patients treated—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must have a chance to answer.

The Prime Minister: As for the number of patients treated, 5·5 million in-patients were treated in 1978, whereas in 1986, 6·5 million in-patients were treated. There were 34 million out-patient attendances in 1978. There are now 38 million. The number of operations, about which hon. Members often ask me, was 2,015,000 in 1978; it is now 2,360,000—nearly 1,000 extra operations every day. The National Health Service has increased in strength and doctors and nurses are doing more with the increased money.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend note the support that she has received for her line on budget discipline during the Copenhagen summit? Will she confirm that she has wider support among the Commission and other member countries? Does she believe that, by the spring summit, France and Germany will have fallen into line with the long-term interests of the European Community?

The Prime Minister: I hope to make a brief statement on the European Council. I confirm what my hon. Friend said, that the Commission's proposal on agricultural stabilisers—a way of keeping down the surpluses—came very much towards our view. They were strict, and there were attempts during the summit to undermine them, which we resisted.

Q3. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: It was important for the Prime Minister to be hostess to Mr. Gorbachev on his way to signing the historic INF agreement, but that did not include a single British-owned nuclear weapon. Did the Prime Minister take the opportunity to put those on the negotiating table for arms reduction, or did she restrict herself to being President Reagan's tea lady?

The Prime Minister: No. That agreement includes several flights of weapons stationed at Greenham Common and one at Molesworth, which of course will be withdrawn. Without them there would never have been an agreement on the part of the Soviet Union to take down an infinitely larger number of intermediate weapons than NATO yet has. With regard to the nuclear deterrent,

Conservative Members believe that it is vital to our security to keep a British independent nuclear deterrent, and so do the British people.

Q 4. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amess: No matter how strongly we hold views on abortion, will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning those who try through violence, intimidation and abuse to silence those who seek a reduction in the time limit in which an abortion can be obtained?

The Prime Minister: I know that there are very strong views on this matter on both sides of the House. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is absolutely vital that whatever those views they should be able to be freely expressed and we should be able to discuss and debate the matter in the same way.

Mr. Maclennan: While I welcome the Prime Minister's timely reminder—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Maclennan: —of the—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is the leader of his party and he has a right to be heard like everyone else.

Mr. Maclennan: —imbalance in conventional weapons in the context of INF and the possible need to modernise the nuclear component of our land, sea and air-based weapons, may I ask whether she considers that discussion on conventional disarmament could not be accompanied by discussions on battlefield weapons in the Vienna talks?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is best to keep the discussions on battlefield weapons separate, but we are very ready to take part, as we have done so far, further in the Vienna talks, with a view to trying to get the Russian superiority in conventional weapons much closer to the weapons the West possesses. It is absolutely vital to do that. One great advantage of the intermediate nuclear weapons treaty is that it shows that by strict negotiation, where the Soviet Union has more weapons than we have, we can get down that superior number of weapons, in the case of intermediate ones to zero, and in the case of conventional weapons to something much more like parity.

Q5. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. King: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the very widespread support for the Rates Reform Bill as a sensible way of reforming rates? In looking at some of the options that have been tabled, has she considered the banded community charge, and does she agree with me that it is nothing more than another form of local income tax, with all the disadvantages that would follow and it offers no accountability?

The Prime Minister: I believe that a banded community charge would just be income tax by another name. It would be yet another burden on income tax payers and would fall particularly heavily on people such as nurses, teachers and policemen. It would be immensely complicated, with marginal relief of all kinds. Income tax is paid and registered where people work, not where they live, so it would mean revealing a very great deal to the local authority, which many people would not like at all.

European Council (Copenhagen)

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about the European Council held in Copenhagen on 4 and 5 December, which I attended, together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

At the previous European Council in June, we had decided that

"the Community must submit the use of its resources to effective and binding discipline"

and adopt regulations

"to keep the level of expenditure within the budget framework."

Our principal task this time was to consider practical measures to give effect to these objectives.

Our discussions concentrated on three main aspects: first, the amount of spending and its control, with particular reference to agricultural spending; secondly, the level and objectives of the Community's regional, social and agricultural guidance funds; and thirdly, how the Community should be financed in the years ahead.

The first aspect is control of spending. I made clear to the House before Copenhagen our determination to see the Community's agricultural spending brought under proper control, together with measures to dispose of existing agricultural surpluses and prevent the build-up of new ones. I also made it clear that the most effective way to achieve our aim was by the introduction of agricultural stabilisers for each and every commodity.

We were able to go far in Copenhagen towards establishing the basis for stabilisers, which will impose automatic cuts in price support if agreed production levels are exceeded. All member states now accept that such stabilisers are needed. We made progress in particular towards agreeing tough stabilisers for cereals, oil-seeds and protein crops, on which spending has increased particularly sharply.

We also had before us a proposal, but only in very general terms, for a Communitywide set-aside scheme, which a number of Governments, including ourselves, support as a complementary measure to stabilisers. I am glad to say that the Commission's proposal for an oils and fats tax, which we had resisted strongly at the June European Council, was not further pursued.

On the second aspect, structural funds, the Commission had proposed a doubling of the resources devoted to those funds by 1992. In common with several other Heads of Government, I made it clear that this was out of the question. Our view is that growth of those funds must be contained within a strict framework of budgetary discipline, but that it would be right to concentrate a higher proportion of them on the less prosperous member states, particularly Spain and Portugal.

The third aspect was how the Community should be financed. We discussed proposals put forward by the Commission for restructuring member states' contributions to the Community budget in order to make the arrangements more fairly reflect national prosperity. Decisions on the future level of the Community's own resources will be taken only when improved budget discipline arrangements have been worked out in detail. I made it absolutely clear that we are not prepared to see any dilution of our Fontainebleau abatement.

Much credit is due to the fair, indeed courageous, chairmanship of the Danish Prime Minister, Mr. Schluter, for the progress which we made. None the less, the large number of issues to be settled, and the amount of detail involved, meant that we were unable to finish our work at this meeting, the more so because each Government naturally want to be able to judge the results as a whole.

The Council therefore adjourned and will resume its discussion under German chairmanship in Brussels on 11 and 12 February, building on the work done at the Copenhagen meeting. On foreign policy questions, we issued statements on East-West relations, Afghanistan and the middle east. Texts are in the Library of the House. We recognised the importance of the meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev and of the INF agreement which will be signed at it.

We urged the Soviet Union to withdraw from Afghanistan by a set date in 1988, and to agree to the establishment of an independent, transitional Government there. We also called for action to enforce implementation of Security Council resolution 598 on the Iran-Iraq conflict by means of a follow-up resolution.

Heads of Government also discussed the world financial situation. We welcomed the agreement between the Administration and Congress to reduce the United States budget deficit. We confirmed our commitment to run our economies soundly, keeping down inflation and encouraging enterprise. We stressed the importance of taking the necessary steps to have a Europe free from trade barriers by 1992.

In conclusion, the Council represented a significant move in our direction, namely towards effective and binding control of Community spending. A great deal of work remains to be done before the next Council, but the United Kingdom's determination to secure such control is very well understood and will not change.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): After the Copenhagen summit, may I welcome the Prime Minister's recognition that what she hailed as "an effective discipline" and a "lasting" agreement on the European Community budget at Fontainebleau in 1984 has, in practice, been neither effective nor disciplined and certainly not lasting. I also welcome the Prime Minister's report that there was a significant move towards an effective and binding control on community spending at the Copenhagen summit. Arising from that, may I ask the right hon. Lady what she intends to do before, and at the Brussels special summit in the New Year, to ensure that the move towards legally binding and effective controls on farm spending is complete and to ensure that Brussels in 1988 is not Fontainebleau revisited?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) is correct in saying that the controls that we wished to be binding at Fontainebleau and which were contained in a minute and in a resolution were not binding because the guidelines were not respected. That is why we made it clear at the last European Council meeting that the controls this time must be embodied in regulations so that they are legally binding.

At that particular Council meeting, when discussing those regulations, we wanted the price controls to be automatically applied the moment it was known that there were surpluses for the year in question. It was in getting those price controls automatically applied by the

Commission that called for a great deal of debate because, undoubtedly, there were countries that wished to weaken the mechanism and weaken the control of agricultural surpluses through the method by which they were applied.

I am sorry that that is a complicated answer, but it was a complicated question. It is absolutely vital that we get detailed regulations embodied so that they can be applied by the Commission and that they are legally binding.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): In view of the near impossibility of getting agreement on anything in a 12-member Community, and in view of the extremely helpful role played by the Commission in supporting the manifestly sensible proposals put forward by my right hon. Friend and the Government, is it not clearly in British interests that the Commission should play a larger role in reaching decisions within the Community?

The Prime Minister: The Commission had a number of draft regulations, and let us have those as long ago as last September. The Council of Agriculture Ministers had considered them, but had not been able to agree on them. We took the three main ones, but there are many others related to other commodities.

It has been our objective, in accordance with what my hon. Friend wishes, to give the Commission a bigger role. It has to apply the method automatically. There was an attempt to take it back to the Agriculture Council, but many of us felt that, if the decisions went back to the Council, price control reductions would never be made. We are proceeding in the direction that my hon. Friend wishes.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is this really the best that the Prime Minister can do—to report that she has no practical measures to report to the House to implement the June agreements? Is it not a sad commentary on Britain's powerlessness in the face of world economic matters that the best that the summit members can do is to stand on the sidelines and congratulate the United States Administration and Congress on reaching agreement, because they cannot co-ordinate their own domestic responses to this dangerous position?

The Prime Minister: May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Community has 12 members? I am sure that, in his party, he would consider 12 members quite a lot. We have to get agreement among all those 12 members. Each of them is naturally concerned to do the best that is possible for their own country, as each of them has a veto. But we must agree on broad general principles, such as not piling up more agricultural surpluses, and methods of getting rid of the existing surpluses. That is not easy, and I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would wish to restrict debate or discussion. I hope that, had he been at that Council meeting, he would think that we had done a great deal of work which will count in reaching the final conclusions.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend recall that the House last agreed to an increase in own resources on the clear understanding that there would be effective budgetary discipline? It would therefore be quite wrong for her to come back to the House and ask for a further increase to achieve the same objective. Will she say what steps are proposed at present to prevent the Community from spending money that it does not have?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend is among the first to know about detailed and effective control. What has happened, as he will know, is that the Commission has had directions about the maximum spending for agriculture. The Agriculture Ministers, meeting in their own Council, have come up with decisions which are also binding on the Commission, but their decisions amounted to more than the money available. We simply must stop that position, and that is why the Commission is now drafting binding regulations. It is up to us, the separate member states, to ensure that those regulations are effective, however detailed they may be. That is the method by which we are proceeding, and that is why we said that we would give no figure for increase of own resources until we had made certain that the regulations would be binding.

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): Does my right hon. Friend accept that she is bound to be under intense pressure to reach a compromise in February, ahead of the French general election, and while the Germans hold the chairmanship? Will she undertake to resist such pressure, knowing that she will have the support of the whole House in going for a long-term deal that is delayed, rather than yet another short-term and unsatisfactory compromise?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. We shall indeed be under intense pressure, but we also apply intense pressure, and several of us are determined to tackle the problem of agricultural surpluses. We have put forward a specific proposal that, as long as other countries did the same, we would be prepared to depreciate the agricultural surpluses against our own budget. We thought that it would be better to start with a clean slate. However, although we were prepared to do that, not enough other countries were prepared to do the same.

The next point is to make certain that we do not build up future agricultural surpluses. Therein lies the difficulty. It is clear that a number of countries are more concerned to continue with the considerable incomes received by their own farmers, regardless of the surpluses that build up. We cannot take that view: the matter must be dealt with, and this time we must not run away from dealing with it.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Is it not the case that, despite eight years of bluster, rhetoric and phoney deadlines, the burden of the common agricultural policy on the British taxpayer is as bad now as it has ever been? Is it not further the case that the only way we shall achieve a sensible food policy in this country is when decisions are made in Britain and not in Brussels?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. Farmers here have benefited very considerably from the common agricultural policy, as a result of which we grow a much bigger proportion of our own food than we used to. That has been beneficial to the economy. Nevertheless, our farmers are the first to understand that we cannot together go on accumulating surpluses and that we need to get rid of the overhang of past surpluses. They are being very realistic and are asking us to take proper decisions because they know that, if we go on as we are at present, there will be an emergency, and the changes that we would then have to make would be much more dramatic and not give them time to plan for the future. I think that they are behind us in the reasonable line that we are taking over the surpluses.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Does the Prime Minister agree that the intended completion of the internal market by 1992 will bring major benefits to the industrial countries, but that there is no guarantee that those benefits will be evenly distributed to the poorer regions of the Community unless there is a strong regional policy. Does she also agree that such a policy can only be implemented if she accepts the Commission's proposal for a doubling of the structural funds and for a reduction of the regions to which they apply? The regions suggested by the Commission are Portugal, Greece, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, French overseas departments and parts of Spain. Will she tell us why she has reduced the list to Spain and Portugal? Does she not agree that the reforms of the common agricultural policy will hit hard those very same regions, thereby underlining the urgency of developing that regional policy?

The Prime Minister: The structural funds have increased in real terms by 47 per cent. since Fontainebleau in 1984 — a very considerable increase. It is totally unreasonable to ask now for a further doubling of those structural funds. That is a view taken by the majority of the nations in the Community. Of course, those who get far more out of the Community than they put in wish to vote for increases in structural funds, but they, too, must be reasonable.

A part of the increase in the funds, going particularly to Spain and Portugal, we thought was justified. One must remember, in making provision for writing off the surplus agricultural produce, that Spain and Portugal were not responsible in any way for it, yet might have to pay for some of it. So it seems reasonable, as their needs are greater than those of other countries, that they should have a larger part of the increase in the funds than other countries will have.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Did my right hon. Friend point out that if agricultural expenditure is at last controlled there will be no need for any increase in own resources? Did she further point out that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to get approval for any proposal for an increase in own resources in this House?

The Prime Minister: I know my hon. Friend's views on this. I know that technically he is correct, if one could have a very sharp reduction in the amount of food being produced now and also an actual disposal of all the surpluses. But, as he knows, about half the total budget goes towards storing and disposing of surpluses and not a great deal of it goes to farmers. He is therefore asking for too much at once. We must act at a speed which our farmers can plan for and which will be realistic. That will be the view that we shall take.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is there not a possible solution in procedure? Is it not a fact that the Agriculture Ministers, when they disagree, remit their difficulties to the Agriculture Council? Why do they not remit them to the Finance Council? Would it not be better for them to do so, for the Finance Council to set the limit and then for the Agriculture Ministers to decide how the money is to be spent? Why can the Council of Ministers not arrange for that sequence of events before Brussels, so that it is the combined Finance Ministers who decide and the Agriculture Ministers who execute?

The Prime Minister: I think that there is a fundamental fallacy in what the hon. Gentleman is saying. He believes that if all decisions went to Finance Ministers they would all be quite tough. Some Finance Ministers are not like ours — they are not nearly as good. Some Finance Ministers are very tough until it comes to agricultural spending, and then they become almost like Agriculture Ministers. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's scheme would collapse, which is why we must get the method closely written down in detail in the regulations. It must be automatic in its application, so that a given amount of increase in any particular product must be assessed towards the end of the year and must result in a given amount of reduction in the price for that product. That will have its impact in future years.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her successful opposition to the oils and fats tax, which would have hit consumers and Third-world suppliers and, paradoxically, would have taxed the consumption of vegetable oils and encouraged the consumption of animal fats.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The oils and fats tax was discussed four separate times at the last European Council meeting at Brussels. Four of us fought it off each time, on the grounds that if there is a surplus of something it is quite absurd to put up the price. In any case, we do not want the price to be put up for the housewife, who is the ultimate consumer. I believe that the matter is now dead. Fortunately, we received many representations from overseas countries, some of whose only possible exports — to pay for imports from other countries — are those very oils and fats that the Community wanted to tax.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Lady said that there was a brief discussion on the Iran-Iraq war. Did she have an opportunity to discuss with the French Prime Minister the release of the French hostages? She may have seen in today's press that some of the Iranian opposition forces in France have been arrested; there is fear that this could have been part of a deal. If those Iranians return to Iran they are dead; there is no question about that. Therefore, will the right hon. Lady say what her thinking, and that of the Government, is on this matter, because we all want the hostages out, but we do not want innocent people who oppose regimes such as that in Iran to be sent back and faced with the death penalty.

The Prime Minister: The only way that I can answer the hon. Gentleman — I am not responsible for French matters—is to say, yes, I did have a bilateral discussion with the Prime Minister of France, who assured me that no ransom money at all has been paid for the hostages, and that there was no question of supplying arms to Iran. With regard to other matters, it is for the French Government to reply. I can only say to the hon. Gentleman that just because people are beng deported it does not mean that they are being deported to their country of origin.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend believe that the lessons of Fontainebleau— [HON. MEMBERS: "—bleu."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) must ask a question of the Prime Minster and not address those below the Gangway.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend believe that the other members of the Community have learnt the lesson of Fontainebleau as thoroughly as we have? Does she believe that they are as committed as we are to financial discipline in the Community in the future? Will my right hon. Friend go to Brussels in February with the same ends and the same determination as when she went to Copenhagen?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the last part of my hon. Friend's question is yes, I shall go with the same determination. Not all our colleagues are as committed to financial discipline as we are, which is why we had difficulty in fashioning the details of the regulation. That, too, will be one of the things that will take up most of our time at the next Council. We shall have to do a great deal of work in the meantime to make it clear that we must have the detailed regulations and that they must be effective. We shall go with the same determination; it is quite right that it might not be settled at the next Council, but I believe that it will be settled at the following one in June.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Prime Minister follow up her brief chat at Copenhagen with Mr. Haughey and request the extradition of Charles Caulfield who is living openly in the Irish Republic and is believed to have masterminded the Enniskillen Remembrance day massacre? He is believed to have been responsible, with others in a four-man hit squad, for the murder of over 100 people in Northern Ireland and is presently believed to be controlling and organising IRA activities in Fermanagh.

The Prime Minister: I let the Taoiseach know of my strong views on extradition and the changes that have been made in the same terms as I spoke about them to the House. I think that he knew the depth of feeling, both my own and that of the House. He has assured me that, if the changes are not satisfactory and do not result in effective extradition procedures, they will, as he told the Dail, be reviewed. People cannot be found guilty unless they are brought before a court, and he is anxious that those accused of crime be brought before a proper court to be found innocent or guilty.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although most people in Europe now accept that agricultural expenditure must be restrained, there is an unhealthy tendency to regard the social, regional and all other funds as acceptable alternatives that can therefore be increased? Does she agree that it is against precisely such forms of wasteful and arbitrary public expenditure that she has fought in this country for eight years? Will she do the same in Europe?

The Prime Minister: Yes, there is a tendency to make extra demands on the Community budget. When we bear in mind that three countries make net contributions to the budget and nine countries take out net benefits, we have quite a battle to make certain that the results are reasonable. I agree with my hon. Friend that we cannot have effective financial discipline if considerable demands are made. We must watch that expenditure as closely as we watch expenditure on our national budget.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): These negotiations are dragging on a bit, aren't they? Will the Prime Minister tell us whether the negotiations to deal with the Common Market's budget and forecast bankruptcy will be settled before the merger negotiations that are taking place between the Liberals and the Social Democrats? May I give her a forecast? I think that both sets of negotiations will end in tears.

The Prime Minister: I think that one set of negotiations will not end in tears.

Hon. Members: Which?

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the last set of strictly binding regulations presented to the House have proved to be a sick joke—with, for example, a record 500,000 tonnes of butter having been sold to Russia at a price of 6p a pound in the past seven months—does the Prime Minister agree that an agreement that does not curb agricultural production is nonsense? How can she call the proposals for cereals "tough", when all that is proposed is a 5 per cent. reduction in price after a level which exceeds the current level of production? Surely we need real answers to this and not just another cop-out.

The Prime Minister: The level of production of cereals is still a matter for argument and we are arguing precisely upon the point made by my hon. Friend.

As my hon. Friend is aware, butter surpluses are going down. I am afraid that one of the ways surpluses are reduced is by selling off to countries that are prepared to buy them. The only alternative would be to dispose of them as waste, and that would be repugnant to many people. We have to try to dispose of them as best we may, because I do not have the slightest shadow of doubt that the great overhang of surpluses has a damaging effect on world prices. Therefore, we dispose of them to those who can buy them and through food aid. However, butter for Africa is not in great demand.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): As it is the Government's stated policy to reduce citizens' dependency on the state, will the Prime Minister confirm that that is her policy for the farming community, too? If it is not, how much support for the farming community is she going for?

The Prime Minister: That is being argued about in the Community at the moment, to determine what should be the agricultural guideline. This year, agricultural spending in the Community has been of the order of 27,000 million ecu and we are arguing about the guideline for the future. It is true that we wish to reduce dependency on the state and we must remember that the produce of most farmers does not come near the Community or the Commission in any way, because the farmers grow and sell it themselves. It is only that which goes into intervention or to export which comes with the guidelines that I have described.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will my right hon. Friend remember the words of Cicero—that what to some is stubborness is to others pertinacity? Will she remember that it is offensive to ordinary people in this country that half the budget of the EEC is just wasted and note that the agricultural community of Scotland is delighted that she has had the principle to hold out for a real, honourable and lasting agreement?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I believe that we are getting the Commission — and a bigger and bigger proportion of members of the Community—on our side. It will still be a problem to get rid of those surpluses. As I said earlier, I wanted a clean slate approach, under which each of us

[The Prime Minister]

wrote off surpluses against our own budgets. It is now proposed that surpluses be written off against the Community budget—but by the year 1992, so by that time there should only be strategic surpluses and not the great overhang of surpluses that we have at present.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Despite all the Prime Minister's comments about stabilisers, the simple fact is that we have failed to achieve an acceptable solution to the common agricultural policy and to the budgetary problems of the EEC. Does the Prime Minister genuinely believe that a real solution acceptable to this country will be achieved by next spring, or will she be tempted to follow the solution that she has followed on other issues by going for the abolition of the common agricultural policy and the surcharging and disqualification of those not able to fix a budget by the appropriate time?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, 12 of us have to agree. Most of us are determined to have agricultural stabilisers for each and every commodity, and most of us want them to be effective. There is, indeed, a problem with agricultural surpluses. I remember that, when I first came into politics, it was asserted that we would have the problem of world food shortages, yet now there are surpluses. There are enormous competitive subsidies on the part of the United States, Europe and Japan. In the economic summit, we talk about getting those down as part of a joint effort. We also discuss it in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and in the GATT round. We need concerted action by the 12 members of the Community, and with the United States, Japan and other agricultural producers.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I welcome what my right hon. Friend said about Afghanistan, but will she go a little further and say what contacts are being made with the Soviet Union in an effort to persuade it to modify its position and get out of Afghanistan as soon as possible?

The Prime Minister: Both my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I spoke about the matter yesterday, and I have not the slightest shadow of doubt that it will be spoken about now by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, too, is now trying to reach a solution. We were particularly anxious—as the Soviet Union is negotiating through the United Nations—to make it clear that the occupation of Afghanistan was unacceptable to the West and that we called for a withdrawal during the next year. The matter will be considered further through the United Nations.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): More than once this afternoon the Prime Minister has talked of the need to control agricultural surpluses. I am sure that the right hon. Lady is aware that we are not yet self-sufficient in sheepmeat production. She will be aware, too, of the importance of sheepmeat to producers in Wales and particularly of the importance of the sheep variable premium, worth about £22·8 million a year, to Welsh sheep producers. Will the right hon. Lady ensure that the price support mechanisms available after the talks are concluded will be no less than they are at present and that Welsh sheep farmers will continue to enjoy the fullest support?

The Prime Minister: We did not discuss the sheepmeat regime. It has been discussed in the Council of Agriculture Ministers, and I assume that it will be further discussed by that body. We do not have a measure in the Community of whether we are self-sufficient. If we took that measure there would never be any oils or fats imported into the Community from any other country. If we stopped other countries exporting to us—particularly some of the Third-world countries—they would have no money to buy our exports of manufactured products. We do not make it a test of production that we should be self-sufficient. If we did, it would have a very damaging effect on New Zealand, which has come a long way—and fought in two world wars—to support us. The sheepmeat regime will be considered further by the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. Friend's statement will be welcomed by farmers and consumers in my constituency as a robust and resolute stand to get down agricultural spending as part of the budget. Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the considerable sacrifices made by dairy farmers in my constituency since milk quotas, which they now accept, were introduced in 1984? Will she ensure that our European partners are aware that our farmers want a fair system, but a system that guarantees them a stable income?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. Milk quotas are an example of a successful method of reducing agricultural production in a particular commodity. At first, they put up milk production, but now they are acting to get it down. That shows that other stabilisers could have equal success in getting rid of the surpluses that we still possess.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Prime Minister agree that since 1983—during the operation of the Fontainebleau agreement—we have contributed £4·4 billion to the Common Market? Would she confirm that 70 per cent. of the Common Market budget goes on the common agricultural policy and that strong vested interests prevent the CAP from being changed and that budget being reduced? Will she also confirm that our balance of trade in manufactured goods is about £10 billion in deficit, and will she not follow the bold and courageous leadership that she so admires in Communist Mr. Gorbachev and prepare alternative plans for withdrawal from the Common Market—in case the next summit is as disastrous as Copenhagen?

The Prime Minister: No, and I was not aware that that was Labour party policy. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is enunciating from the Front Bench below the Gangway a new policy. That would be devastating to many of our manufacturing industries because the greater part of our exports go to Europe. If the hon. Gentleman would join us in trying to get good design, low industrial costs and greater efficiency, we should be able to take advantage of the Common Market to put up our manufacturing exports.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will no doubt be aware that the farming community in the north of England will very much welcome her determination to have budgetary restraint in the community. Will she tell the House whether the opening of the Community to British financial services was considered at the Copenhagen summit, as that is looked for by the banks and insurance companies of this country?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. We constantly tell our partners in the Community that while there is largely a free market in manufactured goods — there are still some barriers, although not necessarily monetary barriers — there is not a common market in services. When we get one — by 1992 — it will be of very great advantage to our service industries and we should be able to put up our balance of trade and services with the Community.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the Prime Minister had brought to her attention an article in *The Independent* last Friday by Nicholas Ashford on "The Thatcher dominance of foreign policy", which is a serious discussion about the Prime Minister's relations with the Foreign Office? Can the right hon. Lady explain why her key adviser in Copenhagen, as in so many other matters, Mr. Charles Powell, has remained in post for four years, considerably longer than would normally have been expected—Mr. Ashford's question as well as mine?

The Prime Minister: I am very well satisfied with all the advice that we get from the Foreign Office on European matters—very well satisfied.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that, in the difficult negotiations—in which she is to be congratulated on her firmness—in the final analysis Scottish farmers expect her to deliver a fair and reasonable agreement and they would rather wait for a proper and final agreement that is seen to be fair than have a botched-up one which, at the end of the day, will bring no credit to anyone?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Yes, our farmers realise that the problem must be dealt with. They want it to be dealt with so that they know how to plan for the future both in arable crops and livestock, and that is our objective.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why does not the Prime Minister come clean and admit to the House that the Copenhagen summit was a complete fiasco and a failure with a lot of discussion about matters over which the EEC has effectively no control, such as the Iran-Iraq war and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan? Since she is so concerned about disposing of the food mountains and was unable to reach an agreement on the CAP, why does not she dispose of the food mountains to the pensioners of Britain this Christmas? In my constituency of Newham, we have tonnes of beef and butter. Will she tell the pensioners of Newham, and, indeed, the rest of the country, that they can get their NHS choppers into those food mountains this Christmas?

The Prime Minister: First, the hon. Gentleman was not at Copenhagen. It was not a fiasco; it was a very good meeting and very thorough. The hon. Gentleman has a habit of talking about meetings at which he was not present and about which he does not know. If one were to dispose of the present butter surpluses, they would immediately be replaced by new ones, because people would not buy the butter that is presently being produced but would go for the older butter, so there would be no increase in consumption.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Was the hon. Gentleman here for the statement?

Mr. Morley: Yes, Sir.

In the discussions about reducing the grain and cereal surpluses, was there any discussion about the use of nitrate fertilisers and their reduction, in view of their disastrous effect in some parts of Britain and also in line with the EEC's stated policy of balancing the agricultural and environmental needs of different nations?

The Prime Minister: No, we did not discuss that matter. We were concerned to make sure that, if there were increases in production, there would be an automatic reduction in price. Of course, increases in production can result from an increase in area or an increase in productivity. There are other measures to deal with farming by more natural methods, but we did not discuss them.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

4.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Welsh rate support grant report 1988-89 and the supplementary reports for 1984-85 and 1985-86, which I have today laid before the House.

I am today announcing the details of the 1988-89 settlement to the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. Copies of the text of my statement to the consultative council, together with a number of key statistical tables, have been placed in the Library.

Before I give details of the settlement I shall refer briefly to the second supplementary reports for 1984-85 and 1985-86, which are based on authorities' audited outturn expenditure and are intended to be the final reports for those years. The 1984-85 report increases aggregate Exchequer grant by £9·5 million and makes provision for an increase in relevant expenditure and additional grant holdback. The 1985-86 report increases the aggregate Exchequer grant by £9·7 million. It restores grant previously withheld and increases provision for relevant expenditure.

I announced my proposals for 1988-89 to the House in July, and these have been the subject of consultations with the local authority associations. The report takes account of their views. The settlement for 1988-89 has six main elements. First, provision for relevant expenditure will be set at £1,894 million. This is £112·9 million or 6·3 per cent. over 1987-88 budgets, 1·8 per cent. over the expected rate of inflation and £8 million higher than the amount that I announced in July. Secondly, the current expenditure provision is set at £1,640 million, an increase of £81·9 million or 5·3 per cent. over 1987-88 budgets and 0·8 per cent. above the expected rate of inflation. Thirdly, aggregate Exchequer grant is £1,256 million, an increase of £80·9 million or 6·9 per cent. over last year. Fourthly, specific and supplementary grants total £241·2 million, an increase of 5·8 per cent. on 1987-88. Fifthly, domestic rate relief grant remains unchanged at 18·5p in the pound, and in aggregate totals £27 million. Sixthly, block grant is £987·8 million, an increase of £66·9 million or 7·3 per cent. over last year.

I have decided to retain the same block grant mechanisms as those used in the present year and have restricted changes to the methodology used in assessing needs to those requested by the local authority associations. I have thus provided the stability sought by the local authority associations. This is particularly important as the present rate support grant system reaches its penultimate year. The threshold and the slope of the poundage schedule remain unchanged, and multipliers will limit the effects of certain year-on-year changes in grant entitlement.

The settlement provides significant rating benefits for councils which increase spending by less than the anticipated rate of inflation. Their decisions will be rewarded with additional grant, with the obvious and welcome consequence of lower rate rises. Authorities' grant entitlements are entirely the outcome of their own spending decisions. They will get the grant to which they are entitled.

The 1988–89 settlement is fair and realistic. The increases in all the main components — relevant expenditure, current expenditure, aggregate Exchequer grant and block grant—are well above the forecast rate of inflation. I hope that all councils in Wales will respond to this settlement, in the interests of their ratepayers, by keeping spending close to my plans, by making further progress towards greater efficiency and by securing moderate wage increases. They have a responsibility to their ratepayers to do so and to budget for low rate rises.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I thank the Secretary of State for the fact of the statement, if not for its contents. It makes a pleasant change from Government by press release.

Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the key figures for the level and quality of our services are the current expenditure figure and the level of grant? Will he further confirm that, because the current expenditure figure covers salaries, wages and transport, it inevitably rises faster than the retail prices index, which, after all, reflects only the average spending pattern of the average family, so comparisons with a 4·5 per cent. change in the cost of living are irrelevant, inadequate and misleading?

In that context, will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that his officials, in conjunction with the county officials, take part in an expenditure sub-group at which they try to agree the expenditure figure that will be necessary to sustain the existing level of services based upon the existing policies? Does he confirm that they have identified that the standstill increase would mean plus 11 per cent. rather than the 5·3 per cent. that he has announced today? That would require £1,700 million, not the £1,640 million that he has announced today. Therefore, we are faced with a shortfall in Wales of £60 million just to sustain services.

Will the right hon. Gentleman further confirm that the 5·3 per cent. increase is below the 7 per cent. increase in spending that has been allowed for England, and that that change alone has robbed Wales of £27 million?

Mr. Peter Walker: That is not true.

Mr. Williams: If it is not true, the right hon. Gentleman can show why later. I shall be only too happy if he does so.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also bear in mind that the £60 million shortfall will be seen either as the scale of cuts that are necessary in services, or as the extra burden that will have to be borne by the Welsh ratepayers? In that context, does he recognise that, because of the penalty system, his statement means that cuts in services will be accompanied by increases in rates in Wales?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that yet again the percentage of Government grant has decreased from 66·7 to 66·3 per cent., itself a cut of £6 million? Does he recognise that, as a result of that percentage change, compared with the percentage of rate support grant that was paid in 1978-79, since the Government took office Wales has suffered a cumulative loss of rate support grant of £750 million? That is a massive deflation for Wales. Councils have had to find £750 million since then to replace that Government grant. It means that a sum of £750 million has been transferred at a cost to the Welsh taxpayer and that £750 million is not available for other desperate needs in Wales.

Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind that today's inadequate and pathetic announcement follows last week's

announcement, by written answer, of capital expenditure for the councils next year which, on his own terms, represents a real cut of £10 million?

On a point of detail concerning the first sub-paragraph on page 2 of the statement, dealing with relevant expenditure, will the right hon. Gentleman state whether the £8 million extra that is referred to is mainly an adjustment that is needed to recognise the fact that in the past public debt charges have been based on public expenditure White Paper figures which have been wildly out of date and which have led to the Welsh authorities being robbed in the past?

Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the failure to recognise the impact of salary increases — *[Interruption.]* They are important to the people of Wales. Conservative Members may not want the people of Wales to know about this, but I would bet that the press handout is several pages longer than the statement that was given to the House. We shall ask our questions whether or not the Government like it. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the failure to recognise the impact of salary increases over the whole range of local government employees covers the teachers' increase of 16 per cent., but refuses to recognise the repercussive effect of that on, for example, further education, for which a 4 per cent. figure is insisted on and used in the calculations?

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that a 4 per cent. figure was used in relation to manual workers, for whom there has been a settlement of 10·6 per cent.? Will he also confirm that, among manual workers, home helps have received a 17 per cent. increase — not because of acquisitiveness on their part, but because they have been asked to change their patterns of work? They have been asked not only to do home help work, but to become carers and to take on the work that was previously done in old people's homes, which are now being closed and cut.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that there is no provision in the settlement for the fact that next year districts will incur the cost of starting the planning stages, which will be considerable, for the introduction of the community tax? Will he further confirm that the settlement does not make any provision for the extra costs that councils will incur in preparing for the Government's education initiatives, such as the decentralisation of school spending, which again must be prepared in advance, and threfore, must be financed by ratepayers? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness to the House, I feel bound to say that there will be a debate on these matters and that many of the issues raised by the right hon. Gentleman can be gone into in detail then. This is the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr. Williams: Every one has been a question, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, every one has been a different and relevant question to which the people of Wales want an answer.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that last year his predecessor stated that predictions of an increase of 10 to 20 per cent. in rates would not be necessary because last year's settlement had been a "very good" one? Indeed, he said:

> "In no case will the rate bill in districts increase by anything like that amount."

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that history has proved that wrong and that 10 of the 37 districts increased their rates by 10 per cent., that two did so by over 20 per cent. and one by 26 per cent.? That happened following what was supposed to be a "very good" settlement. The right hon. Gentleman has made no such grandiose claims for this settlement, so what does he expect the rate increases to be this year? Does he agree that as a result of this settlement rate increases will be greater than the rate of inflation generally and, in some cases, possibly as much as 15 per cent.?

In the past eight days the Secretary of State has announced cuts in councils' capital grant and a standstill in our health provision in Wales. Today he has announced a cut in council-provided services, coupled with a guaranteed increase in rate demands. How does the right hon. Gentleman account for his public protestations of concern and care for Wales, when his actions are calculated to deepen and worsen all the problems of Wales?

Mr. Walker: I have just checked, and my press handout is about half the size of my statement to the House, but not one tenth of the size of the statement that the right hon. Gentleman has just made. The right hon. Gentleman concluded with references to cuts and reductions, not one of which is true. My statement represents a real increase in the rate support grant. As regards local government expenditure, the increase that was announced for health expenditure was exactly the same. What amazes me is that the right hon. Gentleman served as a Minister in a Labour Government who cut capital expenditure on health by 30 per cent. in one year and reduced nurses' salaries by more than 20 per cent. over the whole period of that Government.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State is evading the question.

Mr. Walker: No, I am answering it.

Local authorities have, of course, made estimates and said that they would like more money. However, their highest estimate was for an increase of a further £60 million. What does the right hon. Gentleman think the local authorities were saying during the years when local authority expenditure in Wales decreased, because over the four years of the previous Labour Government it decreased by 4 per cent.? What did the local authority associations say then? I am delighted to say that, under this Government, local authority expenditure in Wales has increased by 11 per cent. in real terms. That should be compared with the 4 per cent. reduction of the previous Labour Government.

Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman wishes to concentrate, as he did, on a comparison with England. As the right hon. Gentleman has forced an argument, I shall give him those comparisons with England and with Scotland. The increase in relevant expenditure in Wales will be 6·3 per cent., and it will be 3·6 per cent. in England. Similarly, the increase for Scotland will be 3·6 per cent., compared with the 6·3 per cent. for Wales. The figures for the aggregate Exchequer grant show the same, that Wales has done very well, and I am delighted about that.

The right hon. Gentleman said that we had forgotten about all the wage increases. There have been increases for manual workers, and it is outrageous to suggest that the main part of the manual workers' increases is for home helps who will care especially for old people. If the right hon. Gentleman knows anything about the totality of the expenditure on manual workers, he should know that that

[Mr. Walker]

is a small fraction of the total. He is obviously saying to the people of Wales, "We are quite happy to have large increases that are way above the rate of inflation, but we expect the Government, not the people of Wales, to finance them." Wales is to receive a rate support grant of 66 per cent. from the Government, and again that is far higher than the figure for England or Scotland. Indeed, if councils are prudent and sensible and improve efficiency, rate increases in Wales will be low this year because of that totality.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call Back-Bench Members, I repeat that there will be a debate on this matter. Therefore, I ask for brief questions because this is a private Members' day and there is great pressure to be called in the subsequent debates.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that public expenditure in Wales remains at a sufficiently high level to cope with the damage that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has done by once again shooting his foot as well as the Labour party? In view of my right hon. Friend's success in securing a higher increase in rate support grant for Wales than has been secured for Scotland and England, does he accept that a duty lies on local authorities in Wales to reduce their expenditure and increase their efficiency to the maximum extent that they possibly can?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir, and I have every reason to believe that local authorities in Wales are anxious to find every way of improving their efficiency and are fully collaborating on ideas and concepts to do that. I hope that that will enable them to provide better services at a lower and more effective cost for the current year.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Is the Secretary of State aware that this year's actual outturn will include a backdating of the manual settlement, with a restructuring back to September, and that it will mean an 11 per cent. increase for at least half the year? Therefore, when the right hon. Gentleman uses percentage comparisons, does he do so on a base that includes that increase in this financial year and, likewise, the increase for white collar workers of 7 per cent.? Will he confirm that adequate money is available for county councils, in particular, to carry out the responsibilities under the disabled persons legislation, which involves additional expenditure? Will he confirm also that resources will be available for flood control, which will continue into the next financial year?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I can confirm that. On the second point, relating to the manual workers' claim, there will be implications for the coming year. Earlier today I spoke to local authorities in Wales. They argued that, although there is a substantial increase above the rate of inflation, there is also an improvement in productivity, and that if there is an improvement in productivity during the coming year, it will balance the increased cost of the expenditure. I hope that that will be the case. It is a substantial claim. If there is no improvement in productivity as a result, it will add to the burden on ratepayers in Wales.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on obtaining a generous settlement for Wales. As he rightly pointed out, it is better than those for England and Scotland. Will he confirm that the settlement should also be favourable for Welsh ratepayers and will lead to no more than low rate rises, provided that local authorities concentrate on their statutory obligations? Will he try to get that message across to Clwyd county council in particular? At the moment, an additional 34 primary school teachers are, in effect, being sacrificed to allow for loan repayments, maintenance and running costs of a highly dubious tourism project.

Mr. Walker: On the last point, I note what my hon. Friend said. I am sure that Clwyd county council will note it, too. It is a provision that we are making this year for those local authorities which concentrate on their statutory responsibilities and do their best to improve efficiency. It will be good news for ratepayers in Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The report is not as realistic and fair as the right hon. Gentleman maintained. Education looms large in the 1988-89 report that he presented today. Is the provision sufficient to save Connah's Quay high school from closure? Parents and staff are deeply concerned about the likelihood of closure. Will provision be sufficient to prevent the closure of Golftyn infant school? I have had strong representations from parents. I ask him to read Her Majesty's inspector's report on Wales. He will see that it is clearly stated that a great deal of money is needed to cope with the bad state of classrooms and the need for new equipment and textbooks. Does he say that the money that Her Majesty's inspector says is needed for 1988-89 will be provided?

Mr. Walker: Over the past couple of years, there has been an improvement in capital allocations for educational purposes. On the question of closures, the hon. Gentleman will understand that I am unable to comment specifically on the two cases that he quoted. It is true to say that in the Principality as a whole there will be school closures, not as a result of financial pressures, but because of the changing demography of some areas. Quite a few proposals are coming up on that basis. The provisions that have been made, and the priorities that we have given, mean that there will be better provision for educational buildings.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, unlike the right hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), the people of Wales will recognise the settlement, which is 1·8 per cent. above the rate of inflation, as good news for Wales? Will he point out to local authorities that it is important that they keep their wage demands under control? That is one way in which they can moderate demands on ratepayers. Will he point out also to local authorities in Wales that there are 125,000 surplus places in our schools, which cost £20 million a year, and that we need to take action on the matter? Will he point out also to the people of Dyfed, of which I represent part, that if Dyfed county council follows the good advice in the settlement, it should be able to reduce its rates by 2·1 per cent.?

Mr. Walker: I am sure that the county council will note my hon. Friend's remarks about its prospects in relation to rates. Many education authorities throughout Wales are coming forward with proposals for school closures because of demographic changes. That is always a difficult thing for them to do. As all of us who have been hon.

Members for any length of time know, any school closure anywhere is a matter of distress for the parents and pupils whom it affects. There is no doubt that there is a case in many parts of Wales for changes in school structures to take place.

In their negotiations on wage increases, it is important for local authorities to recognise that if they go ahead with wage increases that are way above the rate of inflation and are not linked with improved productivity, there will be an increased burden upon ratepayers.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): As the right hon. Gentleman commences his slow ascent up the learning curve of Welsh local government and central Government finance to local government, may I ask whether he agrees that the combination of his two announcements will cause great difficulties to local authorities in Wales? In particular, will he comment on the cancellation of the expected funding for next year of the Butetown link in south Glamorgan? Does not the cancellation of the expected announcement of a road of great importance to inner-city regeneration in south Wales mean that next year we could have disaster in the docklands in Cardiff?

Mr. Walker: It is not a cancellation; it is looking at the financial year for which provision was originally made. It was expected to start at the end of 1988. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there have been suggestions of an alternative to it, which are being considered at present. I must await that consideration. In view of that, it is more likely that it will start in the following financial year. Provision will be made for it then.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): Has the Secretary of State made any provision for increased housing expenditure? In particular, will he free the product of council house sales and allow councils to build more housing for rent? What is his estimate of the effect of public sector pay awards? Because of population sparsity, counties such as Powys are having great difficulty in financing their budgets. In the coming year it is likely that Powys will have a double figure rate increase because of the high cost of providing services there.

Mr. Walker: I am delighted to say that within the specific grant provisions we have made a substantial increase in the amount provided for the important matter of home improvements. The hon. Gentleman should note that it is significant that the increase that we are providing for next year is almost equivalent to the total expenditure that was made in the last year of the last Labour Government. Therefore, our record on house improvements is substantial. Indeed, it dwarfs anything that was done by our predecessors.

The answer to the question about the specific problems of Powys is that to some extent population problems are taken into consideration in the calculations. I hope that the provisions in the Housing Bill that is about to come before the House will help in respect of rented accommodation.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State recently made a statement on his great interest in and desire to improve the valleys. He said that they were beset with problems and difficulties that were equivalent to those in any inner-city area. Where in the settlement is there any hope for valley authorities? Will they have anything to do the job that the Secretary of State said needs to be done? Does he intend to hand over local government powers to quangos such as the Welsh Development Agency and other organisations so that they may do local government's job for it?

Mr. Walker: One must look at the figures and the specific grants. From the visit that I made with the hon. Gentleman to his constituency, I know that one of the greatest problems in his constituency, as in all valley constituencies, is that of house improvements. I hope that, when thinking of what is happening in his constituency, he will bear in mind that previous expenditure on house improvements was a meagre £29 million a year. Under this Government it has not been £29 million but £92 million a year. That is an enormous increase. In the provision that I have made for this year there is another £7·4 million in specific grants for house improvements. I am delighted that that improvement has taken place. For the Rhondda, it must be a happy contrast with what happened in previous years.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Before the Secretary of State accuses Labour hon. Members of being misleading with statistics, will he look at his own speeches and not make claims about how much the last Labour Government paid nurses, for example, while excluding the Clegg award, which was something for which his Government had no good words at all between 1979 and 1983?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there was not one word in his statement about the level of service, and that the people in the Principality will view this settlement as a difficult one for local authorities that wish to keep up the standards of service? Will he respond to the question of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) about local authorities being able to spend the proceeds of council house sales without restrictions, so as to be able to build more houses? Will he take off those restrictions, which are causing a great deal of problems and anguish throughout Wales?

Mr. Walker: It is important to recall, when one mentions standards and service throughout the Principality, that during the lifetime of the last Labour Goverment wages and salaries fell in real terms by 21 per cent. Under this Government they have risen by 29 per cent.

When examining the problems of the Health Service now, we still have the burden of the 30 per cent. capital cuts that were made in one year by the last Labour Government. The provisions that we have made for local authorities and for service, and the manner in which we have considered the whole range of potentialities, show that this is a fair and sensible award that will help service standards in Wales.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Secretary of State explain why the local authorities in Wales should heed his strictures when he has clearly not listened to what they have said to him since his provisional statement in July; or, if he has, he has completely failed to understand the facts and figures put forward to him? Rather than hiding behind generalisations, will he accept that, even on his guidelines, and with the achievement of efficiencies and the use of equivalent balances this year and last year, Cardiff city council, without allowing for the additional costs of the poll tax and other such impositions of central Government, will need a 12 per cent. rate rise

[Mr. Alun Michael]

to stand still on the basis of today's figures? Will he confess that he has either failed to understand the facts and figures given to him by local authorities, or he has tried to mislead the House?

Mr. Walker: In the meetings that I had with the local authorities they said that they wanted more money. I pointed out that I had carefully studied all such arrangements since 1973, that the minutes of all such meetings were available to me—I understood what must have taken place at the meetings for which minutes were not available—and that there had never been a single meeting at which the authorities had said, "The figures that we asked for have been given to us. Thank you very much, Secretary of State." I pointed out that they might be more satisfied with the past year, in which real expenditure on local government had risen by 11 per cent., than with the four years in which it fell in real terms.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is the Minister aware of recent reports that prove that the spiral of decline in low wage rates in Wales is continuing, to the extent that we are now in the disgraceful position in which a full third of Welsh local authority workers are below the European decency level? It will be absolutely right, proper and inescapable for local authorities to increase their rates way beyond the rate of inflation.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that—as he said—the results of today's announcement will be similar to those of the previous announcement, in that there will be few changes in the block grant assessment? That means that the majority of local authorities in Wales will still be on a system known as the negative marginal rate of grant, which has become known as the ratepayers' rip-off, because it will mean that, when cost-effective, good-value local authorities have to increase their expenditure by a single pound, the amount that they receive in grant will not go up but will be reduced by 85p.

Will the Secretary of State confirm the example of Newport borough council, which, on the provisional assessment, will find that its increase is derisory? Its current rate of GREA is £12,441,000, and under the announced arrangements—if they remain the same—that will increase next year to only £12,506,000—an increase of only 0·5 per cent.

Mr. Walker: I really think the hon. Gentleman should study the facts of the settlement. Of course it will mean great rate increases if local authorities decide to spend a great deal more money. If they want to go back to the levels of housing activity in improvement grants that they had under the last Labour Government, they will have to make big reductions. I am glad to say that they have got used to higher levels of activity. The Exchequer grant this year to Wales is equal to £1,200 per household in Wales. That is far higher than the Exchequer grant to England and Scotland, so I believe that, with prudence and efficiency, there will be no need for substantial rate increases.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State must be aware that, at this moment, Welsh local authorities have in their coffers about £280 million of capital receipts from the sale of council houses. Is he prepared to allow them to spend more than 15 per cent. of that each year, particularly when, in his own constituency, local authorities are allowed to spend 20 per cent. each year? Will he announce an increase to enable more council houses to be built?

Mr. Walker: If we were to change the level to that in my constituency, Welsh local authorities would be at a net disadvantage because of other factors that would be taken into account. Welsh local authorities well understand that, unlike the hon. Gentleman. I also point out, however, that there are possibilities of increased receipts from sales in Wales. There is no doubt that the selling of local authority housing in Wales has gone somewhat slower than in other areas. I hope that Wales will have a new sales drive, particularly in view of the additional provisions made by the Government to encourage people to buy their own homes.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Does the Minister agree, that if the economy is growing at 4·5 per cent., and inflation is running at about 4·5 per cent., then all other things being equal, we should have had an increase of 8 or 9 per cent. on last year's figures? Given that the figure is only 6 per cent., does that not really mean that, as the cake is growing bigger, the share that local authorities are obtaining is growing smaller and smaller?

Mr. Walker: I am glad to say that, in real terms, expenditure by local authorities has risen in real terms, in contrast with previous years, when it went down.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Was the Minister trying to say, in answer to the penultimate question, that, in spite of our comparative poverty levels and the degree of social problems in Wales, Welsh local authorities are receiving more than their fair proportion of Exchequer grant?

Mr. Walker: I am saying that I am pleased that the grant percentage in Wales is 66·3 per cent.; in England it is 46·2 per cent.; and in Scotland it is 55·4 per cent.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Does the Secretary of State realise that, after reading the document and listening to the exchanges this afternoon, I am struck by the fact that the Government have become masterly in the art of duplicity? Does he appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) clearly brought out the fact that 11 per cent. is needed—according to the informal discussions that took place beforehand — to maintain existing services? The Secretary of State did not answer that point. Yet a package of £60 million less than what is required is presented as a sort of bonanza to our local authorities. I say to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) that Clwyd in particular will suffer badly as a result of the settlement.

In addition, there is a restriction on our local authorities because if they attempt to redress the deficit by raising the rates they are penalised. They are put in a straitjacket by a Government who are supposed to believe in local decision making. Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that, when cuts are announced, it is local authorities which have to take the can back and the Government just wash their hands of the whole business?

Education buildings are deteriorating, children are being educated in a shabby environment and there is a shortage of books and other materials. These evil effects are equally calamitous for our old people. Surely that cannot be good for the future of our country. The

Secretary of State is a newcomer to Wales, and I say especially to him that we are suffering from mass unemployment, let alone a housing crisis, which he, it seems, is beginning to recognise. In the years of this—

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say again to the Front Benches that there is to be a debate on this matter? Hon. Members should put questions to the Secretary of State. The time to make a debating speech will come later.

Mr. Hughes: I conclude by asking the Secretary of State to recognise that we have been robbed of £750 million since the Conservative Government came to power, because that is the amount of money that we would have received if the formula adopted by the Labour Government had prevailed. This is a sad story of a Scrooge-like settlement being presented with a Saatchi and Saatchi gloss on it.

Mr. Walker: The art of duplicity which the hon. Gentleman described applies to anybody who can stand at the Dispatch Box and criticise an increase of £112 million, or 6·3 per cent. The hon. Gentleman sat on this side of the House when his party was in government and in each of its last three years it reduced, in real terms, the rate support grant for Wales. In 1977-78 it went down by 9 per cent. and in 1978-79 it went down by 4 per cent. I am glad that under this Government it is increasing in real terms.

Questions to Ministers

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising out of questions. Very understandably and properly, during Prime Minister's Question Time, you called the chairman of the 1922 Committee, the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). In view of the well-known fact, which is often referred to, that the hon. Gentleman was in a former incarnation a member of the security services, may I ask whether the BBC if it chooses to—as it normally would with the chairman of the 1922 Committee — can broadcast the hon. Gentleman's contribution during Prime Minister's Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: This is a re-run of what went on yesterday. I am not responsible for what the BBC puts out on the radio. I did not call the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) because he was chairman of the 1922 Committee, but because he had not previously in this Parliament put a question to the Prime Minister.

Sale of War Toys (Prohibition)

4.56 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the sale and advertisement of toys and games which are based on military and other weapons.

It is commonplace these days for politicians and others to deplore the current levels of violence in our society, and of course they are right to do so. However, few if any seem prepared to acknowledge that from the earliest formative years we encourage violence among our male children by the toys that we give them.

Last week, the Government produced a White Paper on firearms and there was a general welcome on all sides for the proposals to tighten controls on the holding of firearms. Many of us thought that the proposals did not go far enough. However, if we truly wish to attempt to reduce the levels of violence in our society, we must look to the root causes. War toys are just one of the many influences that create an unhealthy acceptance of violence in our society.

Children are presented with a wide range of violent images. They see them in films, comics and videos and, most important, they see violence on television. The influence of television on children's behaviour for good or bad is almost beyond reasonable question. Through all the different media, violence is super-abundant. In most cases it is sanitised and often glamorised, and we use violence as a form of entertainment. The overall impact is to lower our resistance threshold to violence.

People are not born violent; they acquire such feelings and attitudes as part of the learning process. If the House is serious about wanting to create a less violent society, it must be prepared to go right back to the time when the first messages and images of violence are received by our children. It is generally accepted that play is essential for the psychological development of children. Therefore, the toys with which they play are of great significance and the gun culture has its seeds in children's play.

In our society we stereotype our children from the beginning. We give our male children guns, and to girls we give dolls. In effect, we condition boys for war and girls for childbirth. It cannot be a mere coincidence that nearly all crimes of violence are committed by men, often against women. I mentioned earlier the influence of television on children. Anyone who looks at children's television at the moment will see just how many advertisements there are for toys. Many of those toys fall into what I would describe as the category of war toys.

A recent *TV Times* contained an insert put out by what was said to be the world's biggest toy superstore—Toys 'R' Us. One of the toys shown in the insert is a photon electronic warrior battle game. I understand that it is very popular. Boys will be boys, and the idea is that they actually fire at each other and the hits that they record are electronically registered. This is target practice and is precisely the sort of thing that the police and the armed forces go in for, for more serious purposes. We are teaching our children to point weapons at each other and to fire them accurately.

In the various toy shops that I have gone round, I have seen children using this toy. Christmas is supposed to be a time of peace and good will, but toy stores like Hamleys in London look like a cross between Aladdin's cave and a terrorist's arms dump. Hamleys refused to co-operate with me, but I went there all the same and examined just some of the war toys that are on sale this Christmas. For the child of three years and upwards there are any number of toys that represent in horrifying accuracy machine guns, bazookas, knives, hand guns and grenades. Many of those toy weapons come with realistic firing noise accessories that have made cowboy guns and caps seem relatively wimpish. I shall describe a few of them.

The SA80 weapons system by Lone Star is described in a sales blurb which says:

"A 50-shot quick fire military rifle. Specially designed, insulated non-slip grip. Sight range adjuster. Cheek support for steady aim. Combat shoulder butt. Hand grip allows firing from hip or shoulder. Removable magazine diecast metal. Recommended for three years and older."

That is the sort of toy that is being put in the hands of children who are three years of age and older. There is also the combat force set by Arco. It consists of

"a rapid-fire machine gun, combat pistol and holster",

and something called "soft and safe hand grenades". I have never heard of a soft and safe hand grenade.

There is another toy that is described as "America's newest hero". On the box there is a picture of Rambo and the toy is called a bazooka. The blurb says:

"It comes with real bazooka shooting sound."

That is for four-year-olds and upwards. The Rambo character is widely used at the moment in the media. At one point Rambo is seen as a big hero, but after the recent Hungerford massacre Michael Ryan was described by the media as a Rambo-style killer. We are giving our children totally conflicting messages, and it is not surprising that so many of them are violent, aggressive and wholly confused. There are many other such toys. I cannot go all the way through them, but the last one that I shall mention is called a 36 balloon grenade by Entertech. Its attraction is that one can load it while on the run and is recommended for seven-year-olds and upwards.

War toys claim 20 to 25 per cent. of the toy market in Britain and most of them are imported from the United States, West Germany, Macao, Taiwan and China. I am mainly concerned about the realism of today's war toys. They seek to replicate the genuine article. Indeed, that is their strongest selling point when trying to attract children or their parents.

My Bill would seek to impose a ban on the sale or manufacture of toys based on post-First World War weapons. In Sweden, a voluntary agreement was reached in 1979 between the Government and the Association of Swedish Toy Retailers to cease marketing toys, games, and modelling kits based on post-1914 war images. In 1982, a resolution was adopted by the European Assembly which expressed concern about the role of the mass media in creating a culture of war and violence, which in turn created the demand for war toys. The resolution went on to request EEC countries to take steps to ban the advertising of war toys and the manufacture and sale of replica guns and rifles. The assembly noted that, in West Germany, the EEC's major toy manufacturer, opinion polls have shown that 83 per cent. of the population were in favour of banning war toys.

It is encouraging to report that I have received dozens of letters from all over the country in support of the measures proposed in the Bill. I have had only two expressing opposition — *[Interruption.]* They were not

from toy manufacturers. Those two letters could be classified as coming from nutters in the "get back to Moscow" category.

Some commentators have said that, even if the House accepted the Bill, children would simply use pieces of wood to represent guns. That is true. One cannot hope to eliminate overnight the accumulation of years of conditioning that we have all received. My Bill would be but a start. It is vital that we start eliminating images of violence and there is nowhere better than at the outset of a child's life.

We are now in the middle of the Christmas present buying season. There is no necessity to be a Christian to find the idea of giving toy weapons wholly incompatible with the Christmas message of peace and good will. It is a very long way from Jesus Christ to Rambo. No adult, even remotely concerned about the level of brutality in our society, should contemplate purchasing war toys for children. To so so is to accept the enfeebling attitude that we can do nothing, because violence is part of the natural order. I do not accept such an assertion, and I beg leave of the House to introduce a Bill which will seek to remove one of the root causes of violence in our society.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Tony Banks, Mrs. Ann Taylor, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mr. Mark Fisher, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Chris Mullin, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mrs. Ann Clwyd and Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Sale of War Toys (Prohibition)

Mr. Tony Banks accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the sale and advertisement of toys and games which are based on military and other weapons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 April and to be printed. [Bill 67.]

Points of Order

5.7 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Yesterday, in a series of exchanges with Mr. Speaker, concerning the injunction obtained against the BBC by the Government to prevent production of a programme on the secret service, several hon. Members raised the point that the injunction prevented the BBC and other news media from reporting some of the proceedings of the House. It could also affect the circulation of *Hansard*. In columns 26 and 27 of the *Official Report* of 7 December, Mr. Speaker undertook to reflect on this matter and report to the House.

Although Mr. Speaker is not in the Chair, perhaps you, Madam Deputy Speaker, could tell us what action Mr. Speaker proposes to protect the integrity and the right of the House to discuss what it wishes—and also, perhaps more importantly, the right of every person in this country to know freely and without hindrance from the courts what is discussed in the House. If this injunction is to persist, there will be an infringement of the liberty of Parliament by the courts. Parliament is meant to be the supreme body in this country and should not be hindered in this way by the courts.

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is a long point of order. The hon. Gentleman will have reflected upon the exchanges which took place yesterday between hon. Members and Mr. Speaker. I shall convey to Mr. Speaker the hon. Gentleman's point of order.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I raised a point of order on a similar subject yesterday. We are just about to move into the debate on the Adjournment for the Christmas recess and you are occupying the Chair. If an hon. Member caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, and raised the subject of the programme "My Country, Right or Wrong", which is now subject to the injunction, I hope that you will give an assurance that the BBC is free to broadcast that speech on "Yesterday in Parliament," if it so wishes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to what Mr. Speaker said yesterday. The hon. Gentleman is raising hypothetical issues. We should wait until that time comes and I shall deal with them at that stage. We should now move on to the Adjournment motion and see what happens during that debate.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to raise a brief point of order which relates to those raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). Today's edition of *The Independent* states that the Conservative Back-Bench defence committee apparently intends to hold what the hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) has described as an in-depth investigation of the secret service. I have no complaints about that—it may be very useful—but it seems to be a case of the BBC not being allowed to go ahead with its programme, for reasons explained by the Attorney-General on Friday, while Conservative Members are allowed without any difficulty to hold an in-depth investigation of the security services. If the programme had gone ahead and there had

[Mr. David Winnick]

been no injunction, a former senior official of MI5 was due to address the committee tomorrow as part of the investigation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is a long-standing Member of the House and he must be aware that this is not a matter within the competence of the Chair.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Surely a more fundamental principle is involved. The House has always had a reputation for saying, and a right to say, what it wants. No court or king has been allowed to interfere with the right of free speech in this place. The injunction infringes that right.

Part of that right is to say what one believes it is right to say and more importantly, to have what one says reported by the press, the *Official Report* or the media, be it television or radio, although proceedings in the House are not televised. Surely our rights as Members of Parliament are infringed when we are not allowed to say what we want to say because it cannot be reported. Surely we need an urgent ruling on this matter.

Madam Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman looks at yesterday's *Official Report* he will see that there was a full exchange in which Mr. Speaker gave his views. The matter must now rest there.

Adjournment (Christmas)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Friday 18th December do adjourn until Monday 11th January, and that the House shall not adjourn on Friday 18th December until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

5.8 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The motion should secure the whole-hearted approval of the House. We sit for more of the year than any other legislative body in western Europe, and each day we sit for longer hours than our counterparts.

I believe that the topic engendered by the motion is particularly relevant to Shropshire, because it covers the period during which consultation will take place on the Shropshire health authority's proposals for the closure of 10 cottage hospitals. That proposition will go for consultation on 1 January. Therefore, I want to establish points before then, and they can only be established this afternoon in the hope that they will be more generally available by the time the consultation begins and before Parliament returns after the recess.

I shall not detain the House with the background as to why the closure of 10 cottage hospitals is being considered in Shropshire. That proposal derives from a variety of factors. Shropshire health authority believes that the decision to proceed with Telford district general hospital is a major factor in the authority's planning and use of resources. Other considerations have caused the authority to present the current option for the consideration of the county. In common with my parliamentary colleagues from Shropshire and the overwhelming majority of voters, patients and residents in the county, I can state that there is bewilderment about and deep hostility to a proposition that would remove two thirds of the county's cottage hospitals. If that proposal were put into effect, it would stand as a precedent for many other rural authorities with a network of cottage hospitals which perform a valued role in the health care of the community.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): It is important that the House should be aware that when my right hon. Friend speaks against the proposed closure of the cottage hospitals, he is making clear his opposition and that of his constituency of Shropshire, North. However, he also voices the opposition felt in my constituency of Shrewbury and Atcham, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) and, I presume, in the constituency of the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott).

It is important for the House to note that the proposed building of the Telford district general hospital on such a large scale will cause the closure of the cottage hospitals and may cause even more closures according to the health authority's consultation document. The fact that spending has risen in Shropshire from £30 million to £72 million reveals that this is not a question of a cut in resources, but a wrong decision on the health authority's part to build the giant hospital at Telford and close the rural services. That is the root of the problem. My right hon. Friend speaks for the Conservative Members representing Shropshire constituencies when he makes his points.

Mr. Biffen: I am pleased to accommodate my hon. Friend's remarks in my speech. His was a very wise pre-emptive strike, in case he is less than lucky later in the debate.

The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) would agree that there is lively debate in the county about the factors that have given rise to the £3 million and which explain the present cost-cutting exercise. The Shropshire health authority view appears to be that proceeding with the Telford district general hospital is not the reason for the proposed closure of the 10 cottage hospitals. All those points will be argued during the consultative period.

The point that I want to put on the record this evening —one that I hope will receive a reply before 1 January when the consultative period begins—is that one or two facts should be available for the guidance of those in Shropshire who will undertake what will be a most important exercise when they explain in the most vigorous and compelling terms why they believe that the traditional network of health care, based upon local community hospitals, should persist.

First, I want my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to tell us in the most general terms— I realise that he can say this only in general terms— what are the virtues and valued characteristics of the cottage hospitals so that they can be taken into account when evidence about the need for their retention is put to the community health council.

Secondly — in a sense it is unnecessary for me to make this request, but this might be helpful — may we have an assurance that the consultative procedure will not be a mere token or ritual? That procedure is at the very heart of determining how decisions are taken about the health services of any community, and in this instance of Shropshire. All those who give evidence at the meetings to be called by the community health council will want to feel that their arguments and cases, which will have compelling implications, will be taken seriously by the community health council. Indeed, I would like an assurance that the Government would want to take account of that evidence. I hope that the council in no sense has a prejudged view of the outcome of health services in the county. I am sure that many of the misunderstandings are unintended and have arisen at random.

The county's paper is the *Shropshire Star* and it has more prestige and circulation than *The Times*. I must secure my quotes somehow or other. We were graced by a visit from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I say this with a certain amount of trepidation because the Treasury has a presence in all these matters. It is not just a matter of the DHSS communing with other elements interested in health. Labour Members represent a party with a long tradition of Treasury involvement in health affairs, so hon. Members will be under no illusions about this.

In the *Shropshire Star* on Friday 13 November Angela Davies reported:

"Chancellor Nigel Lawson today defended the decision to close ten Shropshire cottage hospitals."

That was not the happiest of lunchtime reading. After making references to the case and the controversy about the closures, Angela Davies continued:

"He added: 'The closure of the cottage hospitals is taking place alongside the concentration of all the most modern facilities in one large new general hospital'.

He said that the cash injection would allow better management and a real improvement in patient care."

It is possible to construe those remarks as though Telford district general hospital was the alternative to the 10 cottage hospitals. I cannot believe that that was intended. I informed my right hon. Friend the Chancellor that I would be referring to the newspaper cutting this afternoon. It would be to the advantage of the House and to all those who are conducting this most important health debate in Shropshire if we knew clearly that the consultative period was a time of open argument and open mind and that no decisions had been arrived at prematurely, least of all by the Treasury.

5.18 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) represents a constituency that I know as Oswestry, as it was until the boundary commissioners in their foolishness over constituency names up and down the country replaced it with something else. The right hon. Gentleman raised a local issue, which is the purpose of the debate in many respects. He raised an important local and county issue.

I want to consider a national issue. I want to argue that we should have a statement from the Government on their policy with regard to the use of the Official Secrets Act and to comment on the drift towards using other methods, namely the use of the civil injunction to achieve what apparently Ministers believe cannot be achieved by using the criminal law of the land. We should know what Government policy is in that respect. I must say to the Leader of the House that two Ministers are involved— the Home Secretary, who is responsible for the Official Secrets Act 1911, and the Attorney-General, who is responsible in the context of the public interest for determining whether prosecutions should take place under the legislation.

In 1976, I became Home Secretary with the full intention — which I never achieved — of reforming the Official Secrets Act, as I had been a member of the Franks committee in 1972 which had put forward recommendations. I thought that, four years later, I was on the royal road towards achieving that aim. After I had made a statement as to my intention, I also said something else. I did that at the request of the then Attorney-General, who spoke to me in that distancing way that Attorneys-General should use when talking to a Cabinet Minister about legislation that he is to use. The then Attorney-General said that, as I had said that we would implement the Franks committee findings, he wished me to tell the House that the Attorney-General would take into account what the Home Secretary had done.

In practice, that meant that the Attorney-General would seek to prosecute under the Official Secrets Act only if it was in the public interest, and involved matters classified as secret and above, and that anything below that classification would have to be dealt with by the Civil Service or whoever was involved. At least everybody knew where they were.

I appeared in court on behalf of Mr. Ponting not because I approved of what he had done, but because the Government had said that the document about the Belgrano that he had given to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was not a serious security leak and was not classified secret or above. That man

[Mr. Merlyn Rees]

should not have been dealt with under the criminal procedure of part II of the Official Secrets Act. I was being consistent with the decision of the previous Government.

We have never heard from this Government—from the Attorney-General or from various Home Secretaries—that they have turned their back on that decision. Instead, we have drifted along, as was shown by that interesting section in last Saturday's edition of *The Independent* which gave a list of some 14 relevant cases which arose between 1979 and December 1987.

I should like to clarify a point about the book "Their Trade is Treachery", which was published in March 1981. No action was taken by the Government. In my view, sections of that book should have been dealt with under part II of the Official Secrets Act, yet no action was taken. I believe that that book contained information that should not have been given. I have already referred to the Ponting case, and I have read carefully the Wright book. I shall refer to the dirty tricks allegations and the other allegations that emanate from Northern Ireland. Under no heading can they be classified as secret, and nobody can argue that the information should not be openly revealed, because it was not a state secret. It is what the Franks report argued—too often the Official Secrets Act is used to protect the weaknesses of the Government or of Government services.

I shall never stop referring to the 1924 Zinoviev case. Without offending golf players, there are people in the security services who take a golf club attitude to politics. That is to the detriment of the security services.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker told me that it would be in order for me to refer to the programme which has not yet been beamed by the BBC, in which I and others took part. He told me that I could not read a transcript, but that I could say what I had said. I said, and I willingly repeat, that the MI5 officers who served me in Northern Ireland were excellent. They knew what they were talking about and I happily speak in their favour. When it comes to dirty tricks, it would be false for the Government to argue that they must be protected by criminal sanctions or in any other way, particularly as the Prime Minister, the Law Officers and the Home Secretary have said in this House that they do not know what was in the inquiry of 1976.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware of what appeared in some editions of *The Guardian* yesterday? The former MI5 official who was due to speak to the Conservative Back-Bench defence committee meeting which was to have occurred tomorrow but has been cancelled because of the publicity and the injunction against the BBC, is Mr. Charles Ellwell who, apparently, after carrying out various activities on behalf of the security services in investigating the National Council for Civil Liberties—an organisation which I would not have thought could be considered subversive—went to work for Common Cause, an organisation which is extremely Right-wing. It is possible that that unfortunate connection illustrates only too well that some MI5 officials are not politically impartial.

Mr. Rees: If the dirty tricks allegations in the Wright book, which was only a small section—about two or three pages—contain any truth, my hon. Friend is right. While that may or may not be true, I can say that the men with whom I worked discussed things extremely sensibly and knowledgeably. It would not be their job to discuss them in a way of which I approve, but they served me well. That does not invalidate what I want investigated about the so-called dirty tricks and the allegations that emanate from Northern Ireland.

Part of part II of the Official Secrets Act would probably be better in section 1, but that is a matter for change in future. Instead of that, there is only drift.

I certainly will not get involved in the question of sub judice, but I assume that as no action was taken against the article in yesterday's *Independent* by Mr. Peter Kellner, I can use part of it to support my argument. He points out that the programme was not secret. When I went into that busy little room to give my half-hour's worth, which no doubt was cut down, I was informed that everybody knew about it and that the programme was not secret. The programme certainly was not secret; the just former Lord Chancellor was on it.

On that occasion, I heard that former intelligence officers were on the programme, and I assume that former intelligence officers would have told MI5. I find it astonishing—indeed, I do not believe—that the first that the Law Officers or the Government heard about it was in the "Peterborough" column in *The Daily Telegraph*.

What Peter Kellner wrote summed it all up:

"The notion that the intelligence community only woke up last Thursday after reading the Peterborough column in *The Daily Telegraph* is fanciful: or if not fanciful, extremely worrying. (Memo to Moscow: if you are planning a surprise attack on the West, don't worry if the KGB tells Sir Antony Duff, but for goodness sake keep your manoeuvres out of the gossip columns.)"

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): It is all about politics rather than security, and this is par for the course. We now realise that the Zircon raid on the BBC at 3 am on the Sabbath morning of 1 February was not about politics but about security.

Mr. Rees: I have said in public and I have told my hon. Friend to his face—he was in the House in the whole period I was in office—that he has been a damned nuisance, and I hope that he will continue to be a damned nuisance to Governments of whatever persuasion, because it is important that somebody ferrets and devils around in the way he does.

I am concerned, as was said in the Reith lectures last year by Lord McCluskey, that we are now moving from the Official Secrets Act. The Government have said that they will have a White Paper and will do something about it, but they are using civil injunctions. Lord McCluskey, in his sixth and final lecture, concluded his argument for keeping separate the functions of making the law and applying it. The Government are depending upon the judiciary stepping in to make decisions that for a long period could be taken only on the basis of the Official Secrets Act.

I say to the Leader of the House—I understand the sub judice aspect—that, at the appropriate time and quickly, it is important that the Law Officer and Home Secretary tell the country, through the House, why they are not using the Official Secrets Act. Much to my astonishment, I read in the *Sunday Express*—I shall refer to aspects of this in another place, not now—that Mr. Chapman Pincher said in effect that he was given approval for "Their Trade in Treachery" by officials of MI5. From all that has been said, not in the current case, in the courts over the past six months, the Cabinet Secretary did not

know this. No wonder that a prosecution was not undertaken, if approval were given by somebody or other who has been mentioned. The Government should soon make clear how they are operating, because I am concerned.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I have listened with great interest to the right hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he could help the Government. Did he know, at the time he agreed to be interviewed on the programme to which he referred, that a serving member of the security services would be on the programme? If he did know, did it concern him? When he was Home Secretary and responsible for those matters, would he have allowed a serving member of the security services for which he was responsible to go public on the air?

Mr. Rees: I did not know, and I do not know what my powers would have been in that respect, but the answer is no. However, I hope that I would not have had to wait until I had read the "Peterborough" column on the Thursday before the programme took place before stepping in.

Mr. Mates: The answer is no?

Mr. Rees: The answer is no, but I would not have waited to read it in the "Peterborough" column of *The Daily Telegraph*. As other hon. Members wish to speak, this is not the time to argue for a change to the accountability rule and other matters for which one has argued. The current position with newspapers and the BBC leaves me with a sense of censorship, which our forebears in the war years, let alone at any other time, would hardly credit. We are drifting into a Sargasso sea of media control.

I often ask myself what the media would have done — they grumble and complain very honourably — if a Labour Government had attempted to interfere with the BBC. We would have had much talk about eastern Europe. I have never had any time for that sort of organisation, which is a prostitution of what people have worked for over the years. I have to tell myself that this happens in Right-wing countries, and we are drifting in a direction I do not like. The Government should make a statement about the involvement of the D notice committee.

The Franks report is well worth reading, because it contains many facts. In our report, we wrote that the D notice system is administrative, which means that it is under the control of a Minister. It is an administrative system; it is not flying in the air by itself, doing what it likes. Something is wrong, and the Home Secretary and Attorney-General must report to the House.

I yield to no one in my concern for security; it is vital. We need secret services, but something has gone radically wrong. After having been listened to in far parts during the war years, always with the feeling that there was something right about it, the BBC now faces the Government moving in with injunctions to prevent reporting. There is something wrong; the Government must speak.

5.36 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am pleased to follow the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) who, in his time, has done the state some service in security matters and so speaks with particular authority. Not for the first time I find myself in agreement with many of the themes that he struck. In particular, I agree with his concern about the drift, as he called it, of Government policy towards the extension of the civil law of confidentiality. This was once intended purely for commercial and business confidentiality, and is now being extended dramatically into an area that was thought to be covered only by the criminal law of official secrets.

We seem to be drifting in a curious and worrying direction. One could dismiss some of the drift as pure Gilbert and Sullivan farce. The Government A-team on legal and security issues, after turning "Spycatcher" into a world best-seller, making Peter Wright a millionaire and boosting the sales, royalties and revenues of Mr. Chapman Pincher, have graciously turned their mind to boosting the flagging audiences of Radio 4, for which I am sure it is grateful.

On a more serious note, the drift is going in a dangerous direction, in creating a perceived — not necessarily correct — entrenched enmity between the Government and the media. That a respected figure such as the right hon. Gentleman has spoken of a Sargasso sea of censorship is an indication of the worries and fears of many respected journalists. One has only to look at the editorials in last Sunday's papers to see that the trend of Government operations is genuinely worrying and to see a breakdown of the old relationships. In particular, I mourn—it is mourning time—the apparent destruction of the D notice system, which has been undermined totally by the events surrounding the injunction issued against the radio programmes. That is a worrying trend, which can only damage not just relationships between this Government and the media, but the trust between all Governments and the media, upon which our system of government, to some extent, depends.

At the heart of the problem is the Government's new invention, their new Heath Robinson contraption—the doctrine of absolute lifelong confidentiality. I believe that the doctrine of absolute confidentiality, in common with the doctrine of absolute obedience, cannot be morally sustained in a free, democratic society. Although the obligation of confidentiality should, of course, be the basic rule for certain categories of Crown servants, there must, nevertheless, always be honourable exceptions to that basic rule in a democracy. One such exception—I am almost encouraged by the hissing noise that I hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates)——

Mr. Mates: I was drawing breath.

Mr. Aitken: Surely one such exception should be a Crown servant's right to speak out against serious criminality in his world. Suppose we were to have a Watergate in Britain? Are we to say that Crown servants should never speak out against such activities, on the grounds that they are bound by the obligation of absolute confidentiality? If we were to witness major, unauthorised, illegal crimes of the type carried out by the French secret service when it bombed the Greenpeace ship in New Zealand, are we to say that those who wish to protest against such behaviour are bound to silence by the obligation of absolute confidentiality? I think not, and I believe that society will say not. That is one area of categorisation of honourable exceptions to this new principle of absolute confidentiality that the Government

[Mr. Aitken]

are seeking to introduce, almost by stealth, through the mouths of Queen's counsel rather than through the mouths of Ministers and legislation.

Mr. Dalyell: Surely the first person to break new ground was the Prime Minister, when, to the astonished dismay of a number of us — albeit a minority — she suddenly made a statement on the late Sir Roger Hollis and on Blunt. Was it not the right hon. Lady who in fact set this new trend and opened Pandora's Box?

Mr. Aitken: I believe that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has a valid point, to the extent that clearly there was an honourable exception to the old vow of absolute silence and confidentiality when the Prime Minister decided that it was in the national interest to have a more open approach to the issue of Blunt's treachery, which had been buried by successive Governments and successive Prime Ministers with the time-honoured formula, "We do not answer questions about the Security Service." I believe that that move by the Prime Minister, which I applauded at the time, would mean a new openness in the discussion of sensible, Security Service policy. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Carry on, Mr. Aitken.

Mr. Aitken: I was dealing with the rights of free speech, and that discussion seemed to get somewhat extended. I believe that there should be some honourable exceptions to the new doctrine of absolute confidentiality.

Mr. Mates: I do not believe that there is any difference between the various nuances of argument regarding honourable exceptions. The issue on which my hon. Friend and myself have had friendly discussions and arguments before—no doubt we shall continue to do so —is the fact that what we must legislate for and the Government must act upon the dishonourable exceptions. It is with the dishonourable exceptions that we have been dealing. It is Ponting who has acted dishonourably; it is Wright who has acted dishonourably; and it is Cathy Massiter who has acted dishonourably. If any of them had had a genuine cause for complaint about what was being done there was a perfectly proper channel of communication through which to make that complaint. None of them chose to do it and that is why——

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): This is a speech. It is supposed to be an intervention.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is for the Chair to decide whether it is an intervention or a speech. I hope that the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) will bring his intervention to a conclusion.

Mr. Mates: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) will agree with me. The Government had to act last weekend, not because things were being done in an honourable way, but because they were being done in an improper way. Once that is allowed to happen, there is no way in which the rule can be enforced later.

Mr. Aitken: I believe that we are making some progress at least. We are now admitting, in the formidable voice of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East, that there can be some exceptions to the rule of lifelong confidentiality on an absolute basis. I agree with my hon. Friend that the names he has mentioned—here we are at one—would fall into the category of a dishonourable breach of the rules. However, my hon. Friend and I—certainly the Treasury Bench and I—are unable to agree about the twilight, difficult area of what is an honourable or a dishonourable exception.

With due care for the rules of sub judice, I shall now turn to the recent injunction issued against the BBC. I believe that Crown servants, when retired, should be allowed to comment on certain, innocuous policy issues that have nothing to do with current national security or past operational matters. After all, the Central Intelligence Agency, Mossad and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, ASIO, allow their former security servants to comment on basically innocuous matters.

One has only to consider what has taken place in this House in recent days to discover that the doctrine of absolute confidentiality is clearly not a seamless garment. This morning my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) was reported in *The Independent*—accurately, I am sure—as saying that the Conservative Back-Bench defence committee, in which he plays such an honourable and important role, wished to investigate certain aspects of the policy of the Security Service. Why not? That is a legitimate area of parliamentary concern.

A Back-Bench committee of the Conservative party should be allowed to invite a retired security official, Mr. Charles Elwell, to talk to it on a Wednesday afternoon. However, that invitation has suddenly been cancelled—I suggest, in something of a whiff of panic. If the doctrine of absolute confidentiality, as presented to the court by the Government's counsel, Mr. Robert Alexander, is a seamless garment, there cannot suddenly be a few holes for privileged people, such as Back Benchers. There is no difference between a retired security official coming to talk to a Back-Bench committee of the Conservative party about security policy and going on the radio to talk about the same issues.

At this stage, may I refer to the totally honourable conduct of one retired security official—his name has been mentioned in many newspapers and I see no reason why I should not name him—Mr. John Day. He is an honourable, discreet and circumspect retired official who would no more give away the secrets of his past than he would fly to the moon. He holds the view that the security services of this country need to be more accountable and that there is a need for the oversight of those services. He went on to the BBC programme to say just that and having said it, there was a flurry of excitement in Whitehall as a result of the "Peterborough" gossip column and the injunction was slapped on. I believe that the Government overreacted and overreached themselves by that action.

Mr. Winnick: I appreciate the remarks that the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) is making, but is he at all disturbed by the serious allegation of the lack of political impartiality on the part of MI5 officials — Wright and the official whom the hon. Gentleman has just mentioned — who then went on to work for Common Cause? Surely the purpose of any investigation into MI5 would be to bring out how far that organisation is as politically impartial as it should be.

Mr. Aitken: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is peddling some misinformation or disinformation, almost

like a double agent. Frankly, I believe that he has got the official confused, but let us not go into that now. Obviously, in the past political bias did occur in the security services in certain regrettable ways, and that is all the more reason for an accountable body or oversight body in the future.

Mr. Winnick: I was referring to Charles Elwell. I was certainly not referring to the other official, Mr. Day.

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful for that clarification.

Just as there used to be an old motto in journalism that comment is free but facts are sacred, so, in the world of accountability of the security services, comment is surely free on the radio or to Back-Bench committees. Perhaps the national security facts, past or present, are sacred, and should be kept so. That, I feel, is the principle on which we should fight, rather than the curious new principle of the doctrine of absolute confidentiality on a lifelong basis.

We cannot expect our Crown servants to be Trappist monks for ever. Indeed, they have not been in the past, as we see from memoirs of Ministers and retired officials, such as Sir William Stephenson or Sir Percy Sillitoe. I am worried that the Government will seek to introduce the doctrine of absolute confidentiality by legislation, perhaps because they have not exactly made good progress with it in the courts around the world, despite lavish expenditure of the taxpayer's money.

Let me end on this note. I said that the Government would introduce the doctrine by legislation, because I understand that they intend to vote down the admirable Bill to reform the Official Secrets Act, on the rather curious ground that it is being introduced by a Back Bencher — my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd)—so that they can introduce a more formidable and restrictive Bill that will include the doctrine of absolute confidentiality. Let me warn the House against that. We, as parliamentarians, would do better to support the line being drawn in the sensible area in which it has been drawn by my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills. We should stand up for his Bill and vote and voice down the bogus new principle of absolute confidentiality.

5.51 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). I believe that his speech will be read widely and studied carefully, particularly his remarks about absolute confidentiality. He has done the House a service by giving such a clear-cut exposition of a case that I, along with many other hon. Members — including some on the Conservative Benches—strongly support.

I am tempted to follow both the hon. Gentleman's speech and that of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) by referring to the Government's recent action against the BBC. However, I do not wish to do that. I shall merely say that it is a serious question, which touches not only on the abuse of power by the Government, but on the individual freedom and independence of the BBC.

I believe that the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) simply misunderstood the importance of the issue when he asked the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South whether he would have acted in that fashion. Of course any responsible Government who had reason to believe that one of their servants was about to breach confidentiality and damage the security of the nation, would act along those lines. I hold no brief for secret service employees, present or past, who give away the nation's secrets. It is a case not of what has been done, but of the mechanism by which it has been done.

We know that the Government knew months ago about the programme and about the people who would take part. I understand that they also knew, in large measure, the points that those people would make. The question that we must ask is: why did the Government then wait to act until the last moment? In answer, I have been presented with the ludicrous proposition that they did so because they had read about the programme in the "Peterborough" column. Even if they had paid no attention to the questions that they had been asked previously, one might imagine that they knew what was going to happen, as the rest of us did, from the pre-release newspaper articles in the days before the programme—if not in the weeks and months before it, as they clearly did.

We are led to only one conclusion; that the Government did not take action until the last moment because they wished to do what they had done so often before, and play cat and mouse with the BBC. I do not believe that such action can be taken in isolation. It must be taken—as I believe the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) suggested—in conjunction with the other actions that the Government have taken against the BBC; with the political appointments of some of the governors —and, some claim, of staff at a lower level—with their activities in the Zircon affair, and with the raids in Glasgow. The only possible conclusion is that the Government's action is part of a sustained and deliberate programme of intimidation against the BBC for political purposes. That is itself part of a sustained network of activities which attack the fundamental civil liberties of the people of Britain, as they have been attacked since the Government came into power in 1979.

However, the main point that I wish to raise does not relate to that important matter, although I realise that other hon. Members will wish to talk about it in greater detail; it relates, as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) mentioned, to a constituency matter. We are discussing today whether the House should rise for the Christmas recess. When it does, we shall celebrate an occasion when a young family failed to find accommodation, but those circumstances produced an entirely happy result. However, in my constituency today—as in other constituencies up and down the country — literally hundreds of young families and others cannot find accommodation. The housing crisis in many of our constituencies is reaching catastrophic proportions.

I have been running regular weekly surgeries in my constituency for the past 10 years—since long before I was elected — and, in common with many other hon. Members, I see about 1,000 individual cases each year. Eight out of every 10 people who now come to my surgeries come with a housing problem. They are not trivial housing problems, but serious problems relating to the maintenance of houses or, indeed, to homelessness.

Those people come to see me not because they have no councillors to do the job effectively—they have usually already been to see their local councillors—but out of desperation and, unhappily, in the mistaken belief that I can do something about their problem. But I can do no more than has been done previously.

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

On my list of cases at present are young couples, many of them living apart and some with children. There are single homeless people with no hope of housing in the foreseeable future under the present conditions in my constituency and elsewhere. In the past year, and more recently, I have found young people sleeping on rubbish tips, because there is nowhere else for them to sleep. Some sleep under the stairs of the local supermarkets. That is happening not in an inner-city constituency, but in a rural and, many believe, prosperous part of the nation.

One 84-year-old women—now alone, as her husband died recently — is living in a four-bedroomed house, which I fear she will be unable to heat or look after, with a garden that she cannot conceivably tend. However, she has to stay, because there is nowhere for her to move to.

We have long been concerned about such problems in inner cities. However, it now affects areas such as my own. On Department of the Environment figures, South Somerset district council has the tenth highest number of housing inquiries of any authority in Britain, including the metropolitan authorities. We have a waiting list of 3,742. It has risen by 1,400 in the past year—by 50 per cent. If that problem were to increase, not mathematically or exponentially, but simply by 1,400 in every succeeding year —and I suspect that it will increase faster than that—by the turn of the century 20,000 people would be on the waiting list. That is one in three of my constituents. Transfers from one house to another, often for strong medical reasons — for instance, an old person who cannot climb the stairs to get to a lavatory or the first floor —are impossible. There is no prospect of such people receiving better housing that is more conducive to their health.

The maintenance of houses, in my constituency and others, I am certain, has fallen to a level where it is practically non-existent. My district council calculates that we would have needed to refurbish 250 houses last year even to make a stab at keeping pace with the level of repairs and refurbishment. Of that number, 22 houses were in fact refurbished. So the stock is diminishing in quality. The number of desperately needed repairs is rising to match the increasing misery and desperation of the families who have to live in inadequate, often leaky, housing. By any standards, that continuing rise represents a desperate situation for a growing number of people.

The really scandalous thing, however, is that it does not have to happen. The South Somerset district council has the money to put it right. We have £13 million in the bank. It does not belong to the Government or to the council. Technically, it belongs to the tenants of South Somerset district council. This £13 million has accumulated year after year at a rate of about £1 million a year. The district council can spend only a tiny proportion of it. We would like the freedom to spend that money to build new houses, to house our homeless, to repair the houses that we have, to provide more jobs in our community and to provide greater prosperity. Yet the Government say that, despite the rising tide of misery, we cannot spend a penny of the sum currently available.

In my constituency, as elsewhere, ten council houses require to be sold before sufficient money is accumulated to build one, as a result, first, of the discounts—which I do not argue with — and, secondly, of the capital restrictions. Last year 350 council houses were sold, but the council was able to build rather fewer than 30 in all to cope with a housing list which is now well on the way to 4,000.

The situation is ludicrous. The money is there but it cannot be used. The problem of homelessness could be tackled immediately; jobs could be created and prosperity increased in the process. I am certain that the sum of human misery in my constituency and in most other rural constituencies created by homelessness and housing problems is greater by far than that created by unemployment. In rural areas the matter is considerably worse than most people imagine. In most of the small villages in south Somerset it is impossible for a young married couple to purchase a house, because all the houses are being bought up at increasing prices. The average house now costs about £100,000, and a terrace dwelling £60,000 or £80,000. There is no prospect of local first-time buyers getting them because they are being snapped up by people from the south-east and by an increasing number of elderly people who retire to rural areas.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Does the hon. Gentleman agree, in view of what he has said about the number of council houses that have to be sold before a new one can be built, with the restrictions that the Government have imposed? The fact is that this problem is countrywide. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is immoral that council houses should be sold at all before the need for public sector rented housing has been satisfied?

Mr. Ashdown: No, I do not. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman's comment that the problem is by no means unique. I hope that, as I draw the attention of the House to it, other hon. Members will recognise that a great deal of this applies to their own constituencies as well. My view on the sale of council houses is that people should be given the right to buy them, but that the decision whether to sell should lie with the local council, which is in a position to judge on the advisability of selling as against the need to solve the problem of homelessness. While I do not deny the right to purchase, I think it is a matter that ought to be considered locally in the context of homelessness. If that is what the hon. Gentleman means, I will go that far with him.

I do not want the House to imagine for one second that the situation in my constituency arises because of a behind-the-times local authority which refuses to think about the future, because that is not true. South Somerset district council has been among the most imaginative in the land in constructing new initiatives to build houses. It has set the tone and, in many cases, blazed a trail which others have followed. Those initiatives include, for instance, new starter units — eight units were available and there were 95 applications from first-time buyers— shared ownership, private sector funding, getting together with parish councils to build on parish council land with shared public-private funding, initiatives launched with the Duchy of Cornwall, barter schemes, housing association schemes, the setting up of a single homeless hostels, a housing advice centre, and so on. The council has been really imaginative in finding new sources of funds and ways of meeting the housing problem.

However, what it has been able to do is but a drop in the ocean compared with the scale of the problem. I cannot describe adequately to the House the sense of anger,

frustration, misery and despair which now afflicts those people on the housing list: they desperately need rehousing but they have not the slightest prospect of having that need met in the near future. The despair extends to those who are seeking to assist, to the district council officers, to the district councillors wanting to help with the problem on a catch-as-catch-can basis and, when I see the interminable troop of people coming into my surgeries and asking for assistance that I cannot provide because of the Government's closed mind on this issue, even to me.

The housing crisis in Britain is now reaching epidemic proportions and the Government's dereliction of duty in seeking to block the use of funds that are readily available to cope with the problem is a moral and practical scandal. I beg the Government to do something about it. I do not ask them for their money; I ask them to let us use ours. I do not ask them for their help; I ask them to let us help ourselves. I do not ask them to house our homeless, but to let us tackle the problem of homelessness with the resources available to us. I ask them to recognise that their policy blocks the use of this money. If they do nothing, the responsibility for the problem lies on their head and in their hands. The stain of homelessness and misery caused by their neglect will be a blot upon their record and, I hope especially at this time of the year, on their conscience also.

6.7 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I am disappointed that, apart from the speech of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), almost the entire debate has been about what I would call an unhealthy obsession with the security services, the media, the BBC and so on. Like many of our generation, my wife and I served throughout the war, for most of the time in highly secret work. Neither of us has mentioned a word about it, either to the media or in private. That is how we were brought up.

The second mistake that is made is that somehow some hon. Members, with some connection with the media—newspapers or broadcasting — or out of a desire for excessive publicity, think that this matter is of supreme importance, dominating everything else before we go for our Christmas holidays. I beg to differ. Of my 80,000 constituents, whom I have had the honour to serve for 17½ years, not one has mentioned this matter to me once, in pubs, in factories, in shops or anywhere else. Nor have I received a single letter about it. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends and hon. Gentlemen on the Opposition Benches to cool it a little and put more realism into their thoughts.

The House should not go into the Christmas recess until we have debated something rather more fundamental — the strength, unity and cohesion of this nation. We have a great deal to be thankful for in living in the British Isles, and we should never forget it. To judge from the proceedings of the House and from the news media—particularly the television news and the popular press—one would think that the nation was in a constant state of turmoil. Yet we who are in close touch with our constituents know that that is not so. Proceedings in this place are necessarily adversarial—that is the basis of our system with Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's Opposition—but that does not mean that there is not a broad measure of agreement between the Government and the Opposition on wide aspects of our national life. In saying that, I exclude the extreme Left.

I regret the growing level of noise in the Chamber, such as we heard this afternoon. It does us great harm, it is disliked intensely by the public and the sooner it stops the better. I fear that broadcasting started the rot, which is why I utterly oppose the televising of our proceedings.

To make money, the media must stir things up. They do not want to give out good news. They want to give out bad news and keep us glued to the television screen or tempt us to buy the next newspaper to discover what ghastly horror has occurred. We know that ordinary life is not full of horror, violence, crime or the sorts of skulduggery that we hear about so often from the media. I know that in certain parts of the country there is crime, violence and drug taking, and that in some of the inner cities sad things are happening, but I hope and believe that we will tackle those problems. One must maintain a sense of proportion and realise how fortunate we are to be living in these islands and not behind the iron curtain or in some other ghastly country.

There is a disposition among television people and radio producers to make programmes where every kind of social, political or moral problem is examined, dissected and torn to pieces, and having listened to them we have some new worry to think about. Even the best and greatest of our institutions, the monarchy, is put under the microscope. Some time ago I took part in two separate television broadcasts about the monarchy and the House of Lords. Fortunately, there was a large representative audience of the mass of the people. Their reaction was perfectly sound. They were not brainwashed and they had the highest opinion of the monarchy and of the House of Lords, and so do I.

Our institutions are the backbone of our national life. They are extremely popular and should never be taken for granted. For instance, last summer there was enormous interest in the state opening of Parliament, which was broadcast to hundreds of countries throughout the world. There is nothing that I like more than taking constituents round the House and telling them about the numbers of foreigners who come here and envy our ways and wish that they had them.

All these matters are very dear to us, and our traditions, history, ceremonies and pageantry are loved by ordinary people, who feel that great state occasions express the real cohesion of the British people. The only objectors are rootless intellectuals who have no knowledge of real life, and some of them come from a university that is not too far from where I live.

We have much going for us in these islands, which we should not forget. At heart we are still mainly a Christian nation, and Christian mercy and compassion still flavour our lives, even if rather fewer people go to church and the Church of England is not quite what it was. We love freedom and order and everyone living under the law. England is a peaceful nation and it is hard to stir up a revolution or riot. I saw my constituents relaxing in the evenings during the election and realised what an amicable and agreeable people we are.

By contrast, I frequently go abroad, particularly to France, which is a country that I know well and have been involved with for many years since the last war. What a contrast there is there. Under the apparent calm of a highly centralised form of government there is always the danger,

[Mr. John Stokes]

particularly in Paris and its outskirts, that people will suddenly become wildly excited, pick up the cobblestones and demand that certain politicians be hanged from a lamp post. We do not do that here. Perhaps the sometimes noisy and angry scenes that we have in the Chamber are a safety valve to save us from street corner agitators and incitement to riot. We have some new Members of Parliament, and some of them are fairly new to our English heritage, customs and traditions of life. If they want to make their influence felt, the best way to do so is to conform to our practices, and I am sure that they will then be heard with respect.

There is much talk among the chattering classes of the divide between north and south. Such talk is not true and can be harmful to essential unity and cohesion of the nation. I travel a great deal and find the same outlook among people, whether they be in Devon, Durham, Herefordshire, Suffolk, Cumberland or Kent. I find the same sense of Englishness, patriotism, charity and tolerance.

The comparison in wealth is most misleading. Not all northerners or Scotsmen are poor, and not all southerners are rich. We in the west midlands, part of which I represent, suffered grievously in the world slump from 1979 to 1983. My constituents never complained and never wanted or expected taxpayers' money in the form of handouts or subsidies. I am glad to say that prosperity is returning, and I rejoice to see it.

We are a quiet and undemonstrative people. We do not wear our hearts on our sleeves, but our patriotism goes very deep, as was demonstrated to a remarkable degree during the Falklands war. For all our failings and difficulties we are still a great nation, enormously respected abroad, as is our Prime Minister, and all of us share a common history and heritage of which we are rightly proud. Our Government will make great efforts to improve affairs in the inner cities, and I shall lend my energies to that in so far as I can.

I wish that the Opposition would not try so much to run down everything in Britain. From time to time they even criticise the armed forces, which are the best in the world and set an example in leadership, organisation, training, morale and dedication to careers that is the envy of many of our trades and professions. The Opposition even criticise the judges and police, but how lucky we are to have such a respected and independent judiciary and a police force that is among the best in the world. I hope that some Opposition Members will realise how lucky we are not to live in some of the iron curtain countries.

I glory in being, and am proud to have been born, an Englishman. The country is facing much better times and probably unparalleled prosperity. Let us all be thankful for that and live our lives accordingly.

I shall end with a warning. In spite of the recent falls on the stock exchange, most people in Britain have never been as prosperous as they are this Christmas. That is all very fine, but that prosperity brings its own dangers. I have noticed, for instance, as may other hon. Members, the growth of a certain arrogance and brutishness, whether it be among British holidaymakers in Spain, on the football field, in the boxing ring or even driving along the motorways. The old influence of parson and squire has gone and nothing has taken its place. There is no longer any deference to anyone or anything, or even any respect. This world is now so good for so many people that they no longer feel the need to bother about the next. Clergy, parents and teachers are reluctant to proclaim moral standards. However, a new prosperity, widely spread among all classes, must bring with it a greater sense of responsibility, or we shall be in danger of becoming a nasty and unpleasant nation. That is something which the Government and my party should heed.

6.19 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I have listened to the usual robust contribution of the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) but I must say that having listened to him, I would simply hate to be English.

Before we adjourn for Christmas, I would like some clarity on a statement made by the Secretary of State for Transport on 21 October when he announced the appointment of a group of consultants comprising G. Maunsell and Partners and W. S. Atkin and Partners, to develop a scheme for a second Severn crossing. There was general welcome for that announcement, but there has been a slight difference of emphasis between the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office. For example, on 3 February the Under-Secretary of State for Transport said:

"we wish to be in a position to provide the second Severn crossing by the mid-1990s if traffic growth warrants it by then and Parliament so decides."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1987; Vol. 109, c. 569.]

There is a certain note of hesitancy there. On 2 March 1986, the then Secretary of State for Wales Mr. Nicholas Edwards, now created Lord Crickhowell, said:

"We are working to a timetable that will meet our firm intention to be in a position to provide the second Severn crossing in the mid-1990s". — [*Official Report*, 2 March 1987; Vol. 111, c. 607.]

Yet, more recently, the Secretary of State for Transport said on 21 October:

"We are determined to stay on course to provide their crossing by the mid-1990s if the needs likely to develop by then materialise."

I want to ask why there is doubt about the project.

In the first year after the bridge opened, in 1966, the daily flow of traffic averaged 15,600 vehicles. By 1982, the figure had risen to 33,300—more than double. In 1985, it had risen to 36,100 and in the early part of 1987 it was averaging 40,000 a day. The latest Department of Transport forecasts say that with low growth in the economy, by 1995 there would be a daily flow of 45,600. With high growth it would be 50,400. The free-flow design capacity of the existing bridge is 54,000 vehicles per day. If the growth rate for the 1980s is maintained, the capacity will probably be exceeded by about 1993.

Back in October 1983, I first revealed to the House the contents of a hitherto secret report on the superstructure of the bridge by the eminent consulting engineers Mott Hay and Anderson, which certainly gave cause for concern. Subsequently, £40 million was authorised for various repairs and maintenance work. That work is proceeding now.

However, an important question arises. What if the free-flow design capacity is exceeded by 1993? An important safety factor may emerge. Would there be further restrictions on the number of vehicles using the bridge, and what effect would such restrictions have on the Welsh economy, which heaven knows is depressed enough at present? Practical experience already tells us that at

peak times or when the carriageways are closed for maintenance, there are lengthy queues. It is apparent that the project to build a second Severn crossing needs to be speeded up. I have long felt that the Department of Transport has insufficient realisation or understanding of the importance of the Severn crossing to the economy of Wales. I feel that the existing bridge and the building of a second crossing should be handed over to the Welsh Office, which I feel would put more impetus behind it.

My second point relates to finance. The existing bridge was opened in September 1966 and was built at a cost of £8 million. The outstanding debt has now risen to £57·6 million and is forecast to double by 1993. The tolls collected are not meeting the operating and maintenance costs, let alone contributing to paying off any of the rapidly accumulated debt. We know that the Government chose to ignore the findings of the Select Committee on Transport, which in March 1986 recommended that

"tolls should not be imposed on any major estuarial crossing which forms part of the motorway or trunk road system".

The Committee pointed out that it would cost the Government very little to write off the outstanding debt, as all the debt on the Severn bridge is already owed to the Government. The only additional cost would be the loss of interest. In recent years, the Severn bridge has not been able to make any such payments.

This matter is becoming urgent, because decisions will soon have to be taken about the method of financing the second crossing. In February 1987, the company Trafalgar House proposed a privatisation scheme including taking over the existing bridge. Under that scheme, there would be tolls for 30 years. It was turned down by the then Secretary of State for Wales. Nevertheless, the Government have made it plain that they are considering what has become known as a Dartford-style funding operation.

Certain rather important developments are taking place in other parts of the country at present. For instance, it has long been recognised that the Government have got themselves into an impossible position in regard to the Humber bridge. The debt is now about £300 million and is rising rapidly. The Department of Transport has at last been galvanised into action. It has agreed to write off £190 million of the debt with the proviso that the tolls have to be increased. We now find that the Mersey tunnel authorities are appealing for similar assistance and I understand that special assistance has been promised for the escalating financial problems of the Erskine bridge in Scotland. The Select Committee on Transport stated:

"If the Government can acknowledge the difficulties of the Humber Bridge we believe it should also be prepared to acknowledge that problems are faced by other crossings".

What about Wales? Even by the Government's doctored statistics we already have 148,000 people out of work. That is 12·3 per cent. of our population. Of course, there is much hidden unemployment as well. According to the Government's own submission to the European Economic Community 12 months ago, Wales has the lowest rate of economic activity in the whole of Britain. What is more, we have a Government committed to reducing tariff barriers between countries in the EEC. However, at the same time, the Government continue to insist on collecting a toll from those who wish to pass between England and Wales.

We know that the Chancellor has the money to remedy matters. The Secretary of State for Wales is alleged to be high in the pecking order at the Cabinet table. This is an opportune time for him to display some red dragon qualities and get some action on the Severn crossing, which is so important to Wales and on which I have tried to focus the attention of the House before it adjourns for Christmas.

6.30 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): Our Adjournment debates always have considerable charm. Not least, we had the opportunity to hear from my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who spoke with customary elegance and style, and from my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes), who gave us a wonderful philippic on England today. My hon. Friend usually tempts me to digress into matters concerning our national Church and so on. This evening I shall resist that temptation and concentrate instead on two matters on which the House should have an opportunity to reflect before we adjourn for Christmas.

My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge commented on the influence of the media in our society. There is much talk in the media about whether my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he comes to frame his Budget proposals in the early spring, should concentrate on increasing Government expenditure or on reducing income tax. I wish to draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to something which ought to be articulated much more often in this House.

I have the honour to represent tens of thousands of people who cannot be considered affluent by any stretch of the imagination. When I was first elected to represent it in this House, my constituency was suffering high unemployment. The House will be pleased to learn that thousands of those who were out of work then are now in work and can enjoy increasing family prosperity. However, no one should imagine for one moment that they have yet attained any degree of affluence. Many of my constituents' wives work to boost the family income while wishing that that was not necessary.

The tax that those thousands and thousands of people pay is far to high. People earning £140 a week, which is not a princely wage, are having to pay £40 a week, or perhaps slightly more, in income tax and national insurance contributions. That leaves them with £100 a week or even slightly less. No one can say that they have achieved affluence. They live on the margins. They are slightly less on the margins than they were one, two or three years ago and I hope that that trend will develop and become entrenched. However, it is vital to those who enjoy only a modest income that their tax burden should be reduced, and that includes their income tax burden.

One often hears from people with very much higher incomes that they do not mind paying the amount of tax that they pay at present or even more, but no one should be deceived into imagining that they speak on behalf of the overwhelming majority of people in this country. Those of my constituents on modest incomes do not have the ready access to the media enjoyed by many with a more affluent standard of living. I say with all the power that I can that it is essential that direct tax rates be reduced—not just the standard rates but the thresholds. By reducing them we can do a little to make life easier for those who live on the margin.

[Mr. William Powell]

My second point is entirely different but it too may interest my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport today announced the Christmas campaign to discourage people from drinking and driving, and good luck to that campaign. There is no doubt that we need continual publicity about the evils that accompany the combination of the consumption of alcohol with the driving of motor vehicles. However, I must say to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House—and through him to the Under-Secretary of State for Transport and all members of the Government—that there is a limit to the success that such campaigns can have. The time has come for us to re-examine the law to see whether more cannot be done.

It is a frightening fact that one third of the accidents occurring on our roads are a direct consequence of the over-consumption of alcohol. The innocent usually pay the price; the arbitrary nature of the destruction means that it often afflicts the innocent more than those whose over-indulgence has caused the tragedy in the first place. The cost to the victims' families is vast, but the cost is also paid by the nation as a whole. Many people have to stay in hospital, often for a long time, as a direct consequence of alcohol-induced accidents, which account for much of the slaughter on our roads.

I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to consider a number of points carefully for the future. The existing law under the Road Traffic Act 1972 provides that a constable may demand a specimen of breath in any one of three circumstances: first, if there has been an accident; secondly, if there has been a moving traffic offence; thirdly—this is the crucial point—if he has reasonable cause to believe that the driver of a motor vehicle has been drinking. The House will know that the courts have held that reasonable cause need not arise until after the driver has finished driving. If that is not random breath-testing, I do not know what is.

Instead of pussyfooting around the question whether random breath-testing is legal or desirable, it is about time that chief constables made it perfectly plain that they have that power. The power should be advertised much more widely than at present. I can guarantee that our constituents do not appreciate the extent of a police officer's powers that he is entitled to breathalyse them after they have finished driving if he is satisfied that they have been drinking. We must publicise that fact to the nation as a whole.

I come to the legal framework in which these matters are dealt with. Somebody convicted of a drink-driving offence is disqualified for at least one year, but his licence is not removed from him until he is convicted. Sometimes there is a substantial gap between arrest and charging, and the occasion when the matter comes before a court. I should like to see the Road Traffic Act amended so that at the point of charging, a person's licence is suspended but that he should have the power to go to a judge to ask that that suspension be lifted before his conviction if he can give good reasons. That would stop a number of people who undoubtedly use the delay in our court system to avoid facing reality.

Let me take that one step further; here I come to a much more drastic area of law reform. So serious and damaging are the effects of people who drive with alcohol in their blood that the time has now come for Parliament to revise the penalty that suspension be for only a year, and make it a life suspension. People who drink and drive should know beforehand that they will lose their licence for ever. If that message could be got over, the likelihood of people taking a chance would be greatly reduced.

One further change in the law and practice needs to be seriously considered. We are all paying a huge price for medical treatment and so on, as a result of alcohol-induced accidents. The insurance companies should now be asked to foot the bill in full for the consequences. Therefore, they should be allowed to write into their insurance policies the provision that insurance will not follow if somebody has been drinking and driving. Therefore, people who drink and drive would know that not only do they face a life suspension of their licence, but also that they would not be insured and would be liable for the consequences. Those twin effects would dramatically concentrate the mind and bring home to people that they must not continue in the way in which they have been.

It is all very well trying to discourage people from drinking and driving by the enforcement of the criminal law. That, together with publicity and advertising the bad effects, has been the path pursued so far. But the time has now come for a heavy investment in research to produce a device which would physically stop somebody who had been drinking from driving. Such a device, using a microchip or whatever, could cut out the ignition if somebody had a level of alcohol in their blood which was above the limit.

There is no doubt that some American car companies are experimenting in that area and, increasingly, many people think that such a device is a practicality. If it could be achieved, it would be impossible for anybody to drink and drive, and that would be the best result of all. It would cut out all the accidents that are a consequence of drinking and driving.

The time has now come for the Government to take a lead by sponsoring such research and ensuring that it is brought to fruition. Where there's a will there's a way. Such research would not need a significant amount of investment, but rather a concentration of resources over a particular period. If such a device could be found, it would rapidly become compulsory for all cars, not just in Britain but across the world. The patent fees that could be earned by the inventor of such a device would be just as dramatic as those earned by the inventor of cats' eyes and other road safety devices which we now take for granted.

At this time, when we know that the Christmas season will be ruined for a number of families as a result of irresponsibility with alcohol and driving, the Government should go a step further than they have been prepared to go up till now, and take the steps which, all being well, if pursued relentlessly and with determination, would eliminate the prospect of people being able to drink and drive. If that were to happen, the benefit to our fellow countrymen and people elsewhere would be far greater than anything achieved by most of the measures that come before the House of Commons.

6.44 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) has made a fairly controversial speech, not least in respect of drinking and driving. I drive, but I do not drink, and I would take issue with him on his proposal to remove insurance cover for those found guilty of drinking and driving. I fear that such

a measure would mean that the burden would fall upon the injured party rather than upon those who inflicted the injury. Not everyone who drives a car is wealthy enough to meet the bills that would inevitably flow from the loss of insurance cover.

The hon. Gentleman talked about reducing tax and taking people out of tax, but I am sorry that he did not go on to say that taking a large number of the lower paid out of tax would mean that for the Treasury to raise the same tax revenue there would have to be fairly considerable chopping and changing with the bands at the upper tax levels and the wealthier sections of the community might not like that. However, that is an issue that the Treasury is there to resolve and we have to support or oppose as the case may be when the Budget rolls around.

However, I did not come here to talk about tax or drinking and driving, but to raise the question of extradition, especially extradition from the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland. That is a matter of considerable importance at the moment which should be explored before we depart to our homes for a happy Christmas—which, of course, will not be very happy in the Province, one part of which I have the honour to represent.

A Bill has just been passed by the Dail Eireann in the Irish Republic, which had as its background the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. When the definition of terrorism was being decided on by those who drew up the Bill they seem to have had some difficulty, and, having looked at it, I am not impressed with some of the things in it.

For instance, it lays down that one of the terrorist acts shall be an offence involving the use of a bomb, grenade, rocket, automatic firearm or letter or petrol bomb if their use endangers persons. I am only a layman with no legal training, but if an IRA man or some other terrorist in Ulster or elsewhere blows somebody's brains out using an automatic pistol, he can be found guilty of a terrorist offence, whereas if he uses a plain old-fashioned bolt-action rifle, shotgun or revolver he cannot. It is nonsense that that should be written into such legislation.

Only a narrow range of offences can be treated as terrorist offences for the purpose of extradition where an individual would not be allowed to claim political immunity. Although the scope is widened in article 2 of the convention, it could be narrowed again by the application of article 13. It might be worth the time of those hon. Members who have not read the convention to dig it out and have a look at it.

Despite the difficulties caused by the narrow wording, the Irish Republic has certain difficulties itself because it did not vote for the convention. In fact, it abstained. The Government of that day were obviously aware of the difficulties that it was bound to cause them in succeeding years.

In general, there is no difficulty about extradition from any part of the United Kingdom to the Irish Republic, or vice versa, for an ordinary criminal offence. Most cases go straight through. Apparently, a record is not kept in Scotland, but very few people have been extradited to Scotland. Indeed, only one person has been extradited to Scotland for terrorist activities in the past few years. In all cases, extradition was apparently granted.

However, whenever we come to the question as it relates to England and Wales, there are a surprising number of requests for extradition. Between 1982 and 1986 there were 136, of which 49 were granted, 85 were not acted upon for one reason or another—apparently, in some cases, because the individual was imprisoned in the Republic—and two requests were refused. One was refused because of a technicality, which seems a favoured device for refusing extradition. The other was the famous Glenholmes, the lady who managed to get out of the court and go trotting down the street.

In general, there is no difficulty about the ordinary criminal. The difficulty occurs when one considers crimes that could be described as having a political content. It was evident from the answers given last week by the Prime Minister, on Tuesday and on Thursday, to myself, that she was well aware that the new law is not very good when it comes to extraditing dangerous and wicked men to justice from the Irish Republic. I am sure that some hon. Members will have read my question to the Prime Minister. Indeed, some may have heard me ask it, although at the time it was difficult to hear what was said. I asked the Prime Minister why the Government of the Irish Republic had created such a weapon if they did not intend to use it.

The history of extradition from the Irish Republic to the United Kingdom for terrorist offences has been difficult. When Dominic McGlinchey, a dangerous and wicked man, was extradited, everybody thought that the whole defence of political offence had been uprooted, demolished and completely removed. However, later cases did not uphold that point of view. In, for example, the Shannon case, one of the justices held that an offence could be political even if it went beyond reasonable political activity. At the same hearing, another justice held that political immunity depended on the motivation of the individual who was being extradited, the identity of the victim and the true nature of the offence. All those points were to be assessed by their closeness to the alleged political objective.

That seems a fairly solid clawback to the position that existed before the McGlinchey case. One is sometimes left wondering if McGlinchey would have been extradited had he not become so infamous and brutally well known throughout the United Kingdom that he was an embarrassment to all concerned. Similarly, one wonders whether the most recent character, the so-called "border fox," would have been sought so assiduously had he not become so brutally and wickedly famous. Hon. Members will be able to appreciate from my comments that I view such things with a jaundiced eye.

Some people think that this country is incapable of holding a fair trial. The Incorporated Law Society arranged in Dublin recently a meeting which, according to *The Irish Times*, was attended by more than 400 people. One individual is reported as saying that the Act was

> "inappropriate to exist between two sovereign states . . . it would operate at a time when there were serious reservations about the justice given to Irish people in British courts."

He is also reported as saying that

> "there was a widespread feeling in this country, and to a considerable degree in Britain, that many trials of Irish people in Britain were not far removed from show trials, with a predictable result."

I could quote a great deal more, but those hon. Members who are interested will find a full report in *The Irish Times* of 2 December. Many English hon. Members should read it. Perhaps I transgress, but that was all part of the general

[Mr. William Ross]

hype in the news media in the Irish Republic about the present trial of the so-called "Birmingham Six". We should not lightly forget that matter at present.

I turn now to the limitations of the new extradition law in the Republic. The Attorney-General of the Republic is appointed by the Prime Minister of the Republic and must be satisfied by the production of evidence that there is a case to be answered. I believe that, under Irish law, that means that a full book of evidence must be available. Often some of the evidence that might be needed would be available only after the police had questioned the people concerned. That requirement will apply only to British requests for extradition.

The person extradited will not be subject to intensive questioning after extradition. Therefore, the police will have no possibility of extracting further information from them. The person extradited will not have to face charges other than those that are specified on the warrant. The extradition warrant may be refused because of a lapse of time if it would be unjust, invidious or oppressive to allow the case to go ahead. If anyone believed that it would be unjust to allow the case to go ahead, no doubt a perfectly good reason could be found for refusing the warrant.

It is well known that many people in the Irish Republic are guilty of many murders, extending far back, even to beyond the time when the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) was the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Some of those people are known to me and many of the victims were personally known to me. Refusing a warrant because of the time that had elapsed would mean that many of those people would be beyond the reach of the United Kingdom courts for ever. That is unacceptable to those who have suffered, and this country should not be asked to accept it. Murderers of soldiers, policemen and civilians, and people who have escaped from prison while awaiting trial — I think of one individual especially — can now escape justice simply because their crimes happened a long time ago.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Have there not been recent exchanges between my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach in which the Taoiseach has given various undertakings that the extradition treaty will not cause any trouble? From his contacts on that side of the water, has the hon. Gentleman any ideas about what those difficulties might be and the way in which they might be overcome?

Mr. Ross: That is the great difficulty. The suppression of terrorism convention was passed by the Dail a year ago. It lasted throughout the year until the present extradition measures passed through the Dail. We have now been told that there will be a further review in another year's time. I do not know what that means to the lawyers or legislators in the Irish Republic, but to me it is simply a foot-dragging and time-wasting exercise all the way down the line. I fear the worst, because ultimately, with the conditions that are written into the treaty, it is for the Government of the Irish Republic to exert or relax pressure as to whether individuals should be extradited.

That is what lay behind the latter part of my question to the Prime Minister last Thursday. I said that she should reflect that that power would not be created by the Irish Government if they did not have the intention of using it. The Prime Minister made it plain on that occasion, as she had done earlier, that she saw the changes as a step backwards that would make extradition more difficult.

I go further than that. I believe that the treaty makes extradition impossible unless we pay a constitutional price and the price of interference with the judiciary in this country. We are not and should not be prepared to pay that price. The plain truth is that, in the Irish Republic, the judges take an oath to uphold the constitution and the institutions of that state. I applaud that because it is fair, reasonable and correct that the judiciary of any state should take such an oath. The idea that, in some way or another, we can get a judge from the Irish Republic to sit in a British court when that same Irish judge, because of his support for the constitution, must support the concept of a 32-county Irish Republic, is quite mad. It should never be allowed to come to pass and should not, in any circumstances, be considered reasonable.

We in this House or in the country should not admit to anyone that individuals who appear before our courts are incapable of getting a free and fair trial. If we admit that in respect of citizens of a foreign nation, it will not be long before exactly the same charges are levelled against trials of our citizens within other boundaries. For that reason alone, we should resist it.

The whole thrust of the Republican argument is that the only answer to terrorism in Ireland is to create a 32-county Irish Republic. There is no doubt that that is a large part of the arguments about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, and so on. If right hon. and hon. Members refer to *The Irish Times* of 20 November, they will see a report of an EEC debate on the bombing in Enniskillen. According to the article, one speaker, Mr. T. J. Mahler, said that

> "it was not sufficient to condemn the violence of the IRA 'as this was attacking the symptoms and not the cause'."

To him, the cause is the fact that Northern Ireland is part of this nation, rather than part of the Irish Republic. The article went on to state:

> "He urged strong support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement to ensure the unification of Ireland takes place in a peaceful way."

He thereby revealed the reason he supports it.

As a result of what we have seen in the past two years, the Government's hopes in respect of the agreement are in shreds. It was hoped that the claim to Northern Ireland would be dropped. That did not happen. There has been no improvement in respect of extradition. In fact, it has got a great deal worse. Above all, there has been no improvement in security. The captured shipments of arms demonstrate to any reasonable and unbiased observer that terrorism and terrorist strength in Northern Ireland as a whole are far worse than when this Administration came to office.

We need to look seriously not only at extradition but at the whole thrust of the policy that the House has supported for nigh on 20 years. That policy brought about the events at Enniskillen. The matter went deep to the hearts of people in this country because the folk of England, Scotland and Wales were doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. If it had been another parade, I doubt whether there would have been the same outcry from the Prime Minister at a service of remembrance. Let us remember that, on that same day,

there was an attempt to murder 80 children. That attempt was carried through to the extent of pushing the button, but it did not come off.

These are serious matters. They have not received the attention, time or questioning in the House that they deserve. It is wrong for us to go away for our Christmas holidays without considering them even briefly this evening.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It will be evident to the House that many hon. Members still wish to speak in the debate. It must end at 8.8 pm. Front-Bench speakers will need time to wind up the debate. I appeal to both sides of the House for briefer contributions.

7.3 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I shall follow your wish, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not intend to take up where the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) left off, except to say that Dublin politicians' hostility for the British is almost inexplicable. More people who were born in the Irish Republic live in the United Kingdom than in the Irish Republic. When they come to England, they find an atmosphere of toleration. I follow what the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) said. One admires the British sense of toleration. Many things about the English anger me. I am sure that the Scots and the Welsh have much the same things to say about the English, but there is a sense of toleration. I have never understood why people from the Irish Republic, who enjoy the benefits of living in this country, have not persuaded the people at home to change their attitudes toward this country. I shall not pursue that matter, much as I would like to do so.

The matter I raise relates to an individual. It is the duty of Members of Parliament to protect individual rights and also deal with great national and international topics. I refer to a constituent, Mr. Jonathan Carson, who is 23 years of age. He has suffered a grave injustice at the hands of the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. He was and still is a student at the university of Liverpool. He applied to the Northern Ireland Department of Education for a grant to pursue further education to achieve his master of philosophy degree at that university, but his application was turned down by the Stormont Department because he did not obtain a degree by examination. On the face of it, that seems reasonable if one has to accept the regulations. There is much in the regulations with which I disagree. There is reason for my outrage. In the short time available to me, I hope to be able to show hon. Members and the Leader of the House how a grave injustice has been done to Mr. Jonathan Carson. I hope that the Leader of the House will arrange for the Government to change their mind.

Jonathan Carson enrolled as a student in the department of French at Liverpool university. All in his department speak of his hard work and dedication to his studies. He was due to sit his degree examination in the summer term of this year. Before sitting that examination, in the first week of the summer term he went to his local hospital to give blood. The immediate floating test suggested that he might be anaemic. That suspicion was confirmed by subsequent tests that were carried out. As a result, he had further blood tests at the Royal hospital in Liverpool and a bone marrow test, all of which indicated that he had acute lymphoblastic leukaemia—a serious state. He was immediately admitted to hospital on 19 May. His condition was treated as serious and his chances of success were not regarded as too high at that time.

He stayed in hospital, and received chemotherapy treatment, which involved intravenous doses of many drugs — some orally administered drugs, some intramuscular injections and some injections into his spinal column by lumbar puncture. That treatment continued after he left hospital. In fact, he still has to attend hospital regularly.

The important point is that he could not sit his examination. He was admitted to hospital on the very day on which he was to sit the first part of his degree examination. On the day that he was to sit the second part of his degree examination—I said "day"; it probably covered many days—he was in hospital and could not do so. The Government say that he should not get a grant because he did not sit that examination. That is a grave injustice to that young man.

Many who suffer leukaemia, as Jonathan Carson does at present, would give up. But Jonathan Carson is not a quitter. He does not give way to resentment or despondency as a result of his medical condition. Instead, he fights to continue his studies. I plead with the Government to enable him to continue his studies. Last month, in a letter to me, Jonathan Carson said:

"Mentally, I have been strong since the beginning. My attitude has always been to fight, while doing exactly as I am told by the hospital.

I shall continue to fight. I am to stay in the vicinity of the hospital for at least two years.

So be it. I have not once yet said: 'Why me?' and I have no intention of saying it."

He pays tribute — unfortunately, because of the shortness of time available I cannot repeat it—to the staff, of the hospital and of the university of Liverpool, which he attended.

I have argued with the Department of Education in Northern Ireland that it should regard his as a special case and make sure that a grant is given to Jonathan Carson to enable him to pursue his postgraduate research and take his master of philosophy degree. However, my representations were rejected by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland. They were also rejected when I made a further plea directly to the Minister responsible, and, despite the fact that my constituent has shown ability, the Government still say no.

Jonathan Carson was recommended by the university for an aegrotat degree—obtained without examination. That was conferred on him on 9 July. The aegrotat recommendation by the board of examiners in French and linguistics states:

"his course work throughout his final year until the onset of the disease was consistently of a II·I standard in linguistics and II·I in French."

In effect, he was expected to obtain overall a mid to high 2:1 joint honours degree. The acting head of the department of French at the University of Liverpool told me in a letter:

"As one of our 2 or 3 best students, he had already been selected to fill the post of lecturer at a French University next year for 1 year."

Doctor Waller emphasised:

"the case of Mr. Carson is an extraordinarily deserving one . . . I would hope that it is still not too late to make a further appeal in this 1987-88 Academic year. His case is so patently

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

deserving, for both accademic and compassionate reasons, that the Northern Ireland Department of Education decision seems to me to be scandalous".

That is strong language from Dr. Waller, the acting head of the department of French. I am sure that he is not accustomed to using such language, unless he feels that he should.

I close with this further and final appeal to the Leader of the House to persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to give way in this case. Jonathan Carson has been advised that he must continue his treatment at the Royal Liverpool hospital for two years at least. The course that he wishes to follow lasts for two years. He is eager to continue his research and he has shown his determination by enrolling as a part-time student at Liverpool university. His father cannot afford the substantial expenses involved in his son's staying there for two years, quite apart from all the worry that he, the mother and family have about this young man's medical future. To the credit of the academic staff of the University of Liverpool, the university has given him an interest-free loan to cover his registration fees, but more needs to be done by the Government. I ask my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to intervene in this case and make the Department of Education in Northern Ireland change its mind to enable this young man, who has shown so much courage and strength, to pursue his academic career with dignity.

7.14 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I am sure that all hon. Members will accept that we must defend the rights of the individual, as expounded by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). To some degree I shall follow the subject that he raised, by defending the rights of the families of individals. The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the respect and thanks that are due to hospital staff, and I, too, want to dwell a little on that.

First, I must report to the House with regret that I learned today of the death of four railway engineers who were working on the railway line from Leeds to Sheffield, which runs through my constituency. They were working with a gang of eight workmen, and four of them were struck by a moving train and fatally injured. I am sure that all hon. Members join me in expressing condolences to the families of those people. I mention the defence of individuals and families because I raised the matter with the Secretary of State for Transport, who later contacted me to say that there would be a public inquiry, either in a coroner's court or in some other way, into this serious matter. We must ensure that the interests of the families of those individuals are safeguarded at all times.

The point that I wanted to raise before learning of that tragic event concerns the intensive care unit at Pindersfield hospital, which is in my constituency. Admissions to the unit were stopped on 27 November. The decision was taken by the neurosurgeon and anaesthetist on call that day. It meant that patients were diverted to Leeds, or were not admitted to any intensive care unit if no beds were available. The cancellation of admissions and of the neurosurgical operation list for the Mondays of the past week and of this week is devastating for my constituents and for people served by Pindersfield hospital. Tensions have been dramatically heightened by what is happening in the area.

The cancellations are a direct result of the shortage of trained nursing staff at the Pindersfield hospital intensive care unit. The unit is allowed approximately half the number of trained nurses that are required for its seven beds. The intensive care unit should have 41 trained nurses to provide 24-hour cover on a three-shift basis. The present staffing level is 24. That is a shocking reduction in what is required to maintain the 24-hour staffing level of the unit. It means that the unit can often provide adequate nursing to cover only four or five critically ill patients. In other words, only four or five beds can be occupied by clinical patients, so there is a tremendous shortfall in provision.

The work load of the unit has dramatically and significantly risen this year because the regional health authority agreed to the appointment of an additional neurosurgeon, but no provision was made for additional beds or additional trained nurses to give the necessary back-up service. That is a significant and severe problem because, on occasions, beds in adjacent wards must be taken over to provide additional intensive care facilities.

There is a real shortage of resources at the hospital. The extension of beds so reduced the nursing care facilities available to each patient that the consultant neurosurgeons found the position so anomalous and dangerous that they could not allow matters to continue. They were rightly concerned about the decline in morale among the nursing staff on the intensive care unit, which was due to their undoubtedly heavy work load.

The fall in morale is reflected in the difficulty of filling vacancies, at least for the necessary posts at the intensive care unit. Because of the low level of trained nursing staff at that unit, in the interests of patients the consultant neurosurgeons are restricting admissions so that the level of nursing care remains adequate. The consultants have given notice that they will review on a day to day basis the number of patients and nurses in the intensive care unit and that they will restrict admissions until the situation improves.

I attended the unit yesterday morning before I came to the House. I was accompanied by the chairman and district manager of the health authority, the consultants, the director of nursing services, the ward sister and the trade union representatives. I discussed the real problem facing the unit. All the people present agreed — there was no dissension whatever — that there was a shortage of trained nurses. I noticed during the brief period that I was there the nurses at work going from patient to patient. They were performing processing care for the patients and were working to full capacity all the time that we were at that unit. It is wrong to deny those nurses the support of extra nurses to ensure that there is no distress among the nurses and patients. The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security is not in her place. She should stop hiding behind statistics and should stop hiding the real facts that I have outlined about what is happening at this intensive care unit. We need additional resources, and we need them now.

Before the House adjourns for the Christmas recess, notice should be taken of the problems experienced by hospitals throughout the Yorkshire and Humberside region, the area from which I come. Indeed, throughout the country there is an acute shortage of trained nurses. It is not a case of a ward in a hospital closing. Intensive care units are having trouble and beds are being closed because of the lack of fully trained nurses. I hope that someone will

take note of what is happening in the Pindersfield hospital, where there is a shortage of such nurses. There is a shortage of resources, and I hope that the Leader of the House will take note of that.

The people whom I met yesterday were not trade union activists who, we are often told, are the people who make statements to the press and create problems in our Health Service. As I have said, yesterday I met the chairman and the general manager of the health authority, the consultants, the director of nursing services, trade unionists and the ward sister. Everyone agreed that there was a special need for additional resources in order to maintain the service to which the patients and people in our area are entitled. The same goes for everyone in west Yorkshire. More trained nurses should be provided to safeguard the service that is necessary in our hospitals, and especially in the Pindersfield hospital.

Before the House goes into recess, I hope that hon. Members will have regard for the serious situation in my constituency. I appeal to the Minister who is responsible for providing resources to ensure that they are made available so that the patients served by the Pindersfield hospital are not denied the necessary service of the intensive care unit. I hope that some action will result from this debate and that some resources will be provided to make sure that hospitals such as Pindersfield hospital are given the necessary trained nurses that they require to maintain their services.

7.24 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): Before the House rises for the Christmas recess, I should like to deal briefly with three matters. The first is about safety. I am surprised that little has been said about the obvious danger of people riding bicycles and wearing Walkmans, but I am even more surprised that little or no mention has been made about the dangers of car phones.

I applaud the companies that are selling car phones, because they are obviously doing extremely well. At the moment there are 250,000 car phones in use, and in two years that figure will double. Daily as I drive behind people I am amazed to see that they are driving with one hand and talking into a car phone held in the other hand. On many occasions I have seen people driving round corners while using car telephones. Even more dangerous, I have seen people talking on car phones while driving on motorways. Somehow the House should try to get something done about that.

My second point is that I have the privilege to represent in the House on a voluntary basis the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations. All hon. Members will recognise and acknowledge the therapeutic value of hospital radio broadcasting to their constituents who are, unfortunately, in hospital. Such people enjoy listening to hospital radio, and there are 300 hospital radios throughout the country.

On a number of occasions in the last Parliament I made a plea for zero-rated VAT on hospital radio broadcasting equipment. Two years ago the Chancellor zero-rated talking books for the blind. Hopefully, we can look forward in the coming Budget to zero-rated VAT on equipment used for hospital radio broadcasting.

My final point is about the report that has just been released by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The report is called:

"A report into the plight of stray, tethered and abandoned horses and ponies in England and Wales".

Twice in the last Parliament I attempted to introduce the Horses and Ponies Bill which would have protected those animals from what I saw as their plight. The report from the RSPCA says:

"The only solution to the plight of thousands of tethered horses and ponies throughout the United Kingdom is a change in the law which will ban or severely restrict the practice of tethering."

The report points to three areas in which the RSPCA thinks that abuse takes place. First, the report talks about the horses and ponies that are used for the purpose of earning a livelihood. Then it talks about parents purchasing ponies and horses for their children, not realising the heavy cost involved in maintaining those horses and ponies.

Finally, and most distressing of all, the report talks about animals that are abandoned on waste ground, fattened up and ultimately sent to the knacker's yard. I wish all hon. Members a happy Christmas and I hope that when I attempt to introduce the measure in this Parliament they will support it and help to make a happy Christmas for horses, ponies and donkeys by giving them some protection in legislation.

7.29 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I want to comment briefly on a matter that took my attention during the time that I was away from the House. It is a matter which, in a general sense, we rarely debate: what is happening to children in our society? I am glad to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) who raised the subject of hospitals. Those who watched the programme the other night about 24 premature babies with a heart condition who died in one year because of the lack of intensive care facilities are aware of how this example can be applied to what is happening to children in our society, whether at birth or later in their lives.

When we talk about children and the improvements that have taken place, particularly since the end of the war, it is usual for us to quote statistics and to say how much healthier children are and how much better their teeth are. However, a growing number of children in our society do not share in that prosperity. As we prepare to rise for the Christmas recess, and as we feast ourselves and enjoy the festivities, we must remember that many children are suffering enormously in various ways. The House never debates the subject of children generally. We debate various issues relating to children—particularly health, education and pre-school—but we never debate what is happening to a growing minority of children in circumstances which I find frightening.

A report dealing with the illegal trafficking of children in Europe and many parts of the world will shortly be discussed by the Council of Europe. It deals particularly with illegal adoption. Some children come into this country, but particularly into other parts of Europe and America. These children have literally been bought and sold on the market and given or taken to homes that want them because, for example, there is a shortage of children to adopt or, unfortunately, for other reasons which I do not have time to go into. Some of these children are sold in circumstances which do not bear investigation and, sadly, are not investigated. When the Council of Europe considers the report, I hope that we shall get more information about what is happening.

[Miss Joan Lestor]

Children throughout the world are sold into prostitution, and others drift into prostitution. When we congratulate ourselves, as we so often do, on the sort of Christmas that we shall have, we should remember that between 600 and 700 homeless, young people are going through the Centre Point refuge. Many of those homeless young people end up on our streets being involved in stealing, prostitution or many other unfortunate activities. There are 15,000 missing young people in this country today. During the Christmas period of 1986-87, twice as many children were missing as in the previous year. That figure is forecast to increase this year. The House should consider in far greater detail why this happens.

I believe that we should have a Royal Commission to consider all matters affecting children. That belief was strengthened when I was away from the House and had time to consider what was happening to abused children and to other children in trouble and in need. The problem of gambling among young children is growing. Children who hang around leisure centres and arcades are involved in gambling, and the European report suggests that many of them are picked up and involved in prostitution or end up in need of care and protection.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) mentioned the minority of people — in some areas, a large minority—whose housing conditions are appalling. For example, young children are brought up in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, 30 per cent. of which, according to the magazine *Health Visitor*, does not meet local authority standards for sanitary accommodation and general amenities. Many such properties are fire risks. Young children are confined to one room, without any play facilities, in which the whole family eats, sleeps and cooks. The fire risk is very high. This Christmas, those children will sit and watch their television sets—if they have them. Perhaps they are lucky not to have them. Otherwise they would see expensive toys and luxuries advertised that other children will be able to have and that they know will never come their way.

About 1·25 million children live in families in which one or both parents are unemployed. A recent DHSS study published by the policy studies unit last year explained that the standard of living for many of those children was deplorable. Many of those children had only one pair of shoes, and many of those families in which the main breadwinner was unemployed ran out of food and money before the week was out. Babies, especially those born in winter, were kept indoors and failed to thrive as a result of vitamin deficiencies, especially deficiencies of vitamins A and D. The mental and physical growth of those children is adversely affected, as we can well imagine.

Reported cases of child abuse are increasing, although I would not like to say whether the actual cases are increasing. That abuse is not just sexual, but physical and emotional. The abuse appears to be increasing. I believe it is important that the Government should recognise that many people working in connection with child abuse, child poverty and child neglect believe that the Government have done nothing like enough to try to mitigate the worst effects of the children's circumstances.

I am aware — and I am certain that all hon. Members, if they are honest, are aware—that while we express great sympathy for children who suffer from abuse, neglect and battering—not all of the children are poor; many are, but this is not simply a crime of poverty —and while we condemn those who ill-treat children, when those children grow up and repeat the pattern that they have learnt, the condemnation of those children, with whom we once sympathised, because they are now maladjusted adults, knows no bounds. We are building up enormous problems for our society if we constantly state how much better conditions are now for many children and overlook the fact that a large minority of children are deprived, ill-clad, ill-housed, ill-fed and neglected.

When we talk about the Christmas festivities and enjoying ourselves — I am sure that all hon. Members will enjoy themselves — it is important, as we avail ourselves of the better side of society, to remember that many children will not enjoy such a Christmas. Conservative Members refer to "talking the country down" and failing to recognise the amazing achievements in this country, but they should remember that we sell those children short if we do not have the guts to stand up and say that this will be a very poor Christmas for many of them. It is about time that the House recognised its duty to improve things.

7.38 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Because of the number of speakers on the health argument in recent weeks, there can be little doubt that that is a matter of great importance both inside and outside the Chamber. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) expressed the concern in Shropshire. I do not apologise for returning to the plight of hospitals in Shropshire, because that is of major concern to those of us who live in the county.

There can be little doubt that a degree of party politicking is going on in this respect. I can understand the motivations of Labour and Liberal politicians and trade union leaders in the county who try to mislead those who are ill-informed on these matters and to frighten the elderly about the future of the Health Service. That is perhaps what we would expect of the Opposition, and I duly criticise them for that. They know that it is too simple just to claim that it is all the Government's fault.

I shall tonight point the blame where I believe it lies. One of the problems in Shropshire is that the West Midlands regional health authority, within whose boundary we regrettably lie, is 10 per cent. under-funding the county of Shropshire according to the RAWP scale, which is the Government's method of assessing National Health Service need.

The headlines in the media always cry "Cuts". That is simple to print and difficult to explain. However, revenue spending in Shropshire on the hospital service increased from £29·1 million in 1978-79 under the previous Labour Government to £61·3 million in 1985-86, the last available figures under this Government. The capital spending of the county of Shropshire has risen from £1 million in 1978-79 under the previous Labour Government to £10·3 million in 1985-86. That is hardly a cut, and, even allowing for the special rate of inflation that applies to Health Service spending, the income of the West Midlands region from this Government is 19 per cent. ahead of inflation. Talk about cuts is simply an easy media and politicking ploy. It has no substance in fact.

There is, however, a problem in the county of Shropshire and its health service. On 29 June I brought the problem to the notice of the House in an Adjournment

debate. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security replied to the debate, but sadly stuck rigidly to her brief on the regional authority and did not cover the problems in Shropshire, which was the purpose of the debate.

We constantly hear about the regional situation. Shropshire is a rural county, with half its population—220,000 people—living in the rural part of the county. There are 11 market towns, 17 villages with more than 1,000 people and 374 villages with fewer than 100. There are 5,000 farms scattered across the county, which means that it is a large and principally rural-based county. I represent the county town of Shrewsbury and several villages around it. The ever-growing new town of Telford in the constituency of the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) is also in the county.

Shropshire health authority proposed to build a second district general hospital in the constituency of the hon. Member for The Wrekin. We all have our views on whether that decision was taken because of health needs or because the constituency is politically marginal. I am quite clear about my views on that. I took a delegation to visit the former Minister for Health when the proposal was first brought forward. The consultants in the delegation and I warned him that the consultant cover for the country would not increase as a result of the creation of a second giant hospital within the rural county. It would simply mean that the consultants would spend more time in their motorcars travelling between the two hospitals. Undoubtedly the cost of the hospital would have an effect on the county of Shropshire as a whole.

I welcome this opportunity to put on the record and say to the people of Shropshire that I do not disagree for a moment that Telford needs a hospital. However, I argue with the Government whether it needs one on the scale and size of a district general hospital. A deal was struck that Shropshire would receive an extra £4 million funding from the region when the Telford hospital opened. If the newspapers in particular had read closely the proposal put forward by the health authority, they would have discovered that not only would the building result in the closure of 10 cottage hospitals in the county, but that there was a rather vicious sentence hidden in the first paragraph of the proposals, which states:

"The remaining sum required to run the hospital would be obtained by rationalising services."

The people of Shropshire have not been told by the health authority, which theoretically represents Shropshire, and which is ducking its responsibilities right, left and centre, exactly what the rationalisation proposal would be. Once the 10 cottage hospitals are closed, what will be left? There will be a new giant hospital in Telford and a large district general hospital in Shrewsbury. I suggest to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North that perhaps our internationally acclaimed orthopaedic hospital might be next on the hit list. The health authority unquestionably thrust the hospital into the centre of the county, and the authority is now ducking its responsibilities. Shropshire needs its RAWP allocation to be scaled with its underfunding. That will happen only if Telford hospital is scaled down and the cottage hospitals saved. Let the blame be put where the blame lies.

7.44 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On these occasions it is customary for us to speak against adjourning for Christmas. I shall not indulge in that hypocrisy. As my hon. Friends have made most effective and succinct cases, I do not propose to comment on what they said, as comment would be superfluous. On behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) who has taken Trappist vows for the evening, I can say that the case of the two other hon. Members from Shropshire can be put exceedingly succinctly. Health care in Shropshire will reach the level that the people of Shropshire deserve, only if more money is provided for the health authority. It is a bit potty for the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) to suggest that the only way to protect health care in Shrewsbury is insufficiently to improve health care in Telford, a little further across the county.

I shall concentrate my speech on a major issue which has been before the House for the past few days. This debate has been used, quite rightly, by Mr. Speaker as his reason for rejecting a number of applications under Standing Order No. 20 for a debate on the gagging by the Government of the BBC. It is worth putting it on record, that the Government — or the Tory party, the Government in their other manifestation—have brought forward a series of measures in an effort to gag the BBC to such an extent that, if it were happening in a foreign country, the BBC overseas service would start referring to itself as the state broadcasting corporation.

Mr. Stuart Young was appointed chairman of the governors of the BBC. There was not much coverage of the fact that he was the brother of Lord Young, a Cabinet Minister. Since his death, the chairmanship has been taken on by a Mr. Marmaduke Hussey who is also related to a member of the Government, this time by marriage, and who was a former leading light in the Murdoch operations and the move to Wapping, which is not normally regarded as an indication of any independence of thought or anything else. Mr. Howell James was appointed to a senior post in the corporate affairs department of the BBC. The Young family strikes again, because that man used to work in the private office of Lord Young, advising him on this, that and the other.

There has been public pressure from the former chairman of the Tory party, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit). No one could have brought greater public pressure to bear on the editorial independence of the BBC. We understand from journalists in this place and outside that they have been told by their management that they should go easy when they interview Tory Ministers because of the pressures that they face from the Government. That was followed by the Zircon affair, when the Government carried out an extraordinary police raid on the BBC in Glasgow, taking away crates of material which they eventually had to return, admitting that they had not found a shred of evidence to justify their original action. They also obtained the injunction which they used to stifle the showing of the Zircon film on these premises.

Finally — I doubt whether it is final; the Government's attempts to gag the BBC and fair comment are growing, so this is their latest attempt, not their last

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

—they have obtained an injunction following the intention of the BBC to broadcast the radio programme, "My Country, Right or Wrong."

We were led to believe by a preposterous statement from the Attorney-General last week that the Government knew not a thing about the programme until it was mentioned in the "Peterborough" column of *The Daily Telegraph*. Admirable newspaper though it is, I cannot believe that the Government, and in particular the security services, did not know before they read it in *The Daily Telegraph* that somebody was making a programme about the security services and was interviewing existing and former members — particularly as we know from the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) that one of them had written to the boss of the Security Service to point out that he was to take part in an interview. Yet, for no apparent reason, the Government did not know a thing about it and suddenly said, "Dearie me, there is an article in *The Daily Telegraph* and something must be done about it."

The Government obtained an injunction against the BBC. I understand from legal advice I have received that, if the BBC were to report proceedings in Parliament during which hon. Members referred to the names of serving or retired members of the security services, the BBC could potentially be in breach of the injunction.

It goes further than that, because of another Court of Appeal ruling which suggests that the court is falling down on its duty to preserve freedom of speech. The Court of Appeal held that an injunction against one newspaper might in certain circumstances be held to cover other newspapers, so the ruling that the Government have obtained against the BBC may very well apply to other news media, including newspapers which attempt to report the House.

We have the ridiculous situation where members or former members of the security services might be mentioned in the House and, if that were reported by the BBC or a newspaper, they might be held to be in contempt. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to issue you with a warning: were you to call the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), who it is well known is a former member of the security service, and the BBC reported it, it could be held in contempt of court. It might be a bit hard on the hon. Member for Woking — not being reported and his constituents not finding out what he had been talking about. The idea that somebody in the House is bleeped out because they mention a former member of the security services is absolutely ludricrous. Does it mean, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if I mention the words "Graham Greene" or "Malcolm Muggeridge", both acknowledged former members of the security services, those words will be bleeped out for fear that the BBC is held in contempt of court?

If the Government are trying to stop people mentioning the name of Mr. Peter Wright, a contemporary spycatcher, is it the case — this is how the instrument that the Government put before the court was drawn—that we cannot mention Oliver Cromwell's spycatcher, Thurloe, because he was a former member of the security services? We are reaching an absurd situation.

I understand from people who were Ministers at the time that the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) had a hush-hush job in the Foreign Office which might be regarded as part of the security services. Does that mean that we cannot mention him and have his name reported outside the House?

BBC Radio Essex, which proposed to review a play featuring acknowledged former members of the security services, Messrs Philby, Burgess and Maclean, was advised that they could not carry that item, except at risk of an action for contempt of court. Does it mean that Kim Philby could appear live on Soviet television last week or the week before, but cannot be mentioned live or otherwise on BBC television or radio? This is the absurd situation into which the ridiculous Government have brought us.

The matter is not just ludicrously silly and funny ha-ha: it is funny dangerous, because it shows that the Government are trying to gag the BBC and other newspapers in pursuit of a newly invented principle that people who have worked for the Crown have an absolute duty of lifelong confidentiality. No such duty can be as absolute as that because it would mean, if we take it seriously, that a servant of the Crown who knew of murder, rape or major fraud that no one else was going to talk about, would be under a duty for ever to keep silent about murder, rape or major fraud. That is obviously nonsense.

A servant of the Crown, such as Wright, who claims that there was an attempt to overthrow the elected Government of the country, has a duty to speak the truth about that, if it is true—and I hold no brief for Mr. Wright, who is obviously a rather dubious character. I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he has a greater duty to blow the whistle on people attempting to overthrow an elected Government than any duty of confidentiality that the Government may have just invented.

It was established—I do not want to carry this to a great extreme—in the principles enunciated in the trials of war criminals at Nuremburg at the end of the second world war, that obeying orders and statutes was not the final defence; there were duties over and above that. We are now saying that those duties still apply. If members of the security services believe that other parts of the security services were attempting to overthrow an elected Government, they have a duty to disclose it, not an absolute duty to keep quiet about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask you to raise with Mr. Speaker the points raised by my hon. Friends and by the hon. Member for Thanet, South and me, because we are still concerned about the extent to which the Government's ludicrous efforts in the courts are stifling the BBC and seeking to stifle the free reporting of free debate in the House, about which we should all be concerned, no matter on which side of the House we sit or work. It is vital to the liberty of the country that we be allowed to talk about what we like and that we should be freely reported by a free press when we do so.

7.57 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): These regular Adjournment debates are a valuable opportunity for hon. Members to draw attention to matters of personal and constituency concern. It is interesting to refer tonight to the matters that have not been raised—unemployment, inflation, our handling of the economy and industrial action. That is a clear indication that the House is confident of the Government's approach to those matters.

In the little time that is left I shall do my best to reply to the points that have been raised.

Miss Lestor: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not give way to anybody. I shall go straight through. I hope to deal with the hon. Lady's speech if I have time. I shall go as fast as I can through the points that have been raised, because I believe that is what I am supposed to do.

The former Leader of the House, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), and my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) raised concerns about the 10 cottage hospitals in their constituency. I shall refer to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services the points that have been raised, and I give my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the assurances that they are seeking. The consultation arrangements will not be a formality. Full account will be taken of what they have said and the processes will be carried through properly and efficiently.

The right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) raised certain matters, but, obviously, I am under some restraint as to what I can say. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman recognised that fact. I can only say that the use of the Official Secrets Act 1911, which the right hon. Gentleman questioned, is a matter for the Attorney-General. The Government recognise that section 2 of that Act is unsatisfactory and no one disputes the fact that reform is desirable. However, so far there has been little agreement on the nature of that reform.

In 1979, when we first took office, we introduced a Bill that would have significantly narrowed the scope of section 2 of the Act, but that Bill did not find favour in Parliament or outside. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Attorney-General have told the House that we have had work in hand for some time to find effective, enforceable and reasonable provisions to replace section 2. If, in the light of that work, we decide to bring forward further proposals for reform, we shall announce our intentions to the House.

Discussions on those matters have been confused with a second issue—the injunctions. In spite of what some hon. Members have said, the Government's view—we have been very clear on this—is that members and former members of the Security Service are under a life-long duty of confidentiality to the Crown in relation to information deriving from their employment. In the interests of the country, the Government attach great importance to protecting that confidentiality.

In response to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) may I say that the BBC is still refusing to provide information that will enable the Government to consider whether the three programmes in the series "My Country, Right or Wrong" contain any material in breach of the duty of confidentiality. I do not believe that I should say anything more on that subject tonight.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) spoke about housing. The Government recognise that we have not achieved everything that everyone wants with regard to housing. There is general concern about homelessness, and that is why we are taking positive action to revitalise the private rented sector and increase the choice of rented accommodation in other ways. Many of use believe that those measures will help. The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of capital receipts — many of my hon. Friends have also raised that matter with me—and I understand that the total accummulation of capital receipts in the country is £8 billion. Clearly the Government must be concerned about the control and rate of reinvestment of those sums — we must keep that process under control.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) had to leave because his wife is unwell, and I hope that she will soon recover. I thought that his speech was a breath of fresh air in the proceedings today and I enjoyed it a great deal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) discussed taxation, and I take on board the points that he made. I was also interested to hear what he had to say about drink and driving. As the chairman of the ministerial group on alcohol misuse, I listened with care to his speech. From my experience, I believe that if we were able to enforce the existing laws on drink and driving, we would go a considerable way towards dealing with some of the worst of the problems. My hon. Friend made a number of suggestions—I am aware that some of them did not find favour with some of our hon. Friends—and I shall consider them carefully to see whether some of them require further consideration.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) raised the question of the extradition arrangements. I understand the concern that is felt. Indeed, certain personal experience enables me to recognise that concern. We welcome the Irish Government's decision to ratify the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. We note that they have now introduced further procedural steps regarding the backing of the warrant process. We are naturally concerned that those measures should not impede extradition arrangements within these islands. We shall keep the operation of the new Irish requirements under close scrutiny, and we welcome the commitment of the Taoiseach to review those requirements if they do not work satisfactorily.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) raised the case of his constituent, Mr. Carson. Obviously I cannot answer that case, but I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. However, if we cannot do something to help that gentleman it will not be due to the lack of advocacy on the part of my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) spoke of the death of the four railway workers in his constituency today. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that the whole House would wish to send condolences in those sad circumstances.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of the lack of intensive care nurses at the hospital in his constituency, but obviously at this stage I cannot comment on the detail of his speech. All I can say to the hon. Gentleman and to other hon. Members is that they might care to read the figures in the editorial in *The Guardian* today. I shall not embarrass them by quoting them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) raised three important points in rapid time. He raised the question of car telephones. The Department of Transport strongly advises that drivers should not use hand-held car telephones when driving. Indeed, we believe that, in certain circumstances, such drivers may be committing the offence of driving without due care and attention.

[Mr. Wakeham]

My hon. Friend also raised the question of VAT and hospital radio. The Government appreciate the valuable service provided by hospital broadcasting organisations. However, there are serious difficulties in extending VAT relief in the way suggested by my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend also asked for action concerning the report of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on the tethering of horses. The Government will consider that report, but I should like to point out that it is already an offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to tether animals in such a way that they are denied access to food and water or in a way that might lead to injury.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) gave us a timely reminder that there are many children in various parts of world, unfortunately including this country, who are suffering and will be suffering at Christmas. I accept the hon. Lady's point. I shall be sharing the joy of Christmas with three sons at home, which is one more than I had last year — [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear".] I cannot guarantee that that rate of increase will continue.

All in all, the House can adjourn for Christmas knowing that this country is now going from strength to strength with a Government who pursue policies of sound money, low inflation and prudent finance, and who encourages enterprise. The House can adjourn for Christmas in the knowledge that Britain is eager and waiting to tackle the challenges of 1988, ever stronger and fitter and ever more determined——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Friday 18th December do adjourn until Monday 11th January, and that the House shall not adjourn on Friday 18th December until Mr. Speaker shall have reported the Royal Assent to any Acts which have been agreed upon by both Houses.

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL (No. 2)

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 113 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Durant.]

Inner-city areas

8.8 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I have chosen for the subject of my debate the effect of market forces on building design and planning in inner-city, urban and rural areas. I deliberately chose that subject to cover the broad spectrum of concerns in the area of design and planning and to give hon. Members an opportunity to express their views on this important subject from a variety of perspectives.

This debate represents a consistent approach on my part. Indeed, hon. Members may recall that, in my first address to this House, barely a week ago, I made reference to the design defects, particularly prevalent in my constituency, that have caused significant problems to housing, especially the crumbling of the so-called Bison tower blocks on Druids Heath, and Smith houses.

During the late 1950s and the 1960s, demographic, political and financial market forces dictated that design and planning considerations were dominated by the aims of speed of construction and rapid accommodation for the relocation of the largest possible number of people. Much of that resulted in system-built or prefabricated building designs which have since proved disastrous—not only in terms of the buildings' longevity, but in human terms. They have also cost an arm and a leg to maintain, because of the necessary repairs. Those problems have multiplied as councils have striven to meet the costs from within their allocations.

If the House will bear with me, I should like to read out the shameful roll-call of some of the designs now designated under the housing defects legislation. They include Smith, Dyke, Orlit, Schindler Hawksley, Waller, Wessex, Boot, Parkinson, Rema hollow panel, Unity and Buttersley, Stent, Smith BSC, Underdown, Waites, Wingate, Willoway, Airey, Cornish Unit, Doran, Myton, Newland, Stonecrete, Gregory, Tarmac and Boswell. What an appalling catalogue of design failures.

Design can no longer be treated as an unfettered tool of demographic, political or financial expediency. Design and planning in urban inner cities are human concerns with serious human consequences; thus, they should not be left solely to the expedient vagaries of market forces. Design standards should be continually questioned, uprated, better established and better enforced in future.

We now focus our attention on inner-city urban areas, and we rightly encourage the involvement of private sector

developers—in co-operation with the public sector—in rebuilding and rehousing in certain parts of our cities. We therefore have a duty to ensure that the same errors are never repeated. Design quality must be paramount for human, environmental and, in the longer term, financial reasons. Design quality must be improved by market forces, rather than sacrificed to them. Exactly the same strictures may be applied to planning. We as a House should particularly urge planners in the inner-city and urban areas—the urban development corporations and others — to consider carefully the human, social, community-type, security and the environmental aspects so well developed by, for example, Professor Alice Coleman, and which was sadly so little considered by planners in the past.

I know that hon. Members will wish to expand on this aspect. However, I should naturally like to refer to my own city of Birmingham — part of which I am proud to represent—as representing both the best and the worst examples of how market forces in the past have so influenced design and planning to the detriment of human and environmental elements. Subsequently, that has damaged the city's image, and may consequently pose a challenge to its renewal and future prosperity.

That brings me naturally to the city's exciting initiatives to amend the planning errors of the past and to the designs of the various buildings and projects that are now in hand. It would be inappropriate for me not to mention the interest expressed in the subject by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. While it may cause something of a stir to imply that designs for the new Birmingham convention centre resemble a concrete rocket silo, or that other buildings' designs look like upturned mirrors, it nevertheless serves an excellent purpose in focusing our attention on whether designers and planners are yet giving sufficient importance to the essential correlation, or relationship, between quality and aesthetics, as well as to the human and environmental aspects of modern building designs.

It is vital in this context, as much with the perhaps more mundane subject of housing design as with the more exotic and expensive projects, that market forces should be harnessed in a positive sense, rather than being allowed to prejudice that essential relationship. For a city such as Birmingham, which is of paramount importance in human terms, as well as in its drive to match its image and appeal to its reborn prosperity. I am sure that His Royal Highness's interest and remarks will contribute greatly to harnessing the market forces in a particularly positive way.

I have deliberately touched on these subjects only to introduce the debate. I shall conclude by saying that there are three important areas for us to examine in an initial spectrum covering the subject: the design defects, the human element in planning, and the central correlation of quality and aesthetics, together with the human and environmental aspects. I know that other hon. Members will wish to speak and to expand on those aspects in a more wide-ranging fashion.

8.15 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Let me first thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me in this important debate. I was delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), whose predecessor is well remembered in the House and who specialised in urban problems, was fortunate enough to gain first place in this Consolidated Fund debate. It is equally fortunate that my hon. Friend managed to pick a subject that has the interest and the ear of the country, in the shape of the remarks about architecture made by the Prince of Wales. It is timely and appropriate that, at the earliest opportunity, the House should discuss the matter.

I think that nearly all hon. Members—although the House is rather thinly populated tonight—are concerned about design and architecture. We look foward to hearing what the Minister says when he winds up the debate, for he is well known for making provocative and constructive remarks. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I should rephrase that: his remarks are radical and constructive. When the debate is over, he will no doubt make some very helpful suggestions.

I shall be brief, because I know that many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to participate in this debate. I do not wish to filibuster, or to do anything that might delay our progress.

I have had the good fortune, as a Member of this honourable House, to represent two constituencies. One was a wedge-shaped constituency in Liverpool, which went into the inner city and came out like an orange into the outer city. I have experienced the most deprived housing and the most deprived areas of the inner city. I have had the opportunity to represent people living in the middle and outer city areas, and also those living on the vast, soulless council estates on the edges of the city built in the 1950s and 1960s. There I witnessed the outflow of population, for the constituency was always suffering from population loss, as a result of the redrawing of boundaries to provide a better balance of constituencies in urban areas.

Many of those who left the inner city moved down to the constituency that I now represent, in the rural part of south-west England. There has been a move from the north, the north-east and the north-west to the south-east and south-west over the past 20 years. It is very much like what happened in America—although it is on a smaller scale — when people from the industrial cities in the north-west moved to the sun belt in the south.

I can therefore claim some qualification and experience through having represented two diametrically opposed areas, one with a population outflow and the other with a population inflow. My constituency has experienced a population growth of 14 per cent. in the past 10 years, and it seems to be increasing further.

This debate echoes the concern expressed by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. Much of the architecture in our country, he said, whether in the cities or rural areas, is tasteless. The country is covered with badly designed houses, blocks which are scars on the landscape and do little to enhance the environment. I hope that I do not malign him when I say that that is the gist of what he said.

The real problem now is not simply one of bad design —bad though much of it is—but one of scale. Whereas in the past we had little blocks of three or four houses, we now have these vast blocks of not only public housing but private housing, too. Their size is the cause of the problem. In the 1950s and 1960s, we had major demolition programmes in our industrial cities, resulting, understandably and rightly, in the destruction of our inner-city slums.

Unfortunately, along with the slums went neighbourhoods and communities, and people were put on the outskirts of the cities, in vast, soulless council estates where the design was appalling and the amenities poor. Many of

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

the problems in our urban areas are caused by the inhumane conditions in which many people were forced to live by councils which put them in extremely bad, damp housing, or in high-rise blocks, with few amenities, and in an environment which breeds crime, vandalism and all the problems from which the inner cities suffer. In this respect, the inner city has been replaced by the outer city. That is where the problems are now, because of the transfer of people from the inner to the outer city.

Those blots on the landscape are a thing of the past. No self-respecting council of whatever political complexion now builds similar large housing estates. They were built to satisfy a need, to provide housing for the people of the demolished inner city, who had to be decanted somewhere else. So we need not to concentrate for more than a moment on this kind of public housing, because it is a thing of the past and those vast estates will never be repeated.

Even so, many tens of thousands of people still live in them. Oddly enough, although houses built in earlier centuries have stood for hundreds of years, many council houses which were built 20 or 30 years ago are now being demolished. It is of extreme concern that so much public money has been poured into such vast council estates, which are being pulled down. It is regrettable but understandable.

We tend to believe that all private builders do a marvellous job and all council house builders do a bad job, but that is far too simplistic an assumption. I should like to speak from my experience of what has been happening in a rural part of the country, my constituency of South Hams. We have had a massive growth in population. How are we to stop it? Can we stop it? Should we stop it? Somebody suggested that we should have police blocks on all the roads round my contituency to stop people coming in, or institute a kind of passport control. That is hardly feasible. If people want to move to another area of the country, unless it is somewhere like the Isle of Man or Jersey where there are regulations to prevent people from doing so, they will continue to come. They can be stopped from coming—if indeed we should stop them—only if market forces prevent them.

The only way one can stop them from coming is by allowing no new houses to be built. One would not permit new buildings in green fields. But the result would be scarcity and high prices, and we would have only rich people. I do not know how these rich people would be serviced by electricians and builders and painters, and so on—they would have to be imported from neighbouring areas.

It is totally unrealistic to suppose that one can prevent market forces from working, and that is the first thing to be realised, which I am sure the Minister does. The market wants to live in the south. The retired, the more prosperous, the more mobile are moving south, just as in former days people moved from the inner cities to the suburbs and to new towns. It is the same in the south-east and the south-west; people are more mobile.

So what do we do? We respond to market forces and make land available under the district and structure plans. These, as many hon. Members know, are five-year land banks. Each local authority has to find so much land for this five-year rolling programme to satisfy its own structure or district plan. But this is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once the local authority locates and permits building on five years' worth of land, it has to find land for another five years. Unless the Minister tells us tonight that it will not be, it must be an endless series of five-year programmes; and if this goes on indefinitely there will be no green fields left. If the job of the Minister is to respond to market forces, it is inevitable that more and more green fields will be lost.

That is what has happened so far in South Hams, because people want to live in this tranquil, beautiful port, which contains areas of outstanding natural beauty, areas of great landscape value, conservation areas, heritage coastlines and a national park. The planners have had to provide land on which to build houses. That is where the problem starts. Former hamlets such as Thurlestone, Loddiswell, Ivybridge, Totnes and Kingsbridge have grown out of all recognition. These and other villages and towns have been swamped by large private estates built on the edges, which completely upset the balance of these beautiful towns built up over hundreds of years and with a mixture of designs, periods, colours and elevations. They have been overwhelmed by housing estates, their streets are inadequate and their periphery goes far beyond the original village curtilage.

The Government have been a party to this development, albeit unwittingly. Circular 22/80 and subsequent circulars, White Papers — notably "Lifting the Burden" — and ministerial speeches on the same subject have resulted in conflict between the way in which the Department of the Environment sees the planning system and the way in which my constituents and the general public perceive planning. Circulars 22/80 and 14/85 both show that the planners' regard for aesthetic control should not be exercised over-fastidiously and that control of external appearance should be exercised only where there is justification for it. As a result, the local authority planners have been powerless to stop the developers from building what they like, in whatever density and in whatever style they wish.

This is our basic problem tonight—the Government's unwitting contribution to the conflict between conservation and development. I am opposed not to development —it is inevitable—but to tasteless development. Most hon. Members will know what I mean—the identical modern houses, the identical modern prefabricated houses, and the use of mass-produced bricks and other materials, which lead to an unrelieved picture and a tasteless and unsympathetic environment.

I recently went to see my planners and they said, "You have difficult decisions to make. If you let the market forces solely apply this place will become overrun. Further, there is pressure to build and build on farming land and to develop it. There is no shortage of people who want to live here or developers who want to put up town houses. Within a short time your constituency could be overrun by identical private housing estates." I understand from a colleague to whom I was speaking last night that he has the same problem in Norfolk, as does a colleague in Suffolk. It is a national problem of land coming on stream and houses being built in the way that they are.

Circular 22/80 exercises detailed control over the external appearances of listed buildings in conservation areas and national parks. Elsewhere, planners are asked not to exercise detailed control to improve a design that conforms to the fashion of the moment.

The villages of Kingsbridge and Ivybridge have been engulfed by vast private estates that are monotonous in their use of inappropriate materials — brick and reconstructed stone — and people who see those towns despair at how such development was ever allowed.

Unless planners, local politicians, architects and people who are interested in design are given power by the Government to be involved in the design and the quality of that design, we shall not see any improvement at all. We shall simply see more of the same thing.

I must pay tribute to the South Hams planners, who have been able to wrest some concession from developers. On one estate a developer wanted to use spar chipping finishes, but that was changed for the more traditional render finishes. The developers wanted to put red roofs on the skyline, but that was rejected in favour of grey and brown. That happened only because the planners managed to do a deal with the developer. If the developer had chosen to appeal, he could probably have got away with what he originally wanted.

In Ivybridge, which 10 years ago had a population of 1,400 people but which by 1992 will have a population of 14,000 people, it is not so much the growth as the unrelieved growth and the construction of identical streets that lead to the tasteless growth that planners are powerless to do anything about.

The Spaniards, Germans and French have standards in design and materials. I cannot for the life of me understand why we have been so obsessed by economics and by responding to development wherever people want to live. We have not insisted on the application of certain standards. Somebody said to me recently that in most of our small market villages it looks as though a philistine with no interest in aesthetics or any sympathy for the environment has been involved in designing the modern houses.

The thrust of what I am saying is probably understandable to hon. Members. The Government must place greater emphasis on planning applications to encourage not only employment prospects but the use of redundant barns and other buildings that can be found in our countryside. Further, they must say something about design, and materials and, put limitations on the size of estates.

I suggested to the Minister that every district authority should have a panel of architects so that when an estate of more than 20 houses is being built the architects can be asked to advise on design, preference of materials, the elevation and other matters so that it is consistent with conservation and blends into the environment.

My plea to the Minister is for him to review Government circulars and consider the trend that has allowed these estates to grow up. They are a national blight that he alone can reverse. I am not alone in feeling strongly on this matter; a great many colleagues feel equally strongly about it. We look to him to protect the environment and to say something helpful and constructive to the House tonight.

8.35 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I shall be very brief, but I must say that I agree with the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen).

The Minister should introduce an annual national award for the worst designed, most ugly, offensive and tasteless building.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): There are too many competitors.

Mrs. Golding: We could have different classes. We could have those that have been built in the past five, 10, 20 or 100 years. I have a winner in my constituency — the worst designed building of the past 800 years. I live in Newcastle-under-Lyme, which is my constituency, and there is a monstrosity in the town centre. The borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme is 800 years old, but I do not think that it has ever seen a worse building. It is built on massive concrete pillars, had an enormous green and orange frontage, and emblazoned across the top in large letters are the words "Fine Fare". The building is completely out of character with the rest of the town, and it is situated alongside an old black and white public house. The centre of the town, on to which it fronts, is Georgian.

Had there been such an award, I am sure that the planning committee that considered and approved the plans for that building would have realised how badly designed many Fine Fare buildings are, with their orange and green frontages. It would have been aware that people were monitoring the type of buildings that were going up and perhaps it would have saved the centre of Newcastle-under-Lyme from being ruined by the Fine Fare building.

It is probably too late to do anything about it, but I should like Fine Fare to take all the orange and green front down. I doubt whether it will, because there is so much of it that it will not know what to do with it.

Mr. Steen: Ask it.

Mrs. Golding: I shall send the company a copy of *Hansard* and ask it to do so.

If planning committees were made aware that the country is watching and that it is concerned about the designs of buildings in our town centres and other large areas, perhaps something would be done to improve designs.

I hope that the Minister will seriously consider my proposition. I am certain that it would gain much support and I am sure that he would be inundated with entries, but none of them would beat the Fine Fare building.

8.38 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): First, I congratulate my most genuinely hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) on making two speeches in the past week, each of which was commendably brief and very much to the point. I know that already he has learnt that if he is to attract Mr. Speaker's attention, the briefer and more pithy the point, the more likely one is to be called.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Hear, hear.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It is nice to hear that call from the Chair.

I hope to be commendably brief. This is an important debate, which is why I am so pleased that it should have fallen to a Birmingham Member of Parliament to talk about the problems of people versus planners. My only disappointment is that I have to say to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) that she is braying in the wind in thinking that her monstrosity would win the prize for the worst building. We all have some terrible monstrosities. There are so many of them that it

[Mr. Beaumont-Dark]

is time that all hon. Members, and our local government colleagues who are also elected, recognise that something has gone terribly wrong.

It is said that I have been a critic of some people up the road of much more distinguished eminence than I. It is said that I have been a critic of the views put forward from Buck House. I believe that a certain distinquished person is quite right to have brought to the fore the problems of planning. In the past few years many building and planning decisions that have affected the lives of many of our people have been monstrosities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) and I were both involved in local government in Birmingham. The first decision I made as chairman of the housing and housebuilding committee when we brought them together — my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley will remember that — was to stop the building of monstrosities such as multi-storey blocks of flats. So many people were concerned with housing units rather than homes.

I have had the honour to be in elected public life since the age of 22, and one of the great mistakes that we all made was thinking that it was more important to build units than to provide homes for people. It would have been better if some of those people had waited another six or 12 months and been built homes instead of just units. I always thought, when I look over Aston, which is part of Birmingham, that one of the biggest mistakes ever made was forgetting that people were concerned about living together as people and friends, even if the homes were slovenly. That is better than using people like confetti and spreading them all over the place in what seemed to be better housing units. They were better housing units, but they were not homes. When we look at Chelmsley Wood and Castle Vale in Birmingham and see the great blocks of flats that were built, we can see the great mistakes that were made in forgetting that we were trying to make better homes for people. It may be that we take up more land in building houses rather than flats.

In public life, whether in the House or wearing our council hats — many hon. Members present were councillors before becoming Members of Parliament — we should be more concerned to make life better for people instead of just housing them and getting them out of our hair. If we do not do that we are in a sort of tyranny. It is not simply a matter of us saying, "Let us put people in homes." When I was a councillor in Hall Green, one of my constituents wrote to me and said, "If you will get me a home, I shall be eternally grateful." I got her a home in a block of flats in Castle Vale. She wrote and told me how grateful she was. However, within six months, the lady wrote to me again and said, "This is hell." She said that she was on the eighth floor, had two children, was unable to watch them, and so on. She said, "You put me here." So I did, because I was then chairman of the housing committee. I look back on those days and think that we should not kid ourselves that just by giving someone a housing unit we are giving them a home. It is important to keep people together. It is important to build them homes in which they can be happy.

Because of the slums we all faced in the 1960s in cities such as Birmingham, Leicester and Bradford, we thought the most important thing was to get people out of those slums and into something bright and new. It was not. We should have made sure that when we housed people we put them into homes in which they could be happy.

On planning, I believe that the eminent personage is quite right. Too often today, because of the strictures of cost, many buildings — whether they be multi-storey blocks of flats, multi-storey offices or public buildings — look like the buildings on the wonderful island of Guernsey where the Germans built pill boxes and gun emplacements. The eminent personage is right to point that out. It is not offensive to point it out and it is not going beyond the remit of any of us in public life, who take an interest.

We can look around the great cities of Europe which were pillaged during the war and suffered far more than we did. Dresden was obliterated in the war and 120,000 people died in one night's bombing. In Hamburg 60,000 people died in one night's bombing. However, those cities are far more beautiful than the cities of this country where we suffered, happily, far less than they did. Why were they able to design better things, built better cities and make a better environment? It is no excuse for architects to say, "We could not do it." If those cities suffered so much more than we did, why can they build things that we all go to look at and which give us great pleasure? The eminent person is right to point out that we should build things that people will look at and which are good on the eye.

This debate is properly based. It is based on two things. When we build large buildings, whether offices or other great buildings in our cities, whether council-owned or Government-owned, it is right that we should build something that future generations will think it is good to look upon. It is right that the idea of turning the National Gallery into a latter-day pill box was stopped.

Homes for people are even more important than any public building, and it is right that we should house people not as units but as people. We should build homes in which one generation after another will want to live. If I feel any guilt at all about my 30 years in public life, it is that that was not my main concern. My main concern, rightly in one way but not in another, was to sweep away slums. However, one forgot that when one swept away slums one often swept away family units, friendships and all those wonderful things that make human life worth while. I ask the next generation of planners to learn from the past and not to repeat the same mistakes.

8.50 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am quite encouraged by the slight change in the philosophy of the Tory party. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), who opened the debate very effectively, said that these matters should not be left to market forces alone. I could not agree more. Then, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) made a profound plea for more planning and more effective planning. I can only request the hon. Gentlemen to see the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has been busy driving coaches and horses through just about every aspect of planning and giving as free a rein to market forces as ever he could. The Housing Bill states quite openly and clearly, without any attempt at disguise, that the Government want housing left purely to market forces and that they want to take housing out of local authority control. There seems to be something of a dichotomy in the Conservative party.

I apologise to the House for the fact that I shall not be able to stay until the end of the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) will stand in for me.

I agree with the hon. Member for Hall Green that these are difficult matters that cannot be left to market forces, and that is particularly true of housing. Housing, by its very nature—involving as it does the supply of land and buildings—does not lend itself to normal market forces in the way the price of packets of tea or biscuits might be left to market forces. I agree, too, that we need more co-operation with the public sector. It would be much easier to get effective co-operation with the public sector if the Government were not busy knocking every local authority employee and civil servant and presenting them as a drain on the economic wealth of the nation. They are not. They form an essential part of the country's economic infrastructure and we would be very much poorer without them. It would help the morale of the public sector—both local authorities and the Civil Service—if Ministers recognised that.

The hon. Member for Selly Oak picked on the mistakes of the 1960s, and I agree with much of what he said. I also remember that period. I was not a member of a council at the time. I was one of those whom we refer to as political activists; one of those who make political democracy work, for all political parties. The hon. Gentleman will agree that at that time we were anxious about what we were doing and that we perhaps yielded too readily to the ideas of experts, particularly architects. I also distinctly remember a tendency to argue about the very question that the hon. Gentleman raised—whether we should go for quality of design. I remember being told—I think by an architect, although I cannot remember for sure as it was some years ago — that corners were being cut for economic reasons in many of the buildings that we were putting up. I can remember a Conservative in my area, which was then east London, saying, "Well, we are not going to give them houses and flats with gold-plated taps, are we?" That was an indication of the problems that would arise.

The hon. Gentleman rightly criticised the priority of building in quantity. One must either go for quality or insist on a minimum quality for the quantity of houses that one puts up. Our minimum standards should have been higher, and that is particularly true of high-rise flats. Although many high-rise flats need to come down, many would be acceptable if more effort had been put into them, if more money were put into them now and if they were slightly better managed. Some high-rise flats in both the public and the private sectors are popular, but they tend to be in blocks that are well-managed, with caretakers on duty and with extra facilities.

In the literature of the 1960s the architects said that buildings with 30 storeys or more ought to have every 10th or 12th floor set aside for leisure and recreation facilities, nurseries and so on. There are some incredibly tall buildings in Hong Kong. One tower block, built in a square with a hollow in the centre, houses 4,000 people — more that are housed on the biggest estates in Hammersmith. That block is popular because it has facilities for the elderly, nurseries, a number of caretakers, shops and leisure facilities. The community has been recreated, rather than simply bulldozed. I am not arguing that some high-rise flats do not need to come down—they do, especially the jerry-built ones—but with good management and extra money some could be used to good effect.

One must be very careful when talking about planning. For a start, I have great sympathy with every councillor who is a member of a planning committee. In planning, as in transport, one cannot make the right decision. Whatever one does, one gets criticised by someone. One cannot please all the people. If one says no to an extra room in someone's loft, that will please all those who want to keep the street as it is, but it will upset all those who want an extra room for members of their family. If one tries to discourage the pebble-dashing of attractive brick buildings one gets all sorts of flak, although pebble-dashing spoils the line and design of houses.

We know, too, that what we think of as ugly or beautiful today may be seen in the opposite way in 50 or 100 years' time. I often wonder what people thought of some of the houses that were built a hundred years ago. Perhaps the rows of houses built in and around London were considered eyesores, although we are now busy protecting them and putting public money into repairing, renovating and maintaining them. One must be careful in talking about planning problems.

I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Selly Oak said, and with Prince Charles. In the housing debate I seem to have God, in the form of the churches, on my side, and now I find the royal family on my side. I cannot help feeling that there must be some anxiety on the Conservative Benches about that. We have built many buildings which have spoilt the skyline and which have been bad to live in, but the Tory party must understand that that is because such buildings are cheap.

If one goes for the attractive buildings described by Conservative Members, one must acknowledge that it would be considerably more expensive to provide the office space needed. When the office space restrictions were reduced in London to allow more offices to be developed, those who wanted to build offices looked to high-rise buildings. Those who build offices do not build replicas of the Tower of London or the Egyptian pyramids. They build rectangular blocks, with variations in the outside decor.

The outside decor lends itself to system-build, which is sometimes very good, but sometimes—as we know from experience — it is disastrous. Some of our worst problems arise from system-build techniques which were not thought out properly and from buildings which were jerry-built by large companies who have left the local authorities, or indeed the Government, to pick up the bill.

Any large building company would provide a more attractive building if that was required. It would provide beautiful Victorian designs, but they would have to be paid for. That is where the market forces argument gets into difficulties. If two people compete to put up an office block, the occupiers of which are interested only in office space and its potential for office technology, they will not look with too much concern at the outside. That is where the role of local authorities becomes so important. Yet the Government have abolished local authorities, such as the metropolitan county councils and the GLC, or are undermining their general day-to-day work, and that is a fundamental mistake.

My final point is extremely important, not only in the general context of this debate, but in terms of the inner cities. It is probably true to say that a far greater force than

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any political ideology of the day is the demographic movement within a country. The movement from the rural areas into the towns created our towns throughout the Victorian era and made Britain the first industrial power. We have only recently realised that the reverse is happening now. For the past 40 years there has been a dramatic movement from the cities to the country areas. That is producing an acute crisis in the inner cities and a serious crisis in rural areas. Millions of people are involved and London alone will lose another 1 million people by the turn of the century. Those 1 million people are likely to move to rural or semi-rural areas.

Between 1945 and 1950, the Labour Government planned many new houses and towns, and expanded towns. That was a good idea, which worked wonderfully, but it took from the inner cities the generation of people who would now be in their forties and fifties, perhaps at the peak of their earning power in economic terms, leaving the elderly trapped in the inner cities with the new people coming into the areas. In between those come the famous, or should I say infamous, yuppies, who are usually passing through, staying in an area for five or 10 years before moving out, or the very rich, with one home in the city and another, or perhaps more, elsewhere. That has produced the breakdown in the community that was accurately identified by the hon. Member for Selly Oak.

A community that is broken up in that way experiences problems with everyday services and produces a concentration of types of problems. There is a heavy population of the elderly and of young unskilled unemployed people with social problems. There is also a concentration of crime with its related problems, because it is often community links that prevent crime.

The other side of the coin is that in rural areas there are increasing requests for housing developments at the same time as local authorities there are being told either to sell council properties or not to build any more. When, in addition, people are looking for two homes, a housing crisis is created for people in rural areas who are seeking to buy or rent for the first time. Although that crisis is not as severe as in the inner cities, it is severe in personal terms for those concerned.

Mr. Steen: The hon. Gentleman has hit the nail on the head in what he says about design and the outflow of millions of people from the inner cities to the countryside. The issue of this debate is how we can design homes that can be lived in well and which are sympathetic to the environment.

Mr. Soley: I understand that. The hon. Gentleman is right.

Successive Governments have attempted to deal with the inner-city problem before they have understood its full nature and extent. Britain needs a planning structure which allows local authorities to be more innovative; yes, to co-operate with the private sector—no one is arguing against that — and for the Government to have an oversight of its direction and movement.

In that context design becomes important. It puzzles me that nine out of 10 of the Royal Institute of British Architects design awards went to public or housing association housing. Only one out of 10 went to the private sector. Private sector design does not tend to be very good unless it is up market. Somehow or other, we must deal much more effectively with some of the new build in the private sector.

Many Conservative Members have spoken, rightly, about the need to provide good quality homes. The problem is not just a lack of homes, but inappropriate or bad homes lived in by people with above-average health and education problems and several others that go with inadequate or poor housing.

We must consider the way in which we restructure and rebuild communities that are shifting and moving. That movement may be not as great as we think. Although it is great in numbers, it is only a small proportion of the movement that occurred during the last century. Interestingly, in some respects people now have far more problems when they move. It is not easy to sell a house in the north-east and buy one in the south. As a result, one might have to leave one's family down and go into bed-and-breakfast accommodation or commute in some way to a job. There are many factors that we should consider more effectively in relation to planning and design, but housing is the major one.

Conservative Members are, to my mind, now moving in the right direction in rejecting the idea that the problems can be dealt with simply by market forces. The approach needs to be thought out. That means the Government, and especially the Secretary of State for the Environment, rethinking some of their ideas about the powers and duties of local authorities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call those hon. Members who have been rising, it might help the House if I say that I understand that the Front-Bench spokesman will seek to rise at just after 9.25 pm. I hope that in the time remaining hon. Members will tailor their speeches to about six or seven minutes each.

9.5 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): I shall be as quick as I can, Mr. Speaker and I am delighted to be able to contribute to this debate. This is not only an occasion for my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves)—although I must congratulate him on the way in which he opened the debate. His predecessor would have been proud of him and of everything that he said. My remarks are directed to the effect of market forces on planning in inner-city, urban and rural areas, rather than to the design aspect which my hon. Friends have covered so well.

Land is a scarce resource. It is not like potatoes, because it cannot be grown or produced. Therefore, it requires special care. If our cities cannot accommodate people and provide homes in which they would wish to live, or be places in which they want to work, the rural areas must provide, in the way which my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) clearly described. Therefore, in one sense urban and rural areas are interdependent.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams has a dual career, and I spent five years in an inner-city area, in Peckham in south London, which is why, in a smaller way, I have seen both ends of the spectrum. I must say how much I appreciated the comments made by my hon.

Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) who spoke largely and generously, as one would expect of a man who is large and generous. In some ways, he made a moving contribution to our debate and I congratulate him on it.

I see three problems — some of which have been touched on—against which our planning system should be tested. The first is the over-development of the rural areas. I shall not describe that because my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams illustrated that point absolutely rightly. The second is the failure to develop our cities in the way in which all hon. Members would like and the provision of accommodation that is unsatisfactory for many environmental and planning reasons. The third is the drift from the old, mainly manufacturing areas that are mainly, but not exclusively, in the north of the country, to the new mainly rural areas that are mainly in the south.

If our planning system does not attack those problems, we must re-examine that system. I maintain that our planning system is not resolving those three problems. In fact, it is developer-driven. In many respects, it is making the problems worse and needs radical reform. I have neither the time nor the wish to detail the type of reform that I should like, although I wish to make some brief points relating to it.

First, the Department of the Environment's circulars on housing are out of date and need to be completely rewritten. They often refer to demand, which of course is the market aspect of the motion. Demand is not true demand in the parts of the country that suffer from over-development. It is demand that is created by developers. That is why our planning system is developer-driven. The demand for homes is not that of indigenous people but of developers, who wish to build what they think they can sell in the short term. That is not true demand.

Secondly, planning circulars are not only out of date but ambiguous in many respects. Developers will say that the circulars give them the licence to create the kind of developments that destroy communities in the way that has been described.

Thirdly, we under-estimate developers' capabilities. They are some of the most sophisticated and capable businesses. They will work where we ask them to work. They have to work within rules, and they will need to be guided by tough rules, but they are highly able and have every resource and professional expertise that are available to them. We under-estimate the capability of the private sector developer to do something about inner cities in the way we want.

Fourthly, planning rules should enable us to provide local homes for local people, particularly in rural areas where planning restrictions have to be much greater than they are at the moment. Not everyone can be a home owner and not everyone wishes to be. I am sorry to say that it will take years to recreate the private rented sector. Would that the Government had started much earlier on the task of recreating the private sector. I welcome the fact that we are now taking steps in that direction.

Fifthly, some kinds of development should be shunned altogether. Out-of-town shopping centres, which are out of character with our small towns, cities and villages, drain life from the high streets of our conurbations and are inappropriate in most parts of the country. They may suit the United States of America but they do not suit most of Great Britain.

We need a clear planning strategy that is agreed between national and local government and is enforced by local government, whose decisions will not be overturned by central Government. Central Government should not be in a position to overrule a settled and agreed plan. We have to identify housing growth and housing restraint areas in which development can or cannot take place outside the urban parts of our country. We can aim at only the highest standard of environment for our citizens in urban and rural areas. Because the subject matters to our people much more than any past Government have ever realised, I welcome the debate and urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment to take note of the points that have been made to him.

9.13 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): The theme of the debate has been that of getting the mix right. We have heard excellent contributions by my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), and for South Hams (Mr. Steen), as well as by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). I pay a compliment to them. They all contributed something.

Birmingham had to develop dynamically after the bombs finished falling, when books such as "When We Build Again" were produced by the Cadburys and when there were 120,000 applicant families on housing waiting lists. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak was chairman of the city's housing committee. Homeless families had to be accommodated and a formula had to be found. The formula was not always good. Some of the blocks that looked good on paper then proved to be monsters of maintenance and of quality destruction for those who lived in them — monsters that only accommodated three fifths of the people who were displaced from the Victorian artisan buildings left over from the bombs.

Then we got to grips with the beginnings of the new materials — such as the curtain walling which was referred to by the hon. Member for Hammersmith—and things that we did not know about, such as the tensile life of concrete, and the way in which spalling could take place, corroding metal and exploding concrete. All those things were discovered with the tragedy of Ronan Point. On top of all that, we found that the quality of life of the ordinary people who had to reside in those blocks, which in any event were beginning to collapse under certain conditions, was not appreciated. They wanted to be on the ground in their own housing units, with a bit of garden if possible. So we had produced at that time a dynamic city which had no soul. When the residents retreated into the tower blocks and the business did not return to the city centre, there was nothing left.

Beauty lies in the eye—even the royal eye—of the architectural beholder, as it does in any other. Much as I appreciate — as a past local president of the Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors, one of the professional bodies to which I belong—the merits of palladian Georgian architecture, sometimes even those masses with their Doric, Corinthian or Ionian columns dressing front or rear do not look good when viewed from Buckingham Palace road. Perhaps the answer is a formulation of planning that we have spurned in this country. We have had the direction of local authority totalitarianism and all the planning that went with it,

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which was extenuated under Skeffington and went on ad nauseam. We now have the dangers that have been mentioned of market forces operating through UDAs and UDCs, which only produce an economic formula which prohibits beauty.

Perhaps we should try to get the formula right. The planning formula might be a "once-only" type of planning permission—such as the Germans have—which is not in outline or detail, but which has elevational designs accompanying it so that it is final on approval. Perhaps everyone should be able quickly to appreciate whether a building is beautiful or not. When that filter of appreciation is inserted, we might well be able to create the sort of city centres—and middle and outer cities; they must be dealt with after the inner cities—which will grace our heritage, please our people and make for a pleasant centre for years to come.

We are lucky; we are being given a second bite at the cherry. In taking and savouring the fruit, let us ensure that that which we produce is not only in response to what is needed and based on the economically feasible, but is such as to beautify our land for ever.

9.18 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I wish to express my congratulations on three counts. First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) on his success in being drawn so high in the ballot. He also deserves congratulations on his selection of subject. I do not believe that any hon. Member would fail to join me in congratulating him on his excellent speech, which introduced this important subject.

Having considered the issue of market forces in relation to building design and planning, we should be cautious in our comments about quantity surveyors, architects and town planners. In the final analysis, we have much to thank them for, for the good work that is being done.

We must not be too critical. The city of Birmingham seems to have dominated the debate. Before coming to the House, I spent three years of my professional life in work on the national exhibition centre. With one voice, hon. Members will applaud the excellent design of that centre and the market forces that created it. Eventually it created an airport, which created a station, which created a new environment, which created jobs.

Planners and architects have a responsibility not only for housing design but for jobs. Good design and good planning hold the key to creating good opportunities for increased prosperity in business and in industry and commerce. We are delighted to see those things in the west midlands, which last month had the highest drop in unemployment ever recorded. That shows a fast-moving regeneration of industry in the area.

However, the debate is about much more than that. The most important thing for hon. Members and for those who address themselves to the comments made in this debate is that we must always have a vision of people. If we ever lose that vision, we have lost everything. That vision must be held in connection with market forces and planning matters.

Hon. Members will be aware of my work in and affection for the parliamentary committee for the arts and heritage, of which I am vice-chairman. We must always be careful when we develop an area in the centre of which is a listed building or a building of great historic value. In my tours of the country, I have seen wonderful buildings that are absolute treasures of our history. They are an inheritance and are being marred and scarred by the creation of other buildings that are completely out of touch with the setting. That makes me sad.

Hon. Members have talked about scale in connection with housing. I should like to mention one word that is coming through forcefully and I am confident that the Minister has taken note of it. The word is "quality". It is the quality of housing and design and the quality of life that we are passing on. I am not here just to say nice things. Therefore, I must draw the attention of the Minister to the tragic situation in the constituency which I have the honour to serve, especially the Tiled House lane area, which is disgraceful housing for our people. On a recent visit, the Minister had an opportunity to hear about the problems facing the people in that area.

I draw the attention of hon. Members to the quality of life, design and market forces, but there is something else that is beyond price—the community. We must cater for the work that is done by voluntary organisations, churches, youth clubs and the benefits of music and art. They are catered for, or should be, by those who have the ultimate power of planning. It is tragic to visit a town of 300,000 people that does not have a concert hall, an art gallery or a museum because the planners have not thought about those things. Before we start to talk about the integral parts of a community—the shops and other places where people carry out their interchange of business — such amenities should be provided. Against that background, I ask the Minister to pay special attention to the fabric of society that will be created by the planners to ensure a better quality of life.

Something else gives me particular pleasure this evening. This is the first time that I have had the opportunity in the House of paying a warm and generous tribute to the Minister for his outstanding work in the west midlands, and particularly his work in my constituency. I direct his attention to the events of 19 October this year when I was privileged to receive him in my constituency. Because of the foresight, initiative and involvement of the Government, he was able to announce the first urban regeneration grant awarded in this country, in the sum of £3·5 million. It was to heal the ravages and scars of 200 years of iron and steel production on 36 acres of the Round Oaks works in my constituency. I commend the Minister and the Government on their initiative. I pay a personal tribute to the Minister and, with the gift of prophecy, I ask him to return to my constituency in the near future to see the work and the stewardship of that money.

9.26 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): There has been something of a Birmingham male voice choir in this debate, and very sweetly it has sung. I wish to raise a slight note of discord in respect of the consensus with royalty this evening, and issue a small note of warning about views on architecture. I am delighted that one of the favourite pieces of architecture is in my constituency — the excellent Morgan's Walk development. We do well to encourage the private sector to use its imagination in architecture and

development and not to stifle it. We need good, beautiful design, but not as a constant and rather boring pattern which could be a danger if one were not careful.

When we consider city design, I hope that we shall be careful not to destroy what is underneath our cities. With modern buildings, particularly in the City of London, all too often we see pile-driving through Roman remains and some of our heritage, which we should encourage our planners to deter.

I am racing through these issues, watching the clock, so I shall be brief. Planners should consider river fronts. In London we have a potentially beautiful river front. Planning authorities should take the responsibility for the facing bank of the river. All too often, they cannot see what it looks like and residents on one side of the river look across to abysmal development on the other.

In my part of London—if I may bring the debate slightly further south—many high-rise blocks were put up as municipal housing in the 1960s and far too many problems have been caused by them. In new developments, we must ensure that crime is prevented by better design. We must have communal and play areas, neighbourhoods and neighbours. We need light, colour and space. We need trees, grass and gardens rather than walkways.

This has brought me to the moment when I must hand over to the Front Bench. However, in this brief message, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, in rightly encouraging the speeding up of planning procedures, to encourage also the maintenance of standards of architecture and design.

9.29 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am terrified to take up the suggestion of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) that we should have a competition for the worst designed building because the headquarters of the Department of the Environment in Marsham street might just qualify.

I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) for giving me an opportunity to speak on a matter that is very dear to me. That is not solely because of my role in the Department of the Environment, but because, like all the people I meet, old and young, and from whatever background, I am deeply concerned about the quality of the environment. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn).

Perhaps people are concerned in the main not with the quality of the environment, but with the lack of quality. In that respect concern has been echoed in statements made recently by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. I doubt that there has been any other occasion this century when there has been such widespread feeling about the need to raise the standard of building design. My hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green referred to the effects of market forces on building design. It will come as no surprise to him that I believe that we can achieve better design only if we give the market the opportunity that it is crying out for to respond to people's wishes and preferences without the constant frustration of control and regulation, with officialdom stating that it knows what is good. That must be the lesson that can be drawn from my hon. Friend's description of Birmingham in the 1960s.

I would not call that the effect of market forces. I call that the imposition of stereotypes of buildings to deal with problems speedily, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said, without consideration for the quality of life, or the lack of it, which the people would then have to suffer as a result. That is what my hon. Friend the Member for Hall Green described as "municipal madness" in his excellent maiden speech last week.

This is the opportunity to refer to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen). I want to pick up his points about advisory committees of architects making their advice available at local level. That would not be a precedent. In the past, such bodies have been set up, especially in connection with conservation areas. There is no reason why they should not continue, and I believe that that is a good idea. However, it would be wrong for the Government to stipulate and lay down precise regulations to cover that. Local planning authorities must decide how to organise their development control function in a way that they believe is sensitive to local needs.

My view on the debate is based on simple empirical evidence. When I look round the towns, cities and the countryside, for which I have a great affection, and, whether I see a small market town that has evolved over a period of centuries, a northern city centre with its proud Victorian offices and commercial buildings, leafy arcadian suburbs built by speculative house builders in the 1920s or great landscaped parks, they seem plainly to be the expression of a free market going about its business with enthusiasm and vision. However, when I look around at the ghastly municipal offices, dreary council estates and comprehensive development inflicted on so many towns in the past 40 years, I must conclude that too rigid planning and regulation have reduced building design to a level that we have never experienced before.

Not only are buildings so alien in appearance that they are awarded abusive titles by those who suffer them—and the House is familiar with many of those expressions, such as "Alcatraz", "The Piggeries" and other similarly offensive terms. Many of the buildings are not only aesthetically dreadful; they are falling down. We are faced with an apparently endless catalogue of faults and failures for which in many cases the taxpayer must foot the bill. If they are not falling down, in many cases they are being destroyed by the very people they were planned to serve.

In the 1960s and 1970s mistakes arose out of a generally held but, I suspect, mistaken belief in the virtues of communal living and communal architecture. That is what I would call social architecture. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak. Many of us were members of local authorities at that time and active in those councils. We are all to blame. This is not confined to one political party, and that point was missed by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). He was not prepared on behalf of the Labour party to accept a share of the blame for what happened during that time. We were all to blame.

The truth is that developments place greater emphasis on shared facilities and less emphasis on opportunities for people to follow their own preferences. There was an idea that forcing people to adopt common values was somehow improving their situation. That attempt to impose communal values rather than private values through changing their environment has failed.

The tide is beginning to turn. I shall give the House a few examples. Not very far from the House of Commons, in docklands, there are numerous examples of high quality

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architectural design and sensitive refurbishment of 19th century warehouses for residential and commercial uses. Notable refurbishment schemes include the New Concordia wharf residential conversion in Bermondsey, which has just won the RICS/Times conservation award, and the transformation of the grade I listed regency tobacco dock in Wapping as a new speciality shopping centre. Notable modern buildings include South Quay plaza, The *Daily Telegraph* offices, and LDDC's own offices at 84 St. Katharine's way, which won the 1985 London borough of Tower Hamlets design award.

Across the country, we encourage private sector involvement in refurbishing unpopular local authority estates. Some housing estates which were considerd uninhabitable have been purchased by developers and, in the hands of the private sector, transformed. One example of a successful scheme is in a local authority which adjoins my constituency on an estate in Bolton where 90 appalling flats were modernised by a private developer — 50 for sale and 40 for continuing renting by the local authority. This type of scheme usually brings properties on to the market at prices which are well within the reach of the first-time buyer.

Such schemes help to ensure that people live in the type of homes they want. The success of private house builders depends crucially on their ability to understand public demand. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams suggested, the variety within that public demand encourages rather than suppresses individuality.

Even where the private sector is not in the lead, more can be done on local authority estates to make housing provision more sensitive to the needs and wishes of those who live there. This is a key part of my Department's Estate Action programme. Estate Action has successfully begun to tackle some of the worst probiems on some of the worst estates in Britain, aiming at more estate-based management, and improvements based on close and effective consultation with tenants. The Estate Action schemes announced today provide examples of what we are seeking to achieve. Tenants in Walsall and Leicester have been particularly closely involved in the development of proposals for their estates, and plans for establishing tenants' management co-operatives are being worked up. Through close consultation with those living in the estates, improvements can be devised which reflect their wishes and preferences.

Finally, in view of the shortage of time, I can only add that I do not believe that all regulation and control should be removed. There will always be the need for the community to set boundaries within which the market can operate, so long as those are clearly expressed.

Sport

9.38 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I welcome the opportunity to debate, although it is a short debate, the important subject of sport. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, will be the first to note that sport is a very important industry. It has something like £4·4 billion of expenditure, which is comparable to that of the electricity and gas industries. The Government have an income of about £2·4 billion by way of taxes, so we are not talking about a peripheral aspect of life. It employs about 376,000 people. Therefore, it is vital that the House welcomes the opportunity to speak in this, the Minister's first debate — we all congratulate him — since he took up his important role. The Minister is an important man, in charge of a vital department. We will see whether he deserves it from the response he gives to this and other speeches in the debate.

I begin with a quote, which is a good backdrop to the debate:

"The air above Britain is dark with political footballs at the moment; it is a shame that sport is not one of them."

Those words were spoken by a top commentator at the height of the general election campaign earlier this year, despite the issue by the Labour party of a sports manifesto, an action plan for sport launched by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), me and others during the campaign.

Sport remains a political Cinderella on the election agenda and in the Government. It is only when tragedy or crisis occurs, such as at Bradford or Heysel, or when I have the luck to win the ballot in the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, that the House addresses itself to sport and recreation. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that last March I initiated the longest debate on sport for approximately 20 years, yet the Government's response to the points made in the debate was pitiful. I hope that the aftermath of the debate tonight will be rather different and I hope that the Minister will survive the debate, as his predecessor did not survive the last one. We wish him well.

When the Minister was appointed, many of my hon. Friends wondered whether I had gone slightly off my head, because I had great hopes for him, and I still nurture one or two. I complimented him, inside and outside the House, and I still hope that I was right in my judgment. My right hon. Friend and I recognise that the Minister is on a learning curve, and if the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) will allow him to listen now, perhaps he will get through the learning curve. The curve has taken a different shape.

If I correctly remember Bentham or Samuelson from my student days, the learning curve is fast becoming a backward sloping demand curve. Those hon. Members who are up on their economic theory will know that that is an inferior good. I hope that the Minister will not take this personally: I do not think he is inferior because of anything he has done or is capable of doing: it is because of people in his Department that until now we have not seen a great deal of support for him in fighting his corner. I am sure that the philistines in his Department who are superior to him are doing a great deal of damage to sport, and we expect him to stand up and fight his cause.

In certain areas of sport there is still happily a consensus. I share many concerns of the Minister, whose

responsibilities do not stop at sport. When my right hon. Friend had the Minister's post, he was chided for having many parts to his portfolio, but the Minister has more. He is in charge of water, and he is currently having a rough time in Committee at the hands of some of my hon. Friends. Part of his portfolio touches on sport, and he is becoming very unpopular in the water sports section. He was once a coxswain, so he was in water sports himself. The Minister's responsibilities are endless, covering environmental protection, historic buildings, royal palaces and the ordnance survey. We would like him to spend more time looking at problems in sport.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath and I share the Minister's concern about drugs in sport. However, we do not agree with his heavy-handed approach to the problem. Let us consider the statistics. Last year, more than £400,000 was spent on drug abuse control, mainly through the centre at Chelsea college. That centre estimated that it needed an extra £125,000 to get up-to-date testing equipment. Of the 3,167 tests in 1986, only one was positive; 19 others were positive on the first test, but were not followed up with a second, confirmatory test. Given the time and money that is being spent, why was that? A sum of £400,000 is a lot to pay for just one positive test. We need education and the involvement of competitors rather than blanket testing.

I was further alarmed to read that the Prime Minister has called for a ban on the showing of snooker on television because of the so-called problem of beta blocker drugs. Did the Minister advise the Prime Minister on that? If he did not, why not? After all, he is the Minister responsible for sport. This is yet another example of the Government interfering in public broadcasting. That matter is also connected with the question of which drugs are used for cheating in sport. The Minister has leapt in, but he has left sport in a mess, with no clear direction.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): If the hon. Gentleman has read the report written by Sebastian Coe and myself he will know that the statistics that he has given are inaccurate. Last year, out of a total number of 2,545 United Kingdom tests, some 41 substances were found.

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Moynihan: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman agrees with me.

At that stage, it was important and part of the policy that those positive cases were referred to the governing bodies for action. Action was reported to have been taken on one case only. In other words, 40 other positive cases were referred to the governing bodies about which the Chelsea college and the drug abuse advisory group have had no further information. That was a matter of great concern to Sebastian Coe and myself. For that reason, a whole new system was put in place. I hope that no hon. Member would minimise the serious importance of this issue and the need to take a firm line.

Mr. Pendry: I am grateful to the Minister for that long intervention. I am happy to correct the figures if I was wrong. However, the question remains: what is the Minister doing about the problem?

Perhaps the Minister can clear up certain questions, because there is a great deal of doubt within the athletics world. Is it acceptable to use a drug because of a medical condition? If not, why not? Will competitors be banned after they have been caught taking Night Nurse prescribed for a cold? The evidence that I have read in the bulletin from the Institute of Medical Ethics showed that beta blockers had no effect if taken by top-level pistol shooters, and in fact led to a slight deterioration in performance. The use of drugs in sport is important. We wonder whether the Minister has adopted the right approach. Is it his top priority?

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing North): The hon. Gentleman has put his finger right on the problem. It is an acute problem for a number of athletes and snooker players whom I know. If competitors follow medical advice to take medication, for example by taking beta blockers, are they then said to be cheating?

Mr. Pendry: I am sure that the Minister has heard what the hon. Gentleman has said, and that he will reply to both of us in due course.

Let me move on to what I would call Thatcherism in sport. I hinted at this earlier—the standard Tory attack on sport, the cutting of the annual grant to the Sports Council—*[Interruption.]* I expected that response from Conservative Members. The present Government generally do not understand the difference between total amounts and percentage amounts—and anything else. They do not understand the level of grant per year. In real terms, grant has fallen in the past two years by 3.5 per cent. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) will correct me if I am wrong. We have had a lot of fun in Committee with the Minister's mathematics. We also had a lot of fun when he told the world that the Greenwich by-election would be won by the Conservatives. Now he has got it wrong again.

We want to know why, at the time of the cuts, a full-scale assault is being mounted on sport. The Tory manifesto in June of this year promised only continued work for the Sports Council, and the encouragement of excellence in sport. It said nothing about the wholesale demolition of sport as we see it today. The Green Paper on competitive tendering for sports facilities—on offer at the moment, before it is presumably railroaded into the Local Government Bill — shows clearly the Government's lack of understanding of the subject. The Minister has been strangely silent: he has tended to leave the poor Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), to carry the can.

I see clearly, as I am sure most of my hon. Friends can, that the Government are keen that potentially profitable sports facilities should be hived off to the private sector, and that the facilities that are left should be subject to rigorous financial controls. The result, of course, is that many of the disadvantaged will be forced out of sport, to make way for yuppie business men with the ability to pay.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Rubbish.

Mr. Pendry: It is true. I shall say more about it in a moment.

My own local authority of Tameside will be one of the first councils to face the attack. Six swimming pools and eight sport centres will be threatened. Maximisation of revenue will be called for, and sports halls will be full of flea markets, bingo and the like. My caring council runs youngsters' evening sessions at 10p a time to help young

[Mr. Pendry]

people and, at the same time, to tackle the problem of juvenile delinquency. Collective action to oppose that is already under way. The Central Council of Physical Recreation has stated that town halls must be free to decide sports centres' access arrangements for the benefit of their communities. The Amateur Athletics Association has made it clear that many athletes, especially in inner cities, will be priced out of taking part in competitions. Again, that is something that Conservative Members must understand.

The Football Association opposes the proposals, saying:

"The last thing we want is something that has the effect of putting up prices."

Most significantly, perhaps, the Amateur Swimming Association opposes the plan for compulsory tendering as "dangerous to both safety and the national interest."

It is easy to see why, when we see examples of privatisation in action. In Wandsworth, the jewel in the Tory Thatcher crown, tenders were invited recently for the Latchmere leisure pool. Not one company was willing to "take the plunge". In Islington, the Sobell centre was run privately at such a loss that the council had first to subsidise it, and then to take it over completely. Where is that much-heralded private-sector efficiency?

Perhaps most damning of all in relation to the swimming lobby is the Camberly example. Anyone who goes there for an early-morning swim in the privately managed pool must sign a disclaimer to waive his rights, as there is only one member of staff on duty to cover the duties of opening, taking cash and life saving. That is the dangerous future world of private swimming under the present Government.

Every bit as worrying—I hope that the Minister is worried as well — is compulsory tendering. I do not know how many hon. Members were present when the Secretary of State for the Environment let something slip which the Under-Secretary confirmed in answer to a parliamentary question from me — that capital investment by local authorities in new sports facilities is to be curtailed. Given that local authorities have plans for expenditure of over £1,000 million on these facilities, they are going to be chopped.

So here we have it. The Minister will no doubt reply that a lot of this is mumbo-jumbo, that we have the facts wrong. He always does; in this he is typical of Ministers. But I must tell him that a number of points will be made to him in the course of the debate—far too many for a short debate like this. We ask the Minister to use his influence to stand up and fight the corner for sport by asking for a major debate in Government time, so that we can discuss the many and varied problems of sport today.

We have not exactly finished the honeymoon period with the Minister, but we are very close to doing so. We will give him other opportunities — and he has an opportunity tonight—to show that the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the Sports Council, for instance, instead of going to court to sort out their problems, can sort them out on the sports field, with the Minister as a referee.

Mr. Denis Howell: He is not qualified.

Mr. Pendry: Of course, we know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath is the "permanent" Minister for Sport; he is qualified as a referee and also as Minister for Sport. But the current Minister has a very big job to do. He cannot describe the Sports Council as an arm of his Department, because that is clearly against its charter. He must see to it that the CCPR and the Sports Council get together in the right climate to solve current problems. The courts are no place in which to solve such problems. The Minister really must stand up and be counted.

I am very happy to see that a number of hon. Members have come into the Chamber to take part in the debate. I hope that the Minister will answer their points at some length. He is looking desperately for support, and I understand that; but I want him to answer the points that will no doubt be raised in the debate. Sport is far too important to be regarded as just one of the many and varied parts of his portfolio. A lot of effort is needed on his part.

I am responding, Mr. Speaker, to your wish to be as brief as possible. Nevertheless, I hope that we will have some time to hear the Minister answer the points made in the debate. Sport is too important to be given just one and a half hours every two years or so. We ask the Minister to acknowledge the genuine desire of the House to debate sport at greater length. I hope that in his reply he will indicate that he has won the battle in the Department of the Environment to see that we have more time to discuss sport in future.

9.58 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry), as I serve on his football committee as his vice-chairman. I am sorry that he chose to be a little carping in his criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) and of the Government's record. I suspect that it may be because we have in my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East an outstanding Minister, a man who has made his mark upon the sports world.

I suspect that there may be on the Opposition Benches just a little hesitation now that the almost permanent job that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) considered his own, whether in government or out, may be challenged and now that my hon. Friend, who has made such an outstanding contribution to the argument, is perhaps beginning to edge out, in the minds of the public and, perhaps most important, in the minds of sportspersons, the prowess formerly shown by the right hon. Member for Small Heath. That is why I am delighted to support him and to take part in the debate.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde is a well-known sports buff. He is right to ask for more time for sports debates, but I wonder whether the Opposition, in view of the generous time that they give to lost causes, would consider sport as a topic for debate on one of their allotted days. Judging by the attendance on the Opposition Benches tonight, there may be a better attendance for that debate than they get for the so-called important issues of health and other matters in parliamentary time. *[Interruption.]* I am unable to hear what the right hon. Member for Small Heath is saying, but I am sure that he will be able to catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker.

In the past few months my hon. Friend the Minister has made a refreshing sortie into sports matters. He has

bravely and fearlessly thrown himself into contentious issues. He addressed the playing fields issue, which has great support among hon. Members, and the House will know of my interest as I introduced a Bill on the subject. My hon. Friend trod where angels feared to tread. He has thrown himself into the drugs problem, which the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned, and I commend him for his bravery. His excellent initiative with Sebastian Coe made a tremendous contribution to the argument.

My hon. Friend has rightly reassessed the role of the Sports Council. I am surprised that the Opposition have not questioned the way in which the council spends the £38 million that it is allocated. We should question not the amount that it spends but the way in which it spends it. My hon. Friend has reopened that argument. It was ignored by the Opposition, who were pouring out their hearts and asking for more money.

My hon. Friend has also opened up the argument on sports and leisure centres, about which I shall say something in a moment. He has wisely supported sponsorship in sport and avoided the contentious issue of South Africa, which befell some of his predecessors and possibly caused them a great deal of distress and harm.

I have no hesitation in saying that we have a very fine Minister and I am glad to support him.

I shall take up one of two of the issues that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned: they have been prevalent recently, particularly at the Central Council of Physical Recreation conference that I was privileged to attend last week. The first concerns the basis for competitive tendering. The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde inevitably went down the road that we would expect of a Labour Member now that someone is beginning to question how leisure and sports centres are run and whether ratepayers' and taxpayers' money is being spent in the right manner. We had the usual ritual of shouting and screaming about why we should leave well alone.

If all sports and leisure centres in Britain were run on an equitable and reasonable basis, if every ratepayer received value for money, and if sports and leisure centres were providing to local residents the excellent services for which they were designed, there would be little need for discussion in the House or for the type of consultation paper that my hon. Friend has put forward. Most of us know in our heart of hearts that that is not the case. Many sports and leisure centres could be run more efficiently.

Mr. Pendry *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Many sports and leisure centres could be improved, and I challenge the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde to say that they are so efficiently managed that there is no need for consultation about the effectiveness of their management.

Mr. Pendry: I gave some good examples of badly run private leisure centres. What we would like is some examples of badly run publicly owned leisure centres. If the hon. Gentleman can do that and comment on the examples I gave, there will be some validity in his argument. Up to now there has been a vacuum.

Mr. Carlisle: In public terms local authorities are reluctant to publish—*[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for Small Heath will catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. It would be unusual if he did not in a debate on sport.

The other side of the argument is that in many cases ratepayers are funding sports and leisure centres. Perhaps the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde could tell me where there is a sports and leisure centre run by a local authority which is making such a healthy and substantial profit and giving such an excellent service to the community that the management is beyond reproach.

Mr. Pendry *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman on that.

My hon. Friend the Minister has said that we should be looking at the effective management of such centres. If it turns out that the majority of centres are efficiently run, which I doubt, and give good value for money, the exercise will have been worth while if only to prove that point. However, I think that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde will understand that that is not necessarily the case in every centre. Why are we afraid of looking at those centres, testing the effectiveness of the management and, as my hon. Friend the Minister has proposed, possibly putting some parts of the service out to some form of private tender? It is extraordinary that, as soon as one mentions the word "privatisation", the Opposition throw up their hands in horror as if it was a policy that would be detrimental to the users. That is not true.

I remind the right hon. Member for Small Heath of the gentleman who, during the CCPR conference, talked about his leisure centre in Surrey where there was some input from the private sector and said that he had reported a profit in that year of £1.8 million. The right hon. Gentleman will remember that incident. He was there. He will remember that at that meeting, at which he and I spoke, there was not a consensus saying, "Hear, hear, that is happening with us." It was an isolated incident.

Mr. Denis Howell: It was an isolated case. Representatives from the whole of Great Britain were assembled at that conference and that was the only case that could be brought. Our point—the hon. Member for Luton, North, (Mr. Carlisle) has missed it — is that under the privatisation proposals every local authority sports centre will have its management privatised, whether it is good or bad.

Mr. Moynihan: No.

Mr. Howell: Oh yes, it will. Look at the proposals before the House now.

Mr. Carlisle: There is a dichotomy of view. My view is that every centre should be looked at, but my hon. Friend the Minister says that that should not be the case. Perhaps my hon. Friend will have an opportunity to reply on that matter.

The right hon. Member for Small Heath has confirmed my point and I am grateful to him for doing so. That was a lone voice at the conference. Therefore, it must be right to look at the effective management of the centres, ensure that we are getting value for money, and that the ratepayers are getting the service they deserve.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley) *rose*——

Mr. Carlisle: I am reluctant to give way but I will.

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman believes that there should be tendering, as the present consultation document says is possible. Does he believe that after the consultation has taken place it would be right for an amendment to be tabled in the other place to the Local Government Bill or does he believe we should do the alternative which is that an amendment could be made to the Bill once it becomes an Act with an hour and a half's debate on an order? If the hon. Gentleman is confident of his subject, does he not agree that we should have a full debate in Government time to discuss the implications of such a policy before we embark upon it?

Mr. Carlisle: I cannot be drawn into the intricacies of the passage of legislation through this House or in another place. I know that this argument will recur certainly in Committee and perhaps on the Floor of the House when the Bill is considered. I would not say that I totally disagree with what the hon. Gentleman has said.

I have one last point on competitive tendering, which I wholly support. I wish to give the lie to the theory that the disadvantaged will suffer in this exercise. The consultation document makes it emphatically clear that the disadvantaged will not suffer. I apologise to the right hon. Member for Small Heath because he has heard this example before. When one of the sports centres in my constituency offered the unemployed entry at a privileged price, only one unemployed person took up the offer in the six months for which it was available. I know that other hon. Members will tell us that that is not the case in their constituencies. The fact that the offer was not taken up is not necessarily the fault of the disadvantaged; it is possibly the fault of the centre for not selling itself enough. That is what the consultation document is all about.

My second point on legislation relates to the Education Reform Bill. Now that the Bill is to go into Committee, we should try to increase the sport requirement in the curriculum from one to two hours a week. One hour is not enough. That move would find favour on both sides of the House; many Conservative Members would certainly support it.

I wish to refer to the basis of sponsorship. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his initiatives, and particularly on his speech at the Institute of Sports Sponsorship two or three weeks ago. Conservative Members understand that sponsorship is a very important part of sport and should therefore by encouraged. Sponsorship must include sponsorship from any source engaged in a legitimate occupation. The House will know that I refer to tobacco sponsorship. I am pleased that agreement has been reached — albeit a somewhat loose agreement—with the tobacco companies. If money is available, it is essential that sport should be able to receive it.

Smoking is a legitimate occupation, as is the consumption of alcohol. It is nonsense to say that, while smoking is a legal occupation—pray God it will always be legal and that this House will never change that—the money available from tobacco companies should not go into sports sponsorship. I know that that statement causes Opposition Members some discomfort because it was mooted in their policy document before the general election that they would put an end to tobacco sponsorship in sport.

Thank goodness, Conservative Members believe that, while smoking is a legitimate occupation, the tobacco companies should be allowed to sponsor sport. I commend my hon. Friend for his remark that if tobacco sponsorship is available, it should be used. It is used for the good of sport from top to bottom and I commend those tobacco companies that are no longer concentrating all their efforts at the top but are filtering them down—to use a pun—to the junior side. That must be to the good of sport.

I shall briefly touch on rating relief. My hon. Friend the Minister should understand the pressure now placed on many sports clubs by the high rating that they suffer. Conservative Members would urge that a fresh look be taken at discretionary grants. I know that some councils are reasonably generous—I say no more than that—but others are not. Even the 50 per cent. rating relief offered to some sports clubs is not enough. I should like to see rating relief become mandatory for some councils where the facilities that are being offered are obviously for the public good, as in many instances they are.

I shall not go through the list of various clubs that have applied to us as individual Members, and certainly to my hon. Friend the Minister, for assistance. I urge local authorities to look closely at such clubs. The latest is the Thames Scullers which has been levied some £4,000. That is an enormous sum for a club to find. In the many long years in his job, my hon. Friend may be able to persuade the Secretary of State that some sort of mandatory rating relief should be offered to sports clubs.

I commend my hon. Friend on the initiative that he has taken, and that his predecessor took with regard to football hooliganism, which, as most of us know, has nothing to do with football and everything to do with bad behaviour. We must be constantly alert to that problem. I am glad to see the initiatives that my hon. Friend has taken in support of those of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Membership of clubs should be encouraged, and I say no more than that to avoid starting an argument about whether they should be mandatory. We should be constantly vigilant to the sort of penalties that should be available. We must not tolerate bad behaviour on the field as that is undoubtedly reflected in bad behaviour on the terraces.

As Ian Wooldridge said in the *Daily Mail* last week, it was a bad week for sport. There were disgraceful scenes at Wembley when one participant attacked the referee, when a large number of players were sent off the field, a record number of rugby players were sent off and there was much questioning of the umpire's decisions in a cricket match in another country. There is something wrong with sport when the decision of the umpire or the referee is challenged.

Last week Mr. Ted Croker said at the Central Council of Physical Recreation that footballers are almost beyond the law, and that is wrong. We in the House have a responsibility to tell sportsmen that if they transgress the law, as some players in Scotland may have done—I say no more than that because the case is sub judice—they must feel the full force of the law. It is not for football authorities to say otherwise.

This is a short debate. As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said, there should be more opportunity in Parliament to discuss sport, and most of us would support that. Over the past six months the Government have taken initiatives which have brought a welcome breath of fresh air to the sporting fields. For that I commend my hon. Friend the Minister and wish him well in the tasks ahead.

10.18 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on introducing this topic at this time. I do not find myself in full agreement with the economic analysis with which he began, but that does not prevent my agreeing with much of what he said.

It is a particular pleasure for me to speak in a debate to which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) might contribute. In 1965 he was generous enough—I shall not say farsighted enough—to appoint me to the United Kingdom Sports Council, of which he was then chairman. Although he and I did not agree about everything during that time, the contribution that he made then, and continues to make, to sport in the United Kingdom is unique. Despite the Minister's considerable efforts, I doubt whether he will ever overtake the right hon. Gentleman's contribution.

This is a curious time in sport, and not simply because England's cricketers are challenging the decisions of umpires in a foreign land. In my own sport of athletics there has never been more money than now in the form of appearance money and television fees. However, the British Amateur Athletic Board is bankrupt and the Amateur Athletics Association, which deals with England and Wales, has had to take on responsibility for the United Kingdom. A United Kingdom body to govern athletics, which has been argued for for the best part of 30 years, is coming about, or may come about, because of financial default rather than anything else.

I should like to refer to three elements of the Government's policy. Two of those elements are defective, and the third is, at the least open to question. This is an Adjournment debate and therefore the Standing Orders place certain restrictions on what one might or might not say. First, I do not find it difficult to argue with the Minister that the policy that the Government have adopted on drugs is not stringent enough. I urge him to read yet again—I am sure that he has read them at least once — the reports in *The Times* on 19, 20 and 21 November 1987. In those full and extensive reports the extent to which drugs are available and used in sport is eloquently displayed, as is the extent to which profits can be made from their use and supply.

The reports demonstrate the inadequacy of the Government's policy, not least because the investigation that resulted in the convictions on which the reports were based came about at the insistence of inspectors from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. No doubt they had a perfectly legitimate interest in effecting those investigations, but it seems curious that in an area that has such an effect on sport and on health it should be left to that Ministry to carry out the necessary work.

I submit that the policy that the Government must adopt is one that eliminates the use of drugs in sport. Those who take anabolic steroids are cheats. There can be no justification for doing so. Those who take such drugs run substantial risks to their health, risks which have been well documented and are without challenge. I must advise the Minister that although the initiatives that he and Mr. Sebastian Coe have taken may be admirable, action should not be left to the Sports Council alone. The Government should have a much clearer and more effective policy. At present, their policy would not justify either adjective.

Secondly, the conflict that exists between the Central Council of Physical Recreation and the Sports Council over the allocation of money by the Sports Council to the central council is one of the most wasteful demonstrations of misapplied energy that one could conceive of, and it is wasteful of effort and resources. The fact that lawyers are required means that money is going into lawyers' pockets that could better spent on sport in the United Kingdom. It is curious that those two bodies, which are made up of sportsmen, find themselves driven to legal arbitration to resolve their differences. I know that the Minister has condemned that, and he deserves our support for doing so, but he has stated in correspondence that he feels powerless to go beyond that. It is worth pointing out that the dispute between the CCPR and the Sports Council did not arise in the previous 12 months. It has been going on for a long time. The Goverment's policy is defective because it is not aimed at resolving those differences once and for all, and, most assuredly, those differences are wasteful and unnecessary.

The third element to which I wish to refer is that on which the Government's policy can be questioned. I refer to the form in which the Sports Council may hereafter be invited to conduct its affairs. This morning some hon. Members from Scotland met the new chairman and chief executive of the Scottish Sports Council. There is no doubt about their integrity or commitment of the chairman and chief executive to the cause of the sport in Scotland, but the form of the Scottish Sports Council had been changed in a substantial way. Several of its members are now executives of the sports council. I understand that that was done after consultation between the relevant Minister in Scotland, the outgoing chairman, the incoming chairman and Government Ministers, but it did not involve any consultation with sports bodies. To embark upon such a radical change in the constitution of the Scottish Sports Council, without proper consultation with the sporting bodies, seems to be a dangerous and unhappy precedent to establish.

I suspect that, just as the community charge was tried out north of the border and is to be introduced south of the border, what has happened in Scotland may be a preliminary to a similar approach with regard to the Sports Council that functions south of the Tweed. I do not take the view that such a change will necessarily be to the detriment of sport, but it is at least questionable whether a Sports Council in the form that has been approved in Scotland will have the most beneficial influence in the cause of sport in the United Kingdom.

All those who have spoken and who are about to speak in the debate underline the importance of sport in our community. Eight years into this Government's life it can fairly be said that their sports policies lack direction and cohesion. The sooner such defects are remedied, the better.

10·26 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I also welcome the opportunity to debate sport, but I have to say it is about time. As has already been pointed out, it is about nine months since the last sports debate. The Library records show that the last serious debate in the Chamber on the subject of sport took place in 1984. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) that the House regularly denies sport the recognition and attention that it deserves. What is worse,

[Mr. Alan Meale]

it affords parliamentary time to sport only when matters of concern arise. We have seen examples of that time and again.

An example relates to football. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) talked about football hooligans. Football hooliganism was taken seriously only after the Heysel stadium tragedy. It is nonsense to suggest that the Government's firm policy against hooliganism — to issue plastic membership cards — was correct. I must be straightforward in this respect. Most people who go to football matches do not carry a plastic card. It is nonsense to try to pretend that they would do so purely to get into football grounds.

The state of football grounds is another relevant matter. The Government responded only after the tragic deaths of more than 50 people in the Bradford stadium disaster. They have not responded with any satisfactory solution. Many second, third and fourth division teams now have serious problems at their grounds. My constituency has a third division football club. One side of its ground is closed through lack of finance and help to repair it. I am not talking about an unsuccessful football club. Last year, Mansfield town football team appeared at Wembley and won the Freight Rover trophy. We are not talking about a club in the third division that spends hundreds of thousands of pounds on players. Mansfield Town has brought 11 youngsters from its youth policy into the first team this year. A solution has not yet been brought forward by the Government.

Let us discuss some other aspects of sport to which the hon. Members pay little attention. Tens of millions of spectators of sports of all kinds follow them on the television, in the newspapers or on the radio. They follow all sports — football, cycling, motor racing and many others. Hundreds of thousands of employees are involved as my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde pointed out. Many of them work on low pay in appalling conditions, doing so purely for the love of their sport. For an example of that, one has only to look at the large industry of horse racing, in which stable staff work long hours on low wages in bad conditions. Some of them have to live in bad conditions just to hold their jobs, with little job security or insurance, and few pension rights.

There are millions of participants in sport. Schoolchildren, people in and out of work and people of all age groups take part. Most of them never win a medal of any sort. Supporters in their millions stand on the terraces and in fields and travel miles on buses and in their own cars, just to spend all their spare cash trying to support sport. Billions of pounds are involved in the financing of sport, and the money raised from it is connected with such items as running costs, equipment, sponsorship, gate receipts, advertising and TV and radio broadcasting. All these matters have to do with sport, yet we give them little time here.

As my hon. Friend also pointed out, in 1986 there was an overall reduction of £349,000 in the budget for sport. But leisure time and unemployment have increased because of the Government's policies since 1979.

Mr. John Carlisle *rose——*

Mr. Meale: I shall not give way.

The Government put a grand total of £37 million into sport — less than one fifth of a penny per head of the population per day is spent on the sport budget, which is a disgrace. Sport raises billions of pounds of financing in any one year. Much of that money is paid back to the Government indirectly through taxation and other means.

The Government should fully recognise the importance of sport in modern society. They should recognise the role it plays in entertaining the population, and its value to them socially and financially. I draw the Minister's attention to early-day motion 319—it has already been signed by more than 130 hon. Members — which calls for a Select Committee on Sport. That would allow the House to examine on an on-going basis the state of sport in Britain.

Rather than sitting back and debating it once every nine months, two years or five years, we should get seriously involved in talking about sport in the Chamber. It is not good enough to ask why the horse has bolted after the stable door has been left open. It is our responsibility to the millions who participate in sport and support it to do the same.

A Committee of the type I have mentioned would also allow hon. Members to examine other interests and concerns in sport. The ownership of football clubs, for instance, has recently been regularly discussed in the press. Is it right for one person to own 15 per cent. of the first division? If we include Liverpool and Everton, is it right for two families to own 25 per cent. of the first division?

Some hon. Members spoke about sponsorship. Perhaps they should be debated in the House, along with whether it is correct for breweries and cigarette companies to participate in sponsorship on a large scale. Sunday racing is about to be discussed in the other place and quite soon in this House by way of a private Member's Bill. Perhaps we should talk about the interests in that industry, about the people who work in it in appalling conditions and about what that will mean to our society. We should also discuss what kind of relationship it has with the Shops Bill that was recently rejected by the House.

We could also discuss the general overall financing of sport to see if we can find ways in which we could get greater amounts of money into sport and greater participation in sport. The hon. Member for Luton, North spoke about privatisation under the new Local Government Bill. Perhaps I should give him a few facts about that. The discussion paper says:

> "The proposals in the consultation paper apply to such facilities as sports centres, leisure centres, swimming pools, golf courses, bowling greens, putting greens, tennis courts, athletics tracks, pitches for team and other games, cycle tracks, water sports, artificial ski slopes, skating rinks, indoor bowling arenas and beaches."

That Bill and the management functions that it seeks to privatise will affect the vast majority of our people. It takes into account:

> "the taking of bookings, the collection and accounting for fees and charges, cleaning and maintaining buildings, grounds, sports services, plants and equipment, supervising activities, life guards at swimming pools, providing instruction in sport and recreational activities offered, catering and the provision of refreshments, provision and hire of sports and other equipment, paying for heating, lighting and other service charges and securing premises."

That is not a minute minority approach, nor is it — *[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Luton, North willing to listen?

Mr. John Carlisle: The hon. Gentleman should talk to his own side.

Mr. Meale: It is about time that the House started to take sport seriously. The greatest expression of the lack of such interest is what has gone on in the debate and the number of hon. Members in the Chamber. Only a handful of Conservative Members were willing to come forward and argue on behalf of sport, despite its massive support in Britain and the massive financial support that it attracts. I urgently request the Minister to come forward with some positive measures and methods that will help us to go forward an give the British people the support they need for their sports.

10.38 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I shall be brief and will try not to cover any ground that has already been covered. The Opposition have given a genuine illustration of the concern that we feel about sport and our enthusiasm for it. We have also demonstrated our belief that the House should pay a great deal more legislative attention to sport.

Sadly, the only contribution from the Tory Back Benches was an impassioned piece of lobbying for the tobacco industry, with a plug for South Africa thrown in in passing. That speaks volumes for the Tory attitude to sport. There was nothing very Olympian about the speech by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). I suspect that he was inspired by the excellent episode of "Yes, Minister" in which the coughing and spluttering lobbyist for the tobacco industry was suddenly metamorphised into the Minister with responsibility for sport.

In speaking about sponsorship, I could not take a more diametrically opposite view to that expressed by the hon. Member for Luton, North. There is a total contradiction in allowing the alcohol and tobacco industries to parasite off sport for profit and at the same time contribute directly to the promotion of ill health among the population, more than cancelling out the efforts to promote health through bodies such as the sports councils. Several of us were told at a meeting this morning with the Scottish Sports Council that the council would welcome legislative guidelines within which to operate on sponsorship.

The key to this is the relationship with the television companies. At present it is a corrupt relationship because the brewers and tobacco companies put money into sport only because of the television exposure that they can achieve. There is something fundamentally corrupt—and it certainly has nothing to do with the promotion of sport —when top-class football clubs are inspired by greed rather than need, taking money from breweries, which in turn promote their products through their association with sport.

There is something sick about the fact that in many British cities children will be running about with the names of breweries' products tattooed on their football strips, thus identifying from the earliest age sport and their heroes in sport with alcohol, alcohol being one of the antitheses of good health. That is happening, and it will happen more as a result of the sponsorship deals announced last week.

The Government should act on this matter. Sponsorship is here to stay, but, for goodness sake, surely it can be common cause that the brewers and tobacco companies should not be allowed to use sport for purposes which anyone who cares about sport and the good health of the nation must unite in deploring, a category from whom I exclude the hon. Member for Luton, North.

The level of debate about sport in Britain should be raised. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) is one of the few with a vision of what sport could contribute to the nation on a far greater scale than we have seen in the past. One need only visit housing estates where poverty, frustration, unemployment and anti-social behaviour exist to find manifold evidence of how one can transform behaviour, attitudes and prospects by giving people the leisure facilities with which to operate. If we had real vision, we would be talking about one major sports centre for every 20,000 people in society. Indeed, we would be speaking not of public spending but of investment — of substitute expenditure—because money spent in that way would avoid much wasteful expenditure elsewhere.

I have some involvement with the football players' union in Scotland. It is regrettable that Scottish footballers, almost uniquely among footballers in western Europe, receive not a penny from the televising of their sport. There is, in my view, something approaching a corrupt cartel between the television companies in Britain in their dealings with the football leagues. I understand that in France the television companies pay £18 million each season for the televising of the sport. In this country the sum is £2 million. In England at least the players get some of that. In Scotland the players get none of the money paid by the television companies. That must be wrong because the entertainment would not exist without the players.

I support the call for a Select Committee and the argument that the various aspects of sport should not be lumped together with water and so on, under one Department. Let us take sport seriously. It is not a side issue. It should be a central issue in transforming the prospects of many of our people.

10.44 pm

Mr. Denis Howell (Birmingham, Small Heath): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on his initiative in securing this rare debate on sport. I endorse the plea that sport, which is a social service as well as a recreation, should be debated much more often by the House.

I am grateful to all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, even the solitary Conservative Back-Bench Member, the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). The hon. Gentleman stood out like a sore thumb in the debate, but he often does, so I do not suppose he is worried about it.

I especially want to thank the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who was a distinguished athlete, for his contribution. I am glad to say that his speech justified the fact that I appointed him to the Sports Council 20-odd years ago and that he is maintaining his interest in the subject. I am also grateful for the other contributions from my hon. Friends about the importance of sport.

In a short debate like this all that I can do is to go through a catalogue of issues. I intend to do that to demonstrate that we need to spend more time debating them. It is not possible to argue the case for all the points that I want to raise, but if I put down a marker we might make progress in future.

I agree that the Minister has been very enthusiastic and energetic in his first six months in his new job, and I congratulate him on that. However, some people in sport

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are becoming worried about the content of his contribution and where he is taking us with his great enthusiasm. Sport is being treated disgracefully in this country with regard to Government contributions. Indeed that even applied during my time as the Minister responsible for sport. That is obvious when the contribution for sport is compared with that for the Arts Council. The Minister must do what some of us tried to do. This is as much my responsibility as it is his, and I am not making a particular complaint. It is wrong that the Arts Council should receive a grant of £894 million from 1982-83 to 1987-80. Since 1982-83 the Arts Council grant has increased by 67 per cent. The Sports Council has received only £248 million—an increase of 27 per cent. in grant. That shows the disparity that exists. I had to face the mandarins in Whitehall and the Treasury. They go to Covent Garden and the National Theatre. They may be interested in sport, but we never see them at Wembley, although we may occasionally see them at Wimbledon. It is wrong that we should reflect our concern about the cultural pursuits of the masses in the difference in funding between the Arts Council and the Sports Council. If the Minister does nothing else, will he try to get Treasury approval for the same sponsorship scheme pound for pound up to £10,000 to encourage small time sponsorship that is enjoyed by the Arts Council?

I want to consider the affairs of the Scottish Sports Council. I am grateful to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East for raising this point. We are moving towards the corporate organisation of sport. Without any consultation, the size of the Scottish Sports Council has been halved. Six members of the staff have been made full members of the council and the director has been made the vice-chairman. There are so many questions to ask about that. Does the Minister intend to follow that course in this country? Is it impossible to conceive that the five junior members of the Scottish Sports Council will now take an independent line—as required by the royal charter—distinct from their boss? That situation is ludicrous. I believe that what has happened is unlawful. I hope that the Minister will at least agree to look into this matter. Even if he knows nothing about Scottish affairs, I hope that he will at least kindly agree to investigate.

Clause 7(5) of the royal charter states:

"The Council may not make any payment or remuneration for services as a member."

Clause 7(6) limits that by saying that it may give remuneration to the chairman and vice-chairman. That means that the other five members cannot be paid. Those five members, who are now on the staff of the Sports Council, must be working for nothing under the royal charter. If they are being paid, the royal charter is being abrogated, and it is unlawful. I hope that the Minister will look into that.

I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Luton, North about education: that we should not reduce the hours of physical education in schools from two to one per week, as has been proposed. All sport depends on the base created in schools. Nor should we follow the position in Scotland, where teachers are contracted to work for 1,238 hours and will not turn out on Saturday mornings or other times outside school hours voluntarily to supervise sport, because the Secretary os State for Scotland and the Minister with responsibility for education have forced them into that ludicrous position.

The cutbacks in education are alarming. Swimming lessons in schools have been reduced by 35 per cent. since 1980, and charges for swimming lessons have gone up by 25 per cent. since 1985-86. Evening classes are down by 20 per cent., and we are selling off the playing fields at an enormous rate. The effect of schools opting out on the dual use proposals in the Education Reform Bill will be absolutely appalling. How will facilities be provided for dual use to the community by schools which have opted out? We are totally in the hands of school governors and headmasters.

Privatisation has been mentioned. Under privatisation, the local authority will have to hand over the management services to private enterprise. The Minister earlier interjected and said "No", so I hope he will tell us the criteria under which local authorities will be allowed to retain the management. It is proposed that local authorities will be left to pay the loan charges on sports centres, swimming baths, golf courses, football pitches, and so on. They will have to maintain the fabric and pay a fee to a management firm. If that is not bad enough for the existing facilities, no local authority will ever build another sports centre, faced with those ludicrous impositions. If the right hon. Gentleman can satisfy us otherwise, we shall be grateful.

The poll tax has hardly been mentioned, but its effect on racing alone will be enormous. All stable boys in the racing industry and people employed in sport will have to pay the poll tax, which will have an adverse effect.

The acceptance of decisions by referees and umpires has cropped up. I say to the English football team, Mr. Ted Croker and all footballers that sport can only be run on the basis that the referee always must be right, even when he is wrong. I say that as a referee of 20 years. I made many mistakes, but not half as many as the players I was refereeing, who never seemed to acknowledge any. We must support the authority of the umpire or referee.

The action of the Government will endanger the prospect of this country ever again holding international festivals of sport, such as the Olympic Games or Commonwealth Games. The World Student Games are being held in Sheffield, and I congratulate the organisers on that, but the Government are imposing burdens on them. The Minister went to Sheffield the other day and told them that they would not get a penny, and neither Cardiff nor Birmingham will get a penny.

I was the president of the group that tried to get the Olympic Games for Birmingham and every competitor for hosting those games was receiving massive subsidies from its Government. If the Minister wants international festivals of sport, he should not impose burdens on those cities that are trying to attract such sporting events.

The Government will not raise the cash limits so that necessary facilities can be provided for such events without being at the expense of the other things that local authorities must provide. I beg the Minister—even if he cannot provide the money as he should—to tell his Department that if local authorities build Olympic-size swimming pools, athletics tracks and sports halls to attract the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, they should be given a special allowance so that such building is not at the expense of old people's homes, schools and housing that local authorities must provide. That is a sensible

suggestion and I know that the hon. Member for Luton, North agrees because he did so last week when we appeared in Birmingham together.

I must tell the Minister and the hon. Member for Luton, North that if we are to get the nations of Africa and Asia to vote for us to host the Commonwealth Games and the Olympic Games, we should not be in a minority of one at Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conferences. Such a position has a cause and effect, and I felt the effect when campaigning for Birmingham. I am sure that Cardiff will likewise suffer. However, I wish Cardiff every success in its bid to host the Commonwealth Games. I hope that the Government will give that city some help and enable it to build the necessary facilities without imposing cash limits.

Sport is vital. I believe that it is a social service and should be seen as such. It affects the lives of almost all citizens. In the past six months I have been saddened that the Minister, despite of all his energy and enthusiasm, has not acted in the areas that I have mentioned, particularly in regard to education, local government and privatisation, in a manner that would encourage all our citizens to participate in a healthy and important recreation.

10.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I have been left with a short time in which to reply and I hope that all hon. Members will forgive me if I cannot enter into a long debate, but I will attempt to respond to specific points.

I stand at the Dispatch Box for the first time and I should like to take the opportunity to recognise the significant contribution to sport by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell). That sentiment has been echoed by other hon. Members. The right hon. Gentleman has made an enormous contribution to sport and his efforts are greatly respected by all hon. Members.

I take issue with the right hon. Gentleman on the last point of his speech. In my first six months at the Department, I have tried, with much effort and as energetically as possible, to take sport from the Back Benches and give it a higher profile. I have attempted to ensure that sport is recognised as playing an important part in the regeneration of our inner cities. I have also attempted to tackle some of the substantive issues in sport.

In response to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), I intend to consider policy so that we may introduce the right policies and the right framework for the 1990s. I will not shirk that duty, but it will not be easy. It will be difficult to recognise and come to terms with the dissatisfaction that many people will feel in the world of sport when the existing policies and framework are challenged. I intend to ensure that the open letter that I have written to the Sports Council will form the basis for the debate on those matters. I hope that an extensive consultation exercise will take place when considering those matters.

Without making a qualitative judgment on the case mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, it is deeply regrettable that the Central Council of Physical Recreation has felt that it should initiate an arbitration process—at substantial cost to its budget and the budget of the Sports Council. The Sports Council is also spending a great deal of money on legal fees. It is terribly sad when money is being spent on legal fees when it should be spent on the development of sport and recreation in the country. I know that hon. Members who are well versed in the subject are aware that I am not in a position to intervene—it is a matter for arbitration between the two bodies—but it is sad for sport when the money is spent on legal fees rather than on the development of sport and recreation.

A number of comments were made on the current position of the Scottish Sports Council. With a private secretary and an assistant private secretary both of whom come from Scotland, and who brief me regularly on all matters relating to Scottish sport, I have found that the subject has dominated conversation—and, of course, is one in which I am well briefed, although I have no departmental responsibility. I was asked specifically whether I could take points on board and bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. That I shall certainly do.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) referred to authority, and respect for authority, in sport. I wholeheartedly endorse his points. There must be strong respect for referee, umpire or judge, and for the rules and regulations of sport. No sportsman is above the law. It is also vital that every sportsman must respect the rules of his governing body, and respect authority in his sport. The flouting of that authority cannot be excused in any circumstances.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) on his success in securing a debate on this subject. His interest in, and commitment to, sport are well known. As many of us are aware, his own sporting achievements in boxing—albeit some time ago—are worthy of note. More recently, the hon. Member has taken a close and constructive interest in the future well-being of football.

It has been clear to me from the debate this evening that there is no doubt, on either side of the House, about sport's tremendous potential for enhancing the lives and health of individuals and communities. It is one of the few activities in life which recognises no barriers of age, ability, creed or origin. Sport has a wide range of benefits to offer everyone, from childhood to retirement. Moreover, I am pleased that we all recognise the considerable scope that sport offers at the highest level of participation and competition to boost the nation's status and reputation. However, it is equally clear from the debate that there is more than one view about how best the future development and prosperity of sport in our country can be ensured.

Let me be very clear about my position on a number of points that have been raised. Both inside and, I regret to say, sometimes outside the House, there has been some misinterpretation of the position that I have taken. The Government, first and foremost, remain fully committed to a continuing role for the public sector in sport. The level of grant has increased by nearly 40 per cent. in real terms since the Government came to power, and we have secured for next year an increase in grant of nearly £2 million for the Sports Council, which I worked hard to achieve. That is an important contribution, and has been welcomed by the Sports Council. Our proposals for bringing competition to the management of local authority sports facilities are designed to improve their management—to the benefit of the needs of communities, including disadvantaged groups and promising sportsmen and

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sportswomen—not to deprive them of opportunities. We are also determined to maintain the importance of sport in schools.

We are absolutely committed to assisting the future well-being of sport through our policy. I make no apology for repeating my three aims, which are to improve the nation's health, to alleviate social deprivation and to help promote sporting excellence at national and international level. The Government could not possibly hope to meet those aims by pursuing policies that preclude any public-sector financial support for sport, or by declining to exert other than financial influence, wherever possible and wherever appropriate.

Of course, the nature of sport in Britain is such that the Government's direct role is limited. We have an enviable tradition of voluntary and independent effort. That is seen not only with regard to the recent growth of the Sports Aid Foundation and the Sports Aid Trust, but in the substantial increase in sponsorship for sport, which hon. Members have mentioned. I do not believe that anyone with an interest in sport would wish it to be any different in the future. We must not only develop the voluntary and independent effort, but put all our powers and energies into ensuring that more money comes into sport through sponsorship and the private sector. That is why I have welcomed on several occasions—I am glad that I have the opportunity to do so again this evening — the importance of the Sports Council's contribution, and have worked to ensure that next year that contribution is increased.

I have mentioned my letter to John Smith, the chairman of the Sports Council, in which I identified some of the issues that need to be considered. Two points are particularly relevant. First, are we striking the right balance between sporting excellence and wider participtation? That brings into question the structure and provision of sport and recreation in this country. Secondly, are we doing enough to promote private-sector investment in sport? As I have said many times, I believe that we could do much more. I say that as a former sportsman who spent a good deal of time trying to raise private-sector money. I also recognise that much more clarity could be brought to the system, thus bringing the interests of potential sponsors to meet those of governing bodies and sports that need money.

But this must be not just at the top level of sport. What is required is a package approach to sponsorship, ensuring that the money coming into that governing body comes right the way down to the grass roots, rather than just assisting those at the very highest level of sport. I continue to emphasise what I have termed the package approach, and take every opportunity to persuade not only sponsors but governing bodies to see what more they can do about it.

On the subject of education, there is a clear misunderstanding, I regret to say, about the curriculum. The importance of physical education and sport in the overall development of children is recognised by our position over the core curriculum, and I must emphasise the importance that, I and the Government, attach to PE. The fact that it has been included as a foundation subject in the national curriculum is a very important first step.

A PE working group will be established in due course to make recommendations about the content of PE programmes and guidelines about what children should be expected to achieve at particular ages. The group's recommendations will be the subject of further consultation by the National Curriculum Council. Although the content of PE programmes will be the subject of secondary legislation, there is no intention to prescribe the amount of curriculum time to be devoted to PE or any other subject.

Our competitive tendering proposals are still the subject of public consultation and I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House will understand that I cannot pre-empt the outcome of that process. I would, however, like to clarify one or two important matters, which seem to have caused a degree of uncertainty and some misguided comment.

The aim of the proposals is to bring about more effective management and marketing of local sport and recreation facilities and a greater sensitivity to the needs of communties. The proposals specifically recognise the need for disadvantaged groups to retain the opportunity to make full use of sports facilities, even it they are managed by private companies. This has happened many times, where the private sector is already managing sports facilities for local authorities—Babergh district council, Basingstoke and Dean district council, Surrey Heath, Vale of White Horse, Windsor and Maidenhead district council, Wokingham—all examples where the needs of the disabled, unemployed and disadvantaged groups have been very much taken into account.

It is because of the experience in the private sector that this has been incorporated into the consultation document; and we specifically recognise the importance of the need of disadvantaged groups to retain the opportunity of making full use of sports facilities, even if they are managed by private companies. The proposals do not preclude a continuing level of local authority subsidy where appropriate. They do not preclude local authority employees continuing to manage facilities where they are able to bid successfully for the contract.

Perhaps most important of all, the proposals do not suggest anything which is not already working perfectly well. A number of local authorities already use private sector companies to manage facilities; some have even adopted these arrangements by agreeing free use of facilities by disadvantaged groups and by promising young sportsmen and women for training purposes.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

11.8 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): We are very grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to air a matter of considerable concern to the residents of Gwynedd and elsewhere. I am referring to the proposals by Nirex for the disposal of low — and intermediate-level radioactive waste. It is a matter of particular relevance to my two colleagues and me who, as Gwynedd Members, must live with a continuing nuclear dimension. We must face several questions that arise: the safety of existing nucler power stations, of which we have two in our own county; the implications of eventual decommissioning, should that occur, or, alternatively, the implications of new reactors; the dangers of pollution in the Irish sea, a sea that is, they say, the most radioactive in the world; and the effect of raidoactivity on agriculture, and we are the county that still lives under the cloud of Chernobyl, with so many farmers still suffering from its effects on their sheep flocks.

The question of the disposal of nuclear waste has recently come to the fore. It is a matter of concern to my hon. Friends in the Scottish National party and to Scottish Labour members. The possible disposal of nuclear waste in north-east Scotland in particular, and in the islands, was highlighted in the most recent Nirex report. That is why all six Plaid Cymru and SNP Members put in for this debate.

I have a constituency interest in this issue, although from the original Nirex map the position could easily have been misunderstood. The only area in Wales that is identified on the map—it is on page 25 of its document, "The Way Forward" — as a possible area for the disposal of nuclear waste is Ynys Môn, the Isle of Anglesey. It was not until my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) received a letter dated 25 November from Mr. P. T. McInerney, the managing director of United Kingdom Nirex Ltd., that it became apparent that the map should have contained a part of the Gwynedd mainland on the Lleyn peninsula. As my constituents have become aware of this threat they have understandably demonstrated their strong feelings about it, as have those in Ynys Môn. At a meeting in Llangefni several hundred people voiced their opposition to the possibility of nuclear waste being dumped on the island. It is a matter on which people understandably feel very strongly.

On the first page of its consultation document Nirex says:

> "The Government is responsible for the national strategy for the management of all readioactive waste. The task of UK Nirex Ltd. is to implement Government strategy."

I am glad that we have been able to raise this matter and ask the Government to respond to it.

This is a matter of concern to me, not only from a constituency point of view, but as someone who, before entering the House, was fortunate to take a physics degree at Manchester university when Professor Flowers was the professor of physics there. In the 1960s I worked for a short period on the construction of Trawsfynydd power station. At that time people felt that although we may not have known all the answers, the march of science and technology would resolve the problems in due course; that even if at that time we did not know what to do with nuclear waste, something would be worked out in due course; and that even if we did not know at that time how to decommission a nuclear power station, something would be worked out in due course.

The reality is that that has not happened. Some 25 years later we still do not know the answers to those problems. That is what causes me, as a one-time scientist, to start doubting whether we should be marching on with nuclear technology before we have worked out the answers to those questions. Perhaps we should stop proliferating the environmental threats and stop diversifying the types of nuclear installations. At the least, until there are answers to these questions, we should stand still on these matters. If satisfactory answers are not forthcoming, the nuclear programme must inevitably be reconsidered.

Responsibility for nuclear waste rests with the Government, as they dictate nuclear strategy to Nirex. We must ask, in the context of Wales, who is responsible for policy on the disposal of nuclear waste in Wales? Environmental decisions have been devolved to the Welsh Office. Therefore, one would expect it to have responsibility for their issues. We know that the Department of the Environment is taking the lead in London, but does the Scottish Office have responsibility for Scotland? Does the Department of Energy have a major say in these decisions? In this short debate we ought to have some answers to that question from whichever Minister replies. It looks as if it will be the Minister with responsibility for sport, which casts an intriguing light on the question of ministerial responsibility for this important matter.

We also want to know the role of local authorities in such questions. District councils have a responsibility for environmental health and for refuse disposal. Are they to be totally ignored when it comes to decisions on the disposal of nuclear waste? County councils have a broad planning responsibility. To a large extent they are responsible for road transport, which is significantly involved in the disposal of nuclear waste. They are also responsible for emergencies within their areas, but are they to be overruled? Is public opinion to be overruled? Will decisions to be taken centrally in the interest of the Government, Nirex and the nuclear industry, even though that may cut across the interests of the people and the communities that the councils serve?

In the introductory chapter of its document "The Way Forward" Nirex says:

> "Nirex, in considering its design and location must take into account many factors; the most important of these are safety, technical feasibility and public acceptability."

Public acceptability must be fundamental to any decisions that are taken, otherwise we will go down an unacceptable road. Any proposals for disposing of nuclear waste must take that on board.

No convincing reasons have so far been given by the Government and Nirex as to why they abandoned plans for a near-surface disposal site for low-level waste at Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme. The decision was described by "Plaintalk", Nirex's newsletter, as a "shock decision" and a "surprise decision." The same issue of "Plaintalk" gave two reasons for the change in "economic costings", which allegedly led to the decision: first, a technical reason, that more money was needed for research on such sites; and, secondly, that there had been a "change in public perception", which had

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

"dramatically increased the projected unit cost for disposing of low-level waste in such a facility."

Surely, if research needs to be undertaken on the options open to us, funds must be made available. Surely they should have been made available before now. When making his statement on 1 May the Secretary of State reiterated his belief that shallow disposal sites are safe. If that is his true belief and the change of course outlined in the statement was not merely an electoral ploy, it is scandalous that a lack of funds for research caused that option to be put on one side. It is the lack of research that leads to the greatest apprehension over the plans of the Government and Nirex for waste disposal, especially deep-site disposal.

As recently as 1985-86 the Select Committee on the Environment stated:

"There is no proper research programme in the United Kingdom for deep geological disposal."

As long ago as 1976 the Flowers report said:

"The United Kingdom now seems conspicuously backward among nations with significant nuclear programmes in its consideration and funding of studies relating to geological disposal of radioactive waste."

In 1986 the Select Committee on the Environment reiterated the story, adding:

"All that we have seen confirms that impression, save that we are now nearly 10 years further behind."

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I was a member of that Select Committee. The hon. Gentleman's quotations refer to the fact that in 1979 the Government cancelled site specific research into deep geological disposal of high-level nuclear waste. No research is being done on that. However, the Nirex proposals are nothing to do with high-level nuclear waste. They are to do with low-level and intermediate-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Wigley: Indeed. There is, nevertheless, a need for research to give us surety of what is scientifically right. If we have confidence in research work, the public are more likely to accept programmes that are put forward. Uncertainty leads to apprehension.

We have heard nothing that suggests that the Government have done anything during the past year to put more emphasis on research—certainly not enough to allow Nirex to go ahead with commissioning a deep disposal site.

A change in public perception was the second ground given by Nirex for abandoning the Bradwell, Fulbeck, South Killingholme and Elstow sites. The Government admitted in their discussion document that public acceptance of their plans was a major factor. Coming from the Minister just before a general election, that was hard for even the least cynical to swallow. Nirex and the Government will find the people of Wales and Ynys Môn no less resolute in their opposition to such plans than the people of Essex. I am sure that the same is true for Scotland.

Ours is not a hysterical response to anything concerned with the nuclear industry. The people of Gwynedd have lived with Wales' two nuclear reactors for many years. With regard to the Elstow site, the Environment Select Committee conceded to Bedfordshire county council:

"feelings run high and such feeling is based on reasonable scientific doubt."

The Committee's report should be given due weight. The state of Britain's research is basic, and that alone is enough to justify people's fears. We are talking about a problem that we shall bequeath to generations for thousands of years. As is suggested in the Nirex report, radioactive waste will be a hazard for centuries.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): As the hon. Gentleman is a physicist, would he like to give a percentage risk factor for low-level waste so that his constituents and others in the rest of the Celtic fringe may be aware of the risk?

Mr. Wigley: I shall come to that later. The hon. Gentleman's constituency is in one of the areas highlighted by Nirex. Many of us will be relieved if he is telling his constituents that he welcomes the possibility of low-level nuclear waste being deposited there.

People's perception of risk was minimised before the Chernobyl disaster, which led to a traumatic time for farmers in Gwynedd. They do not want their nuclear problem to be aggravated by the dumping of nuclear waste. They know about the effects of radiation on the life cycle, and that they can be serious. They know that if nuclear waste is dumped underground there is always a danger of water seeping into the dump and waste getting into the food chain. The rocks in Gwynedd are said to be stable, but only three years ago we had a major earthquake. There were several tremors and some public buildings, such as chapels, had to be demolished because of the damage sustained. Water mains were broken. How can we be confident that such things will not occur in the 10,000 years of which the Nirex document speaks? It is difficult to quantify risk. All we know is that nuclear accidents are much more serious than any others. That is why we must be so careful when dealing with this matter.

Nirex is now involved in a series of desk studies. On page 11, headed "Site Selection", it says:

"Drawing upon the experience of previous field investigations and hydrogeological surveys, a desk study was carried out . . . the five geological environments were ranked in order of preference. The first three, with simple and consequently more predictable hydrogeological structures, were grouped together as the preferred group as follows; Hard rocks in low relief terrain; Small islands; and Seaward dipping and offshore sediments".

It goes on:

"Areas identified in the first of the above environments are on the Scottish mainland, some of the islands off the west coast of Scotland, and small parts of Wales, including Anglesey. The small islands comprise over one hundred islands around Britain, most of them off the west coast of Scotland and in the Shetlands and Orkney Islands."

I should be grateful if the Minister would clarify exactly what areas of Wales are included. Apart from the Isle of Anglesey, is Ynys Enlli—Bardsey Island—still in? It was named last year, but it appears not to be in there now, unless it is in the generic group of those islands around the coasts of Britain. Which communities are being affected? The definition in the letter to which I referred from Nirex does not, by a long chalk, spell out which areas are being affected.

There is a need to warn that if any further geological exploration takes place the farmers in these areas, as in the Dyfed valley when it was threatened a short while ago, will physically try to restrain any attempts to undertake geological exploration. That is sad, because much bona fide geological work will be hampered, and that will be the result of Nirex's work in the disposal of nuclear waste.

There are other implications. For example, road transport in many parts of north Wales, and, I believe, in

parts of Scotland, is appalling. In areas such as Gwynedd in summer the roads are chock-a-block with tourists. Only a couple of years ago there was a sign on the Menai bridge, which affected many of the constituents of the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), saying that Anglesey was full and had no room for any more cars. That is a measure of the road problems of that area. To think that we might have armoured convoys with lethal radioactive rubbish on such roads—*[Interruption.]* Well, if the waste is not to be in armoured convoys, but in any lorry or van, that raises serious questions for the public. Equally, if carried by air, rail or sea there will be problems. Most of the areas do not have a rail service that lends itself to such matters.

I want to deal now with the points highlighted by Nirex under the heading "Public Discussion of the Issues". It says:

"There is little doubt that any development of this magnitude will have a substantial impact on the local community".

It can say that again. It goes on:

"Because of this, there is a need for open discussion and feedback from a wide audience."

I hope that tonight we shall be part of that.

Let me pick up some of the points that Nirex highlights in its questions. It asks:

"which factors should be taken into account in selecting a site? Nirex is studying safety, waste transport, population density, environmental issues, constructability and costs."

Why is population density an important consideration? If the material is as safe as some hon. Members tonight would have us believe, that question does not enter into it. If it is not safe, why should the sparser areas have to face the consequences of the dangers that may exist? We and Nirex must face that question.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Is my hon. Friend aware that in Nirex's document "The Way Forward" a map recording population density in Scotland missed out Glasgow, the central belt area and Aberdeen, showing only the Edinburgh and Lothian area as having a high population? Does that not give cause for serious concern when one considers other analyses?

Mr. Wigley: Because of some of the things that have been left off maps by Nirex, it clearly has some geographical, if not geological problems.

If the issue of density of population is a valid consideration, that must be faced, and if it is — my goodness—it is telling us that the more remote parts of north-west Wales, north-east Scotland and the islands are remote enough to live with that problem, whereas Finchley, Birmingham, Manchester or wherever are not.

Mrs. Ewing: Or Dulwich.

Mr. Wigley: Indeed, or Dulwich, as my hon. Friend has said.

The next question asked by Nirex is:

"what weight should be given to the view of neighbouring countries when considering sub-seabed disposal?"

I draw the attention of the House to the strong feelings that have been expressed by the Government of the Irish Republic on radioactivity in the Irish sea. The present Irish Government, like their predecessors, have made direct representations to the British Government about that.

Nirex also asked:

"should particular areas of high amenity value, such as National Parks, be eliminated from the start?"

That is a fair question, as the Lleyn peninsula, which has just been added to the Nirex list, has been designated in the past few weeks by the Secretary of State for the Environment as an area of outstanding natural beauty and one that is environmentally sensitive. It would appear that one hand is not working with the other on this matter.

Perhaps the most important question to be asked by Nirex is:

"should an adequate site which enjoys local support be preffered to a superior site which does not?"

That is a most important question, to which it is worth giving a little attention. If the need is to identify a basic number of sites that are acceptable, I suspect that if any one site is acceptable probably a few dozen other sites are also acceptable, and if within those few dozen sites there are some at which the local community is willing to have the facilities, such as the Wirral, as the hon. Member for Wirral, South suggested, or even more so in the Sellafield area, why on earth put other areas through trauma, uncertainty and campaigning? When one considers the Sellafield area, with all its expertise, and where, according to the apparently sound maps, there is the appropriate geology and the people are said to want the waste to be deposited there, why are we going through this exercise? Could it not be sorted out in that locality?

This issue is causing concern in an area where the nuclear question has been a problem for a long time. The Central Electricity Generating Board is considering building nuclear power stations in Gwynedd. Without any doubt, what is causing the CEGB the greatest difficulty is the additional uncertainty that is being created by Nirex. Such matters need to be sorted out quickly. If the Government could come to a rapid conclusion because a general election was imminent, they could come to an equally rapid conclusion now and save the worry that faces communities such as my own and let the facility go to those areas which are, clearly, keen to have it.

11.32 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I rise to speak on this matter because, as you will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, areas of Scotland have been judged by UK Nirex Ltd. to be suitable for the depositing of low-level nuclear waste. There is no doubt that, as long as we have nuclear power and nuclear power stations and enjoy the benefits of cheap nuclear fuel, we must accept the downside, which is that there will be waste of some kind from the processing in those units and that that must be disposed of.

I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that the best way to find answers is with openness, frankness and a degree of sensitivity. I draw his attention to the fact that there is much scaremongering about the problem. Indeed, during the last week of the general election campaign in my constituency, the Scottish National party distributed leaflets stating that the *Sunday Post*, a well-known Sunday newspaper in Scotland, was the authority that had stated that nuclear waste would be dumped in Sheihalliom, which is in an environmentally sensitive area in Breadalbane. Naturally, if there had been any substance or truth in the matter, it would have been a cause of considerable concern.

In May, the information regarding the possible location of nuclear waste in Sheihalliom was released to the *Sunday Post* by the Scottish National party candidate for Western Isles. The *Sunday Post* printed the story. The leaflet was then taken from the story in the *Sunday Post*, and

[Mr. Bill Walker]

innocently, or possibly deliberately, it mistook the date on which the *Sunday Post* had printed the story. The wrong date was put on the leaflet. Therefore, at the time it was not possible to check accurately. However, the Western Isles SNP candidate released the story in May.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I am trying hard to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. Am I right in thinking that he is leading up to saying that he will welcome nuclear waste in Tayside, North? The Nirex map that has been referred to shows Tayside, North and regions near it painted in colours that show that they are first preferences for nuclear waste disposal. Would the hon. Gentleman welcome a nuclear waste depository in his constituency?

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman had been patient, he would have heard what I was about to say. I am drawing attention to the unnecessary scaremongering that has gone on and the deliberate attempts to use Goebbels-type tactics. Stories have been invented, and a newspaper has picked them up from a source at the Scottish National party. The newspaper was shown to be the authority for such stories. That is the type of thing that we expect from nationalists of some kind or another, but, I had hoped, not from the Scottish nationalists. It seems that my hopes have been destroyed. The Scottish nationalists were pursuing the type of nationalist policies that Goebbels practised before the war. In other words, they invented stories and then told the public that they were true.

One is dealing with a sensitive matter relating to nuclear waste and areas such as Sheihalliom and Breadalbane, which the Government have declared to be environmentally sensitive. Opposition Members do not realise that the highland fault lies close to the areas that we are discussing. Anyone who assumes that one may dump anything close to the highland fault has made little attempt to study the geographical history of Scotland.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to beware of news invention. It gets people upset and terribly worried. It means also that large areas of the country are faced with scaremongering that has no relevance to the truth. The truth is that, as long as we have nuclear power stations, satisfactory measures for the disposal of nuclear waste will have to be found.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East) *rose*——

Mr. Walker: When Opposition Members bob up and down, I can only say to them how delighted I was to note that, when the truth emerged, it did not show that Breadalbane and Sheihalliom were areas in which nuclear waste might be dumped. The areas that were considered to be suitable were in constituencies for which Scottish National party Members are now the sitting Members. That is a satisfactory way in which to resolve the problem of the Goebbels-type stories that came out during the general election. Indeed, Scottish National party Members have been hoist on their own petards. There is no question about that.

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I shall give way to the hon. Lady in a minute.

I hope that, when he replies to the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind that the SNP put out such stories. Now that the chickens have come home to roost, Scottish National party Members do not like it.

Mrs. Ewing: I am glad that, having made his comments, the hon. Gentleman has finally decided to give way. Having for postefity now inevitably dubbed himself as the "Oot Bill" of the *Sunday Post*, will he answer the question that was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)? Would he welcome nuclear waste within his constituency? Am I right in interpreting his latter remarks to mean that he would regard it as a suitable punishment for people who vote SNP to have nuclear waste in their constituencies?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Lady made that statement, not me. I hope that those who read *Hansard* will realise that I did not say that, but that the Scottish National party had been hoist on their own petard. They raised the issue of nuclear dumping, and raised it in my constituency with a leaflet that came out in the last week of the election. I called it the Scottish National party fairy tale leaflet and I warned the people of Scotland to beware of Scottish National party fairy tales.

There is no question but that at the next general election all their other fairy tales will be exposed equally. If the hon. Lady thinks that I am ashamed that the *Sunday Post* or anyone else might think that I am linked to them in some way, I remind the hon. Lady that D. C. Thomson and Co. Ltd. prints the *Sunday Post*, and I was born in Dundee and I am very proud that the *Sunday Post* and the *Dundee Courier* originated from Dundee, as I did. I shall not be in the least ashamed to be linked to the *Sunday Post*.

11.41 pm

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): I wish to join the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and support the many excellent points that he made, especially in relation to the irrelevance of population density. He was right to say that if a deep disposal site is safe, then density of population should not come into the issue.

I also join the hon. Gentleman in his more general observations, as I understand them, and his opposition in principle to the deep disposal of radioactive waste. I do not believe that technical knowledge is adequate yet for this solution to the problem. We cannot safely and with peace of mind abandon radioactive waste in deep disposal facilities, where it would be difficult to monitor, treat and retrieve if something should go wrong.

I disagree profoundly with the entire premise of the Nirex proposals in its discussion document "The Way Forward". The document says on page 5 that the impetus behind the proposals is the

"recognised need, reflected in Government policy, to establish permanent safe disposal facilities which will remove from future generations any burden of management of current accumulations and future arisings of such waste."

The key phrase there is the aspiration to

"remove from future generations any burden of management"

of nuclear waste. That is thinking so wishful as to be grossly irresponsible. We must accept that the "burden of management" of nuclear waste will be with us for generations and generations to come. That is why I believe that we must store these wastes at or near the major production sites, where we can monitor and manage, treat and retrieve such wastes as and when necessary.

Having made that general point, I wish to say a word or two about my own constituency, which features largely, as has been mentioned this evening, in the Nirex document. Last weekend I attended a crowded public meeting in my constituency. That meeting rejected utterly the suggestion that the Hebrides should be considered a suitable site for radioactive waste disposal. Indeed, I have to tell the House that the entire Hebridean community is united in repudiating such a suggestion, and any attempt to put it into practice will be most bitterly opposed.

The entire community is opposed, for the general reasons that I have outlined and for particular reasons. The disposal of radioactive waste in the Hebrides would have a disastrous effect on the economy of the islands, dependent as they are upon a deserved reputation for a clean, natural and unspoilt environment.

Mr. Porter: Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that the sort of speech he is making, like that made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), is precisely the reason why people in these remote areas think that this is all very dangerous? I happen to live in and represent an area that has a fairly dense population—*[Laughter]*—and we have the problem, if it is one, of the disposal of low-level nuclear waste.

The more Opposition Members go on about how dangerous this all is, the more likely areas with remoter populations are to be given the waste, because of public sensitivity about the matter. If SNP, Plaid Cymru and Liberal Members had the courage to say that the risk is not worth bothering about—it is not—we might be able to get somewhere.

Mr. Macdonald: If there was no risk worth bothering about, the low-density population would not be one of the factors in Nirex's proposals. The Hebridean community is opposed to the disposal of radioactive waste because of the disastrous effect that that would have on the economy of the Hebrides, which have a reputation for a clean, natural and unspoilt environment. That is obviously true for the primary industries—crofting, fishing, fish farming and shellfish farming. Indeed, the prosperity of shellfish farming is founded on the reputation of the seas around the Hebrides for being uniquely clear and pollution-free.

Nuclear dumping would also have an impact on non-primary industries in my constituency such as the tourist industry, and even, by extension, on industries such as the manufacturing of Harris tweed.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when the Nirex document gives as one of the advantages of under-sea disposal the fact that it is in no one's backyard, that shows a limited perspective? For those of us whose local economies depend heavily on the fishing industry, under the sea bed is very much in the backyard—although it may be out of sight, it is a relevant factor.

Mr. Macdonald: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. The seas around our coasts are our backyard. The precious reputation of the Hebrides will vanish overnight if the Nirex proposals are put into effect. That is why they will be resolutely opposed by my constituents.

There is another argument against disposal in the Hebrides, which applies to areas other than the production sites. It relates to technical grounds; the Nirex document notes on page 21 the added danger caused by double handling of waste and by transport by sea. On those grounds, transport across the Minches to the Hebrides would be unsuitable. The waters around the Hebrides are difficult and dangerous, especially, but not only, in the winter months.

Given what Nirex has said about the dangers of transport at sea, it is extremely disturbing that highly radioactive plutonium dissolved in nitric acid is even now being transported from Dounreay through the Minches down to England. Should there be an accident at sea, and should that plutonium nitrate solution escape into the sea, it would be impossible to recapture because of its soluble form. That is extremely disturbing and of great concern to my constituents.

The Nirex discussion document on the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive waste is not comprehensive. It fails to rank at least one type of rock that is often said to be suitable for a dump site, if any rock is—and I do not agree that that is so. Some maintain that thick, onshore deposits of mudstone strata in a particular sort of clay have the property of being able to absorb leaking radioactive waste, much as a sponge soaks up water. I shall not go into the merits of mudstone clay strata, but it is strange that it is hardly at all debated in the Nirex document, especially when it is remembered that the area where this kind of mudstone is to be found is also one of the few parts of Britain that escaped the last ice age. According to the Nirex document, the coming of the next ice age in about 20,000 years is supposed to be a major worry, in relation to deep disposal.

Is it only coincidence that the area to which I refer is, of course, the south-east of England? My constituents must be forgiven for their cynicism in thinking that this is not a coincidence and for feeling even more justified in their opposition to these proposals.

11.50 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss this matter. All six Members of the Scottish National party and the Welsh National party submitted applications, for this debate. In submitting those applications, we reflected the long-standing concern in both our nations about the disposal of nuclear waste. If we needed anything to confirm that concern, we had the publication in October of the document "The Way Forward". It came as no surprise to us that there was almost an immediate response to it from the people of Scotland and Wales.

On page 21 of the document the three options looked at by Nirex are outlined. It is clear which option is the most acceptable to Nirex — underland disposal. The only disadvantage outlined in the document is that it would be under someone's back yard. Given the comments of some Conservative Members, it appears that as long as that back yard is so-called "sparsely populated" it is acceptable. That is why there has been such a strong reaction by people in Scotland and Wales to the proposal.

When we look at sections 5.2.5 and 5.2.6, we see that it was inevitable that Nirex should take the decision almost in advance of the consultation period to opt for disposal under land. When we look at the map, we see that the areas that are particularly singled out are in Scotland and Wales, especially in the constituency of my hon. Friend the

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones). Therefore, we are deeply concerned that there seems to be an inevitability within the document.

Some Conservative Members say that we are being selfish because we are following the "Nimby" principle —"Not in my back yard". The Scottish National party has taken an unequivocal stance on the issues of nuclear power and nuclear weapons. We have consistently opposed the use of both. If one looks at our record, one sees that we had a suspicion about the siting of Dounreay. Why was it sited in that area of Scotland? It was because it was a sparsely populated area. We also opposed the siting of Torness nuclear power station in Scotland. It was commissioned by the Labour Government, but has been carried through since then. We have a consistent record of opposition to nuclear power.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Is the hon. Lady also implacably opposed to the use of radiation in medical treatment, X-rays and similar treatments? Where does she think that the waste from those uses will be stored?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman is trying to take himself to an illogical conclusion. We all accept the importance of nuclear power in medicine. Indeed, I have benefited from it over the years. However, if the hon. Gentleman had allowed me to conclude this part of my speech, he would have heard me say that we accept that we have a responsibility for the disposal of waste that we create.

Scotland has been landed with three nuclear power stations. We have argued that the nuclear waste should be disposed of on site and above land where it can be monitored. That conclusion has been reached by many organisations, but it has not been considered by Nirex in its document. Those of us in Scotland and Wales are concerned to ensure that our geological strata do not become the nuclear dustbin of Europe, if not of the world. The British Government seem prepared to take nuclear waste from outwith our borders and dispose of it within our borders. We find that totally unacceptable.

Consider the environmental implications. At the public inquiry at Dounreay, much of the evidence against the development came from those with a direct interest in the maintenance of their local environment. We think, as did the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), of the fishermen, the farmers those involved in tourism and of those in my constituency who work in the whisky industry. They all depend on a clean environment, including clean water and fresh air.

Consider the psychological implications of nuclear waste being nearby. How many tourists will visit an area if they think that there is a danger of contamination? Who will buy fish, agricultural produce or whisky if they think such items have been contaminated by local water being in contact with nuclear waste? We are concerned about this from the environmental and industrial point of view because the livelihoods of our constituents are dependent on industries which would be affected by the storage of nuclear waste. Previous decisions about the disposal of nuclear waste have been political. We have been told what happened at Bradwell, Elstow, Fulbeck and South Killingholme. On 1 May last the Secretary of State for the Environment announced the abandonment of those four sites—all of which were in Tory strongholds—on the eve of a general election. He said that Nirex would look for a deep multi-purpose facility for low and intermediate level waste.

But the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee was not consulted on such a major change of policy, despite the fact that it was set up to advise on major issues relating to the development and implementation of an overall policy for the management of civil nuclear waste. As I say, the Minister's announcement came 10 days before the general election.

If political decisions are to be taken about the disposal of low and intermediate level nuclear waste, the Government will find strong resistance throughout Scotland and Wales to such decisions. Do not let Tory Members think that, just because we are talking about sparsely populated areas, that resistance will be weak. People throughout Scotland will resist the dumping of nuclear waste wherever it is proposed, even in Tayside.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Lady disown the leaflet that was distributed and the scaremongering that took place in my constituency during the last election and the tactics that lay behind it?

Mrs. Ewing: The decision of the people of Tayside, North was illustrated by the fact that the hon. Gentleman's majority decreased substantially at the election. He should look ahead to the next election when he may well lose his seat. He has not answered the question. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North, is he willing to accept the dumping of nuclear waste within his constituency? He is unwilling to answer and his constituents will note that.

We are looking for three basic promises. I am surprised that the Minister for Sport is to reply to the debate, although that is no reflection on him. However, given the interest of hon. Members from Scotland and Wales on the Opposition Benches and the fact that the overall responsibility lies with the Department of the Environment, I would at least have expected someone from one of those Departments to be on the Government Front Bench to give a direct reply on this issue.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The tragedy is that, since the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) was given a different responsibility in the Department, the Minister of State responsible for this crucial issue, Lord Belstead, is in another place. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is in the Chamber, but the Minister responsible for these matters is in another place. I would not argue that the Under-Secretary of State should not be the Minister responsible. However, the responsible Minister should be in the House to answer these questions and not in another place.

Mrs. Ewing: Indeed, half the Scottish Office Ministers are in another place, and the Secretary of State for Wales does not even represent a Welsh constituency.

We are looking for accountability. Nirex was established by the Government to consider how we should dispose of nuclear waste. That does not mean that the Government have a right to abrogate responsibility for taking the decision. We want to ensure that the Government will take full responsibility for any decisions. That is vital.

We want to see full consultation on all the options that are open. By "full consultation" we do not mean the

appointment of individuals representative of local authorities. All members of local authorities should be represented, not Government nominees or those who would favour the nuclear industry. We also want clear definitions of the procedures that will be followed in seeking planning permission. I expect the Government to tell me the minute that anyone sets foot in my constituency looking for the possible selection of a site, even if that person has only a pencil and a piece of paper. I expect to be notified immediately if my area is coming under scrutiny from Nirex.

We want to see a clear definition of the planning procedures and a clear assurance that all of us with an interest in these matters will be given the information. It is only right that there should be a full debate on this matter—not a debate called by six Back Benchers, but a debate offered by the Government to enable us to consider the matter clearly, thoroughly and fully. We should have full official statements from the Government on where they stand on this issue.

12.3 am

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Even a glance at the recent history of the nuclear industry will show the difficulty that the Government and Nirex have had on this issue. Since 1979 the Government have had to withdraw from every site selected for test drilling in the face of local opposition. Most recently and dramatically, just before the election, the Government called off tests at Elstow, Killingholme, Bradwell and Fulbeck.

For the Government, the withdrawal from each test drilling represents another failed attempt to get the problem out of sight and out of mind. For those of us who oppose such quick-fix methods, that represents another reprieve and a chance to urge more broadly based research into safe storage. We are all paying now for years of neglect of the waste problem. At present we simply do not have the knowhow to deal with the waste effectively. The Select Committee on the Environment reported on radioactive waste last year and admitted:

"The poor state of research in the United Kingdom means it is impossible at this stage for us to recommend any disposal option with total confidence."

It also stated:

"The United Kingdom is well behind other nations in its research and development programmes."

The need to embark on that research will become increasingly urgent as we approach the end of the century. As the Magnox nuclear power stations reach the end of their lives, and if the Government go ahead with the decommissioning of Polaris nuclear submarines, the volume of waste to be dealt with will further increase. It means that we have to work within a tight, fixed timetable. The site at Drigg in Cumbria will, according to the Government's response to the Select Committee's report last year, be full by the year 2010. It goes without saying that we cannot begin too soon our efforts to find a lasting and safe solution to the problem of waste storage. In this respect, we welcome the attempts of Nirex to get the debate rolling.

Nirex described its document "The Way Forward" as the beginning of a great debate, consulting as widely as possible on future disposal options. We welcome such a debate, especially the efforts to take account of community views, otherwise Nirex has no real democratic accountability. It is constituted essentially of vested interests, with little or no participation by the community.

The debate must be genuine. In one respect, the consultative process promised by Nirex is a sham. As my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said, Nirex has claimed in its discussion document that no decisions have been taken on the repository site for low and intermediate level nuclear waste. However, one important decision has been made —that there must be a disposal option.

It is clear from remarks in the forum and from the document that Nirex will not entertain any debate on the possibility of storing radioactive waste on site at the nuclear installations at which it is generated. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), speaking for the SNP, said that it is clear that Nirex has already determined that it wants deep-level storage, and on-land storage at that. It shines through the document. Some consultative process!

The truth is that there can never be disposal of nuclear waste in any real sense, only burial or safe storage, with continuous monitoring. If we could dispose of waste we would not find ourselves in the present predicament, yet the Nirex report deals only with low and intermediate-level waste. High-level waste is not discussed. Can we really expect an open debate? Sadly, I fear that Nirex gives away the game in its document when it says:

"Nirex wishes to receive advice and comments about how it should proceed within the framework of Government policy."

If we can debate only on the Government's agenda, we must assume a commitment to an expanding reprocessing programme and total nuclear power, all of which produces ever-increasing quantities of waste. Surely part of the debate must be about how we can decrease, and ultimately stop, the production of radioactive waste.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does that mean that the hon. Gentleman and his party do not support replacing Polaris with another breed of nuclear weapons? If Polaris is replaced with another breed of nuclear weapons, where will the plutonium come from?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman knows well that my party believes and has always believed, that we should pursue the abolition of nuclear weapons. I hope that all parties agree with that belief. There may be different views on how we should go about it, but even the Government have said that they would rather see a nuclear-free world.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The hon. Member has not answered the question. If there is to be a replacement for Polaris —as I understand it, it is alliance policy—the plutonium will have to be provided for the replacement, so that will require reprocessing and a nuclear power station of some kind to produce the plutonium. Is that the position of the hon. Gentleman's party?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman's party set up the Chapel Cross tritium plant to produce the materials. I hope that he will join us in working towards the abolition of plants for civil and military nuclear power, and therefore the need to dispose of waste. Clearly the problem is with us already, so it makes little odds whether we go ahead with the programme, because the waste still has to be disposed of.

It is no wonder that the environmental groups remain sceptical about the Nirex document. Greenpeace has said:

"If consultation is to have any credence, there must be a clear commitment towards taking account of the views of those consulted, even if these run contrary to Government and nuclear industry policy. The exercise must not artificially

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limit the choices available, otherwise the public are simply given the choice of variations on the same theme. The facts presented to the public must also be just that, omitting nothing even where the truth is embarrassing.

On the evidence presented so far, we are far from hopeful that the above criteria will be met by Nirex and its consultation document."

The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) should consider Labour's behaviour last year in the Select Committee on the Environment when the Committee reported on this matter. Labour opposed the Liberal call for research to be co-ordinated with our American and European counterparts. It also opposed our plea that no new deep geological sites should be opened in the United Kingdom. Labour also opposed the Liberal and Friends of the Earth view that storage should continue to be on site for the immediate future. The Labour spokesman voted with the Tories when the Committee considered chapter seven of its report on radioactive discharges. Labour voted against Liberal demands for the Government to establish an inquiry to investigate the incidence of cancers among people near nuclear establishments. Such is the Labour record on this matter.

It is hard to accept that Nirex is the appropriate body for the task. After all, it is a

"creature of the nuclear industry."

That apt description was given by the Royal Commission for Environmental Protection. If the consultation process were to reveal overwhelming public preference for long-term on-site storage, Nirex would be unable to approve that because it is not within its terms of reference.

On-site storage has important advantages, and that is why the Liberal party advocates such storage until suitable alternative methods, proved to be safe, are available. Any decision taken now, based on poor knowledge, could have catastrophic consequences for the future. We should not enter into any storage method that might preclude retrieving the waste in the future so that it might be stored more safely. On-site storage would enable constant monitoring, and it recognises the limits of our present knowledge.

On-site storage removes the need for the transport of waste, with all the attendant problems of safety and security that have been mentioned. Such storage represents no more of a security risk than is presently represented by nuclear power stations. Such land surface storage has been employed for high-level waste for the past 40 years, and there is the prospect of such storage continuing in the foreseeable future.

Conservative Members have said that the Nirex proposals are aimed only at low and intermediate-waste. If we measure such waste in terms of radioactivity rather than bulk, we find that it accounts for only about 5 per cent. of waste. The other 95 per cent. of high-level waste must, in any case, be stored above ground. As yet such waste is undisposable, and the other 5 per cent. should be kept with that waste.

In a debate on waste dumping it is impossible to cover all the arguments relating to nuclear power. It must be acknowledged — it is undeniable — that the problem would be eased if we were not producing more and more waste without knowing how to dispose of it safely. Present worries are bound to increase as the nuclear industry is privatised. In a competitive environment we already know that private business will not invest in nuclear power, partly because of the high cost involved in keeping those stations safe. That problem has confronted the Secretary of State for Energy as he squirms around to try to find a formula that will maintain a nuclear industry within a privatised industry that does not want it.

If the privatised industry is forced by the Secretary of State to act, how do we know that the safety of the nuclear industry will not be compromised? Overseas, there have been some unpleasant experiences. Of six commercial low-level radioactive waste dumps in the United States, three have been closed because of off-site radioactive contamination.

Some method of safe storage is needed even if we do not continue with the nuclear power programme. We must deal with the existing waste and also de-commission existing power stations. The means of storage for which we opt must be built on a sense of responsibility for the future. We are dealing with a matter that is more important than crude party politics. The safety of future generations is at stake.

The Government should not underestimate the weight of responsibility on their shoulders. We may disagree vehemently about the poll tax and the restructuring of education, but those are changes that we can reverse. The disposal of nuclear waste is final and potentially deadly. I hope that Ministers will start a debate around the country about the genuine wishes of people. I hope that the Government will respond to what I believe will be the clear demand to protect future generations.

12.14 am

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): When the Secretary of State for the Environment was answering questions in the House on 2 December about the disposal of nuclear waste, he said:

"I sometimes think that it would be best if we had 650 supplementary questions on this matter, and then we would all be back where we started." — [*Official Report*, 2 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 927.]

That, I think, shows the controversy that surrounds the subject that we are debating. The Secretary of State was no stranger to such controversy, for on 1 May 1987—as we have been reminded by my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)—he announced to the House that Nirex had decided not to proceed with investigations into four sites.

Whatever reasons the Secretary of State gave the House, technical or otherwise, for not proceeding with investigations into a shallow site, it is clear that his decision on that occasion was a political one. Quite simply, he knew that an election was in the offing, and that there was a danger that the Government would lose marginal seats in England because of the massive opposition to their plans in those constituencies.

Mr. Harris: They were strongholds.

Mr. Jones: They were marginal seats. The hon. Gentleman knows that. Otherwise, the decision would not have been made.

When Nirex published its consultative document, it invited Members of Parliament to a briefing session, during which Nirex officials said that, apart from technical and geological criteria, they were prepared to look at three specific matters: first, public acceptability of the plan; secondly, social considerations; and thirdly, economic considerations. When I called a public meeting to consider

the implications of the consultative document in my constituency, 600 people turned up to voice their opposition. That was the biggest public meeting that I have attended in my constituency, and the breadth of opposition was quite revealing, involving the trade unions, industry, various organisations and associations, the churches and others. Clearly, there is widespread concern in our communities.

I am very conscious of the time factor, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I should like to say in conclusion that the main problem in relation to land disposal is the inability to predict with any great confidence future geological or ground water activity. Furthermore, the consequences of a mistake would be catastrophic. My constituency is well known as an area where there is a great deal of ground water activity. When I described that as a potential problem, I was informed that an island was a suitable site, because if there was an accident it could be contained.

What confidence can that inspire in Nirex's plans among the people of Ynys Môn?

Mr. Welsh: There have been accusations of scaremongering from the Conservative Benches. However, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) has pointed out that the criteria chosen by Nirex point clearly to Wales and Scotland as the most favoured sites. Far from being scaremongering, this is straightforward opposition to Scotland being used as a nuclear dumping ground. The arguments are valid, for the very reason that they were rejected in England.

Mr. Jones: We are saying to the House that Nirex should withdraw the consultative documents, so that further research can be carried out on this important matter.

12.18 am

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I once had a general studies tutor who used to say that what surprised him was not how little people knew, but how much they knew that was not true. That is especially true of the nuclear industry. I do not suggest for a moment that it applies to any of the speeches that we have heard today; a good deal of knowledge has been displayed on both sides of the House. I particularly compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) on an excellent speech in defence of his communities and his area. He displayed considerable knowledge about the problems that we are discussing.

However, many people mix up the levels of nuclear waste, the nature of nuclear waste, and what we are talking about. There is low-level nuclear waste, intermediate-level nuclear waste, and high-level nuclear waste, and there are low-level discharges to the environment. I want to deal with each one in turn.

The Labour party believes that there should be no discharges to the environment from any nuclear installation, and that is possible. The Select Committee on the Environment, on which I served — the Liberal spokesman produced a parody of what happened in that Committee, but one would expect that from the Liberals — argued that discharges should be be as low as technically achievable.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: No.

Mr. Wallace: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: The answer is no.

That was rejected by the Government at that time, and by the industry. But the ministerial declaration after the second international conference on the protection of the North sea—this is a document to which the Secretary of State for the Environment has subscribed—declares the Ministers' intention to respect the relevant recommendations of the competent international organisations and to this end to apply

"the best available technology to minimise pollution".

This is in the section about radioactive wastes and discharges.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Roberts: I ask the Minister if this is a change of policy. Are we to have nil discharges from Sellafield and from all other nuclear installations? That is the view of the Labour party. There is no need for the discharge of either gases or water.

Low-level nuclear waste — the Select Committee on the Environment agreed with this — can be safely disposed of. That is what the shallow burial sites were about. At the moment, it is disposed of in Drigg. If it is not safe in Drigg, where at the moment the people are fed up because it is all coming there, with lorries rumbling through the village, because the Government, quite wrongly, abandoned the other possible disposal sites, where is it safe? But there would always be some production of low-level waste, even though nuclear power were to be phased out, as is Labour party policy, because to stop it we would have to close every cancer hospital in the country. So let us not get mixed up about that.

Then there is intermediate-level nuclear waste. I hold no brief for Nirex; I think that it is an incompetent body, for the reasons already mentioned in the debate; it represents the industry but no one else—not the trade unions in the industry, not the community, not the environmentalist lobby. It is not a cross-section in any way, but only an incompetent pawn of a Government who have no policy for the disposal of nuclear waste. But Nirex is now considering putting low-level and intermediate-level waste together in deep disposal sites. Is it disposal —I want the Minister to answer this—or is it retrievable storage that is capable of being monitored? I do not support disposal. *The Guardian* of 13 November reports Mr. John Baker, the Nirex chairman, as saying that

"disposal did not mean that it would be impossible to monitor or retrieve the waste".

But that is not what the document says. The document talks about disposal. We say that disposal of intermediate-level, not low-level nuclear waste, is an option that we would not support. We prefer retrievable, monitorable storage in a safe place.

One of the problems about Nirex is that disposal of high-level nuclear waste is not in its brief. The Labour party does not believe that one organisation can deal adequately with the problem if it has a brief only to look at certain categories of radioactive waste, without taking account of the whole picture, including high-level nuclear waste. There is no proposal in the Nirex document, nor am I aware of any proposal by the Government, for the disposal anywhere of high-level nuclear waste. High-level waste is to be stored. At the moment, it is mostly in

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liquefied form, stirred at Sellafield, then vitrified, and then it will go, in its vitrified form, to be stored above ground for 50 years.

I support that as the only possible, technically feasible way of dealing—whether any more high-level nuclear waste is created or not—with what is already there. But what will happen to it after 50 years? There is no disposal route, no long-term plan, no costings, as regards what happens to that high-level waste in 50 or 100 years' time—the waste that for the time being will be vitrified and stored above ground. Do the Government have a policy for future high-level nuclear waste?

The Labour party believes that low-level discharges into the environment should be stopped. Policies for the compaction, incineration and safe storage of low-level waste should be developed. We believe not that intermediate-level waste should be disposed of but that it should be stored in a monitorable and retrievable form. There is no proof, research or evidence that high-level waste can ever be disposed of, and we do not know whether the Government have a policy for its long-term storage and monitoring.

Having said that research needs to be done, I accept that when a Labour Government come to power, we shall have to deal with this problem. Decommissioning Polaris and phasing out nuclear power stations will create more waste, which will have to be monitored and dealt with.

The Labour party does not pretend that it is opposed to everything and that it is not prepared to seek a solution. Unlike the Liberal party and the Scottish National party, we shall be in government and we shall have to deal with this problem, which is why we are opposed to a Government who have no policy and to the hypocrisy of the alliance, which pretends that it is greener than the Labour party and that it will phase out nuclear power, close down Sellafield and stop reprocessing, but will replace Polaris with another breed of nuclear weapons and produce the plutonium to test them. The greatest source of radioactive pollution in the world is the testing of nuclear weapons. More radioactivity in Britain's environment has come from the testing of nuclear weapons, which the alliance supports, than has ever come from the civil nuclear power industry.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Gentleman has given a complete parody of alliance policy. I understand from an interview that the hon. Gentleman gave to *The Guardian* that he is in favour of deep-sea tunnelling from the coast at Sellafield. Presumably he is also opposed to the transportation of nuclear waste around the country. Is the Labour party in favour of deep-sea tunnelling outward from the coast into the Pentland firth for the disposal of the nuclear waste that is created at Dounreay?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman should not believe everything he reads in *The Guardian*, particularly as it is a Liberal paper, and he should not presume that we are against the transportation of nuclear waste. That is not a matter on which I have made a statement in the past, and I shall not do so now.

When the Labour party comes to power at the next election, it will stop the production of military grade plutonium at Sellafield or anywhere else, which is a policy to which the alliance is not committed. We shall immediately stop the Official Secrets Act being applied by executive action to the civil nuclear industry and will end the secrecy that surrounds Sellafield. We shall immediately set up a proper research programme on how to decommission power stations and deal with nuclear waste in a manner that takes account of the protection of the environment.

We shall not, as the Government have tried to do, use special development orders to find sites for the disposal of nuclear waste against the wishes of affected communities. If the BNFL or any other proposal progresses, it must be within the limits of planning legislation, without special development order status; communities will have to be considered, and a full public inquiry held. That is the policy of the Labour party on any disposal route—we are not in favour of disposal — for retrievable, monitorable storage of intermediate high or low-level nuclear waste.

12.29 am

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Time is short and I want to press the Minister on one specific point. I am concerned at moves afoot to short-circuit the site selection procedures.

Like any earnest seeker after the truth, I have been tabling parliamentary questions that have been answered by the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland. On 10 November he told me that the procedures remain to be determined. On 18 November he told me that there was to be no change in the planning procedures for site selection. When I probed the apparent conflict between those two answers, I was told on 27 November that he would reply as soon as possible. After a long thought-provoking pause over the weekend, on 30 November he said that he had nothing to add to his answer of 10 November. On 25 November I wrote probing the Under-Secretary of State on the same subject and have yet to receive a reply.

Will the Minister confirm or deny that there are moves afoot to short-circuit the site selection procedures, or will he, like his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, continue to evade the question?

12.30 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I have very little time but I will try to answer as many of the points as possible. There will be no short-circuiting of the site selection procedure. I must stress that at this stage neither Nirex nor the Government have any firm proposals for the siting of a radioactive waste repository. No decisions have yet been made and no part of the country can be ruled out.

I can assure hon. Members that the developers will have to have the appropriate permissions at all stages for the preliminary investigations. That might take the form of planning permission or—I say this to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts)—a special development order approved by Parliament. Any proposal to build a repository will be the subject of a public inquiry. The developers will also have to comply with all relevant safety standards as laid down and enforced by the authorising Departments.

The important issue of risk was raised in an exchange across the Chamber. It is important to place it on record that the radiological safety target currently set is a risk of one in a million per year. That is a small risk compared with those we run every day from other hazards and I hope

that that will assist hon. Members if they are in any doubt about how the Government define the risk involved and the level of risk.

The position on co-ordination between Departments is that, when Nirex comes forward with a specific proposal, the Department or Departments dealing with it will depend on the country in which it is located. Normal liaison arrangements with other Departments will apply. However, the current Nirex document and the work going on in regard to the desk studies are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment. That is why I am responding to the debate. The Department of the Environment is in regular discussion with other Departments, including the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office, about progress with the Nirex proposals.

On public acceptability, Nirex will be making use of the comments received during the consultation exercise, together with the results of its studies of technology and geology, to come forward with a proposal for a facility. It will be for the Government to make the final decision, after full public debate.

There was an important and understandable exchange on population density. Containment deep under ground eliminates significant risks to the public, so population density is not crucial. However, Nirex specifically asked in its consultation document whether that was one of the factors to be taken into account in selecting a site. It would be most unwise not to pay due attention to the strength of public opinion that exists, which has led many hon. Members to spend hours late into the night debating this important issue.

The role of local authorities is another important specific point. Any proposal to build a repository will be the subject of a public inquiry. The views of the local authority will be taken on board at that point, as they will during the consultation exercise. Briefing seminars are already being held for local authorities.

We have made it clear in the Government's response to the report of the Select Committee, Cmnd. 952, that it is Government policy that waste should be disposed of under strict supervision to high standards of safety and that the periods of storage should be the minimum compatible with safe disposal. It is desirable to dispose of low-level and intermediate-level waste as soon as possible and to avoid the creation of additional accumulations and the provision of costly and extensive storage capacity.

I was asked why the plans for a new near-surface disposal facility were abandoned. I know that that subject has led to a lively and intense debate and to reaction from hon. Members on both sides of the House. They will be aware of the answer that I am about to give but, for the record, I shall give it again. Reassessment of the costs by Nirex shows that the cost differential between near-surface and deep disposal has been eroded. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accepted therefore that Nirex should focus efforts on development of a single deep repository.

Research has also been drawn to our attention. The Department of the Environment and Nirex have substantial research programmes on radioactive waste management. The development of a disposal facility is not inhibited by lack of research, but the research leads us increasingly to focus on specific potential disposal sites. It is for Nirex to identify technically suitable sites.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) mentioned monitoring and retrievability. Those are issues on which Nirex would welcome views. Its proposal in "The Way Forward" involve monitoring during the operational life of an underground disposal facility. It is not expected that waste should be retrieved from a repository, but the ability to do so will remain during the operational phase. I hope that that answers the question asked by the hon. Member for Bootle, although without giving him satisfaction, which I regret.

The hon. Member for Truro also mentioned decommissioning wastes. The decision not to proceed with a new shallow disposal site has little bearing on decommissioning Magnox and AGR stations, although it is accepted that the delay in providing disposal facilities might require certain wastes to be stored for a time before disposal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) expressed surprise during an exchange about whether the transport of radioactive waste might require armoured convoys. There is no reason why transport of low and intermediate level nuclear waste should require armoured convoys. International guidance on procedures for such transport are well established and we follow them.

The hon. Member for Bootle referred to the North sea conference. The declaration on discharges and disposal of radioactive wastes provides a framework within which the United Kingdom can continue its improvements to, for example, the Sellafield complex. The agreement to apply the best available technology to minimise pollution is a welcome clarification. The wording on solid waste repositories institutionalises the need to aim to preclude pollution from that source. Disposal remains accepted policy, but that does not mean that no provision might be made to facilitate monitoring and to ensure retrievability.

I have not yet arrived at my speech, despite the fact that I have about 30 seconds left. Rather than become involved in it, I should like to say that I hope that my addressing some of the matters that hon. Members have raised has been helpful. Although I have not been able to say what I wanted to say, I welcome the fact that others have been prepared to stay so late to take part in this important debate.

Afghanistan

12.37 am

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): It is right that, as we approach the eighth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, we should debate the matter in the House. Moreover, Mr. Gorbachev has recently talked to the Prime Minister and he is now engaged in negotiations with the President of the United States of America.

British policy has two strands — humanitarian and political — and I should like to consider both. The United Nations General Assembly recently debated Afghanistan and concentrated on Soviet withdrawal. The Soviet Union has expressed a desire to withdraw and the PDPA—the Afghan Communist party—has said that it is ready to compromise with the Afghan resistance and wishes to end the war.

What proposals have emanated from Kabul with Soviet support? First, the regime declared a ceasefire, which did not succeed. It amounted to a demand, which nobody expected the Afghans to accept, that they should surrender in return for nothing whatever. A coalition was proposed, but all key posts were to be reserved to the PDPA. The regime called for refugees to return to Afghanistan, but the evidence is that, even if official figures are to be believed, less than 2 per cent. of the refugees have done so.

The Afghan regime adopted a constitution that has been endorsed by a hand-picked assembly, although the Afghan people have not been consulted. The constitution enshrines the leading role of the PDPA and its front organisation, the National Front, and draws heavily on the soviet constitution. It is no surprise that Dr. Najib told the PDPA conference in October that the Communist party would keep both its dominant position and the presidency.

Kabul's reconciliation proposals have not been accepted by any credible Afghan group outside the ruling regime. As my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur said to the United Nations General Assembly on 10 November,

"it is not reconciliation but capitulation which is on offer."

The Afghans will not accept a regime dominated by the PDPA or whatever name it may subsequently adopt.

The massive violation of human rights in Afghanistan was once again condemned by a record majority in the latest United Nations resolution on human rights, co-sponsored by the United Kingdom. The United Nations resolution was a diplomatic success. Pakistan and her friends overcame one of the largest diplomatic offences the Soviet Union has ever mounted. A record 123 countries sent a clear message to the Soviet Union on 10 November which demanded, as Britain has done eight times before, that the Russians should translate their words into deeds, withdraw their troops and let the Afghans decide their own future.

But diplomatic successes on their own are not enough. While these processes run their course, contrary to Soviet propaganda, as the House knows, the war continues with unmitigated ferocity and cruelty. While talking of withdrawal, the Soviet and Afghan forces have launched major offensives this year in the Kandahar and Pakhtiar areas. The Kandahar offensive did not secure the city and that in Pachtiar was beaten back in a major success for the resistance. At the same time, there have been continued violations of the Pakistan-Afghan border and large numbers of Afghan refugees, including women and children, have been indiscriminately slaughtered. As the United Nations special rapporteur, Felix Ermacora, said, it is a situation approaching genocide.

We see little in Britain on the television or in the newspapers about Afghanistan. It is a war that has not been reported in the way that Vietnam and other wars were. The Russians do not accommodate journalists, as the Americans did in Vietnam. They have not taken any western correspondents on operations because they obviously do not want to show what they do when they go into a village and slaughter the inhabitants. They have offered conducted tours of Kabul, Jelalabad and Paghman, but those have yielded little in the way of news.

The alternative for the newsman is to go with the Mujahideen, and those journalists and others who have done so and have undertaken the tremendous danger and discomfort of that course deserve every respect. In addition to the dangers of the war, the terrain is unsuitable for vehicles and television cameras must be transported by horse or on foot. Therefore, the level of coverage given to this war in the news media has been very low and is declining. People are now less well aware than they were of what is happening, but I believe that the British people, deep down, do not care any less about the tragedy that is being enacted in Afghanistan, about the hundreds of thousands of people who are dead or maimed, including women and children, or about the homelessness, destitution and starvation that has been caused and is experienced in that country.

I am pleased that the Government are supporting the Afghan information office, which is chaired by our former colleague in this House, Lord Cranborne, and which has set up an information office in Peshawar to provide detailed and factual reporting of what is taking place. I am sure that hon. Members of all parties would wish to recognise the courage and dedication with which that effort is carried out and to hope that the vital grant that is provided by the Government — vital but small in comparison to the need and scope of the work—can be increased as a matter of urgency within the next few weeks so that that work can continue.

I know, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend will confirm, that the Government believe, as I do, that public support for the plight of the Afghan refugees and the struggle of the resistance is as vital now as it has ever been —public awareness is essential if there is to be public support, and the Government have a crucial role to play in this.

The Government have given vital support to the voluntary organisations. I believe that we are making available in total this year £5 million for humanitarian assistance to Afghans, including £3·5 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees — that is about one fifth of our total funding for UNHCR—and about £370,000 to Afghan Aid. In addition, £25,000 has been provided for the Afghan information office, which I have already mentioned, and which is an important but exiguous sum in relation to the importance and magnitude of the task.

For nearly eight years of war, Afghanistan has been suffering from an increasing and ever-more tragic refugee problem year by year, and it is now the biggest in the world. More than 5 million Afghans are refugees in Pakistan and Iran. About 2 million people are refugees in their own country. About one Afghan in two no longer lives where he or she did when the Soviets invaded. An

immense effort has been made by the international voluntary agencies to try to cope with the problem. Most Afghans now have little of no means of support. Several private voluntary organisations have been trying to help. Afghan Aid and Health Unlimited are justifiably well known in this country, and similar organisations operate from the United States, Norway, France, Germany, Austria and Pakistan.

Lack of co-operation from the Afghan Government has compelled those organisations to operate their programmes clandestinely across the frontiers. Funding the work has proved difficult. Obviously, official donors usually operate through recognised Governments, but that has proved virtually impossible with Afghanistan. Government-sponsored international bodies, such as the International Red Cross, are bound by international law and cannot work in a country without the approval of the recognised Government. In the case of Afghanistan, the Kabul Government refused to grant access to such organisations.

There was also lack of interest by the West during the first years of the war when people believed that a Soviet victory in Afghanistan was inevitable. Many Governments were unwilling to provide money for aid to Mujahideen-held areas, now amounting to three quarters of the country. Therefore, medical aid to Afghanistan has been limited to the efforts of private voluntary organisations. Medical and paramedical staff of such agencies take great risks associated with clandestine missions inside Afghanistan to take medical aid to a population that is deprived of even the most basic health care facilities. Recently, a substantial United States Government-sponsored programme was started to step up the health service inside Afghanistan, through Afghan paramedical staff.

Before the war, Afghanistan was developing a national health service in rural areas. After the coup in 1978 and the killing or imprisonment of doctors, many doctors fled abroad. There is now a desperate shortage of qualified medical and paramedical staff. The war ended immunisation and eradication campaigns and public health programmes. Then came the horrors of the war itself—the wounded, the maimed, the 2 million displaced persons within Afghanistan, and the problems of the refugees. Before the war, infant mortality was estimated to be about 18 per cent. Recent surveys show that the under-five mortality rate is 30 to 40 per cent. One in three children dies before he or she reaches the age of five.

It is estimated that only 30 to 40 Afghan doctors have remained in Mujahideen-controlled areas—that is, about three quarters of the country. They and those of the Mujahideen who have done first aid courses at Pershawar cannot possibly cope. Private organisations have clandestinely sent more than 500 doctors and nurses, inspired by humanitarian and professional ideals, across the border. They have set up clinics in many parts of the country, and carry supplies on horseback for weeks and months at a time. They work under tremendous pressure. Many clinics, some bearing a red cross on their roofs, have been bombed. The doctors have given more than medical help to the Afghan people. A French doctor, Philippe Augoyard, was captured by the Russians and held in goal for five months. During one of his cross-examinations, he was told:

"We know that you are not supplying weapons to the Mujahideen but you are doing something worse—you are giving hope to the Afghan people."

That is a vital function that the Government have continued to support.

Crucial to the survival of the millions of refugees have been the Government of Pakistan. They bear the burden of approximately half the world's refugees today. They have withstood massive political and violent pressure, aerial attacks, and terrorist bombs that have been planted in bazaars, indiscriminately killing hundreds of men, women and children.

When the war is over, there will be a massive task facing Afghanistan — reconstruction, resettlement of the population, and rebuilding of the economy, administration and education. That will require not only technological expertise but a political structure that has the consent of the population. Where have we got to? The negotiations at Geneva, under the auspices of the United Nations, have, on paper at least, so far shown agreement that, after settlement, Afghanistan should be non-aligned, that there should be no future external interference or intervention, and that refugees should have the right to return home safely. But there is still a deadlock over the timetable for withdrawal. Although Moscow and Kabul seem willing to accept a 12-month withdrawal period, that is still well beyond what is necessary, and a date has not yet been decided. The Russians are not yet prepared to risk allowing the Afghans to decide that their future should be other than Communist, whatever happens in Geneva.

I know that yesterday my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pressed Mr. Gorbachev for an early withdrawal, and I hope that President Reagan is doing likewise. Soviet withdrawal is essential to a solution to the agony of Afghanistan. The Russians must accept that real rather than cosmetic steps are needed, and they must come forward with a firm date for early withdrawal in 1988 so as to secure a transition to an independent and non-aligned Afghanistan. Kabul's present proposals cannot bring about that transition; there is a very long way yet to go.

Dr. Ermacora, the United Nations rapporteur, has put together in the past five years a peace plan that does not include the timing of Soviet withdrawal but provides for the return home of the 5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, as well as for United States and Soviet guarantees of the settlement.

Outside the scope of the United Nations talks, there has been an understanding of how Afghanistan will be ruled in future, which must include discussions with the seven-party alliance of the Afghan resistance. Kabul has offered so far only a constitution that would confirm the Communist party's dominance. The American Secretary of State has said that the announcement of a timetable for withdrawal must precede work on forming a transitional Government, and that if a timetable were agreed the United States would work to help create a transitional Government.

The plan that is reputedly being proposed by Dr. Hammer in his shuttle between Moscow, Kabul, Islamabad, Peking, Rome and Washington calls for phased withdrawal of Russian troops, with an agreed ceasefire policed by United Nations observers, leading to a conference to discuss the formation of a new coalition Government to be headed by former King Mohammed Zahir Shah.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

However, many of the Mujahideen believe that the right to decide the future of Afghanistan belongs only to those who have been fighting against foreign influence, and the right should be exercised only after unconditional withdrawal from Afghanistan by Soviet forces. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, regards the Communists as the only reliable guarantors of security and continues to insist that any withdrawal must leave the People's Democratic party of Afghanistan as the dominant force in the post-withdrawal Government. That attitude seems to the guerillas to be an attempt to achieve by diplomacy what the Soviet army has failed to achieve by force in eight years of savage war, and the gap remains wide; if the Mujahideen are not involved in the negotiation process, it is inevitable that they will not feel bound by any agreement. They have said over and over again that they are prepared to sit down and negotiate with the Soviet Union. That would not be a simple process as the seven parties making up the Mujahideen alliance have not agreed on what sort of Government should appear or who should run it. Nor would their authority necessarily be accepted by Mujahideen commanders within Afghanistan.

Despite the difficulties about the unity of the Mujahideen, it is clearly vital, if there is to be peace, that they should be part of negotiations about the future of Afghanistan. They are the logical spokesmen for the majority of people, and if they are not included in negotiations they are likely to continue to fight, which could be used in turn as an excuse for the Soviets to remain in the country.

The plight of Afghanistan, tragic though it is for those involved, is also a major issue. The Soviet Union's behaviour there is the main contemporary test of its alleged commitment to new thinking in foreign policy. Withdrawal would show that Mr. Gorbachev means business and has the authority to transact it.

It will not be easy for the Russians to accept a representative regime in Kabul by allowing a process of genuine self-determination to take place. But it is essential that they bring their troops home if they are to end the widespread international comdemnation of their actions and if they are to help to bring peace to Afghanistan.

Today, popular acceptance of and respect for the central state authority in Afghanistan have broken down. That has happened twice before in the past 200 years of Afghanistan history. They can be re-established in the minds of the people of that country only if a future political leadership has some perceived roots in the past, is not imposed from outside and is seen to be capable to working in the present conditions. A Marxist regime imposed by force from outside cannot possibly have that effect in the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan.

Whether the Soviets work to heal the devastation and suffering that they have caused is the litmus test of their good faith, not only in Afghanistan but in international affairs generally. The withdrawal of their military forces is essential.

The Government's policy in this crucial area should have four themes: first, to continue to press for an early Soviet withdrawal; secondly, to urge the inclusion of the Mujahideen in the negotiating process; thirdly, to give the Afghans as much humanitarian assistance as we can afford; and, fourthly, to offer strong moral support, based on greater public awareness of the misery that has been suffered by the people of Afghanistan.

1.3 am

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) on choosing this important subject for debate tonight. It is not a matter to which hon. Members are often able to turn their minds, but it is none the less crucially important for that. The turnout on the Government Benches tonight —at this hour—is a tribute to that.

There have been some remarkably optimistic and important developments in East-West relations, exemplified today by the signing of the agreement on intermediate weapons in Washington. Great expressions of good will are being made hourly, in more and more lavish terms. There is no doubt that conditions in the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States and her allies are far better for a rapprochement across the broad spectrum between the Soviets and the free West. However, progress should now be restrained until the Russians right a most wicked and terrible wrong, namely, that in 1979, by a large-scale and cruel military intervention, they raped Afghanistan. By any standards, the invasion was a grotesque and entirely unprovoked act of force against a small, non-aligned and independent country.

It is important that when we discuss these matters we do not forget the background of that monstrous crime. To this day, despite the odd hopeful but largely irrelevant noise from the Soviet Union, innocent Afghans continue to be butchered by a brutal military regime. That regime will stop at nothing, and no crime or act of wickedness has been spared in the prosecution by the Soviets of their war against Afghan civilians.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury said, terms for a settlement were recently offered to the Afghans. In his speech to the United Nations, Lord Glenarthur rightly described those terms as likely to lead not to reconciliation but to capitulation and the Afghans should have no truck with them. However, all is not total gloom, because, following our noble Friend's speech to the United Nations on 10 November, by a vote of 129 to 19 the United Nations adopted a motion urging the immediate settlement of this appalling situation. The nations voting against included such luminaries of democracy as Bulgaria, Cuba and Czechoslovakia. There were just 19 votes against a motion that urged an immediate settlement and the taking of immediate steps to end this appalling situation.

Just over a year ago Mr. Gorbachev described the Afghanistan situation as a "bleeding wound". A year later the bleeding has not been staunched. In fact, things have got worse. I hope that at the dinner being held at the White House tonight the President of the United States will not forget to remind Mr. Gorbachev that if he and his nation wish to be treated as moral equals of the nations of the free West they must withdraw from Afghanistan.

The United Nations report on the situation in Afghanistan said:

"In spite of the political declarations concerning peaceful reconciliation, there has so far been no marked change in the human rights situation in the country: fighting is continuing, particularly in the border areas; many wounded persons are crossing the border and the number of refugees is increasing steadily".

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury rightly said, the Afghan war is not adequately reported in this country. The public feel strongly about it, yet it seems no longer to command the sort of news attention that it once did. The British public should be aware that the situation approaches genocide. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children have been killed and maimed, and 5 million Afghans have been forced to live outside their own country. Until the Soviets withdraw and leave this tragic country to try to rebuild its life and its role in the world, we would do well to resist the blandishments offered by the Soviet Union. We should return again for the moment to the principle so effectively used by Dr. Kissinger of the carrot and the stick.

I warmly endorse the Government's general line on this matter. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury, I welcome their support for the Afghan information office and hope that it will be continued and, if possible, increased. I welcome the robust line taken by my noble Friend at the United Nations. We should not forget that our words of support are cherished thousands of miles away by those heroes who are defying the wicked Russian campaign against them.

I agree with my hon. Friend that the nub of the problem is that the only test of their good faith in future, having gone this far on arms control and shown a desire for glasnost and a broader understanding throughout the world, is for the Soviets to behave in the way that they must behave if they wish to be treated as equals. Only by withdrawing their forces can the Soviet Union show the world that they have truly changed and desire to be treated as equals. I hope the Minister will agree that we must have irrevocable and unbreakable guarantees and commitments from the Soviets about the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan.

1.12 am

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) in raising the subject of Afghanistan on this night of all nights, when the festivities in Washington—which are of importance to the Western and Eastern worlds—may disguise the fact that one of the participants in those celebrations, the Soviet Union, still has about 115,000 troops in Afghanistan.

More serious than the number of troops it has in that poor country are the tactics against civilians which it has ceaselessly and mercilessly carried out during the eight years since the invasion, and I endorse the comments of my hon. Friends the Members for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) and for Crawley (Mr. Soames) describing the horror that has occurred in that country. Too often the West has remained silent, or unaware of those events.

We should pay credit to ITN, and particularly to Mr. Sandy Gall, for bringing to our television screens images that otherwise would have been denied us. We should contrast the television coverage of the Vietnamese war, particularly in America—on my visits to the United States during that war I saw almost nightly the problems which most disturbed the American people—with the way in which the Soviets are able to keep out the press. The result is that we rarely see the images of the awful suffering in Afghanistan. Apart from the efforts of ITN, we are unable to appreciate the horror that can come to a country, when one third of the population is reckoned authoritatively—over 5 million people—to have become refugees and more than 3 million of these have gone into Pakistan.

The horror of that must be taken into account when we consider our relationship with the Soviet Union. We cannot ignore it and pretend that, just because of glasnost and an INF treaty, we can imagine that the Soviet Union has the same criteria and moral values as ourselves.

I hope that in the days that follow the signing of the INF treaty, we do not slip into the comfortable assumption that we are dealing with a country that behaves as we in the West try to behave. That is self-evidently not the case. My desire to put that point on the record is one of the reasons why I wanted to speak this evening.

The difficulty facing the leader of the official Soviet-backed Government in Kabul, Dr. Najibullah, may perhaps provide the first clues why the Soviets are beginning to consider seriously firm action about withdrawal. They should not be considering just withdrawing 5 per cent. of their troops; they should be considering serious negotiations. That at least is something that Western Governments and many non-aligned countries have insisted upon in the resolution passed on 10 November in the United Nations. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister will refer to that in her speech.

I am delighted that the 12 members of the European Community not only endorsed the United Nations resolution, but found the time during the weekend summit in Copenhagen to go further:

> "The Twelve paid tribute to the Afghan people's spirit of independence . . . They believe there should now be . . . new impetus in the peace negotiations and call on the Soviet Union to:
>
> withdraw all its troops by a date in 1988 according to a fixed timetable;
>
> agree to the establishment of a transitional government, whose independence could not be contested, to make preparations for a new constitution and a genuine act of self-determination;
>
> recognise that the participation of the Afghan resistance is essential to a comprehensive political settlement."

The last of those terms is vital. We cannot agree to a settlement in Afghanistan which leaves a quasi-Communist, Soviet-friendly Government in Kabul. The battle has been too vicious. We must insist upon some solution that guarantees independence for the country and self-determination

The difficulty has been that the seven or so groups of the Mujahideen have not always been able to be concerted in their efforts—other than their military efforts—partly as a result of geography and partly for local reasons. Perhaps my right hon. Friend the Minister will take it upon the Government and herself to take a lead in that matter. We might be able to encourage a formation of the Afghan resistance fighters perhaps around ex-King Zahir Shah. I understand that he now lives in Rome and is at least contactable. One of the Afghan rebel leaders visited this country recently and said that he believed that there was increasing support for the ex-king as a focal point to bring together otherwise diverse groups. That is essential if we are to give the help to that country which is so vital.

Western aid must continue. The United States is a major provider of such aid, and that aid enables Stinger missiles to be used by the Afghan resistance to such devastating effect. We have heard from ITN that the Soviet tactic for aircraft and helicopters was to fly low and

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

bomb not military targets but villages, and their accuracy was devastating. At least the Stinger enables the Afghans to force those helicopters and aircraft to heights where their accuracy is not as devastating, and so gives innocent civilians a chance of survival. Once a village has been bombed, whether or not accurately, most villagers become refugees. The dirty work of the Soviet Army is done in a different way, as those pitiful people cross the borders into Pakistan, which is already struggling to cope with the refugees there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury has made most of the vital points, so my remarks are deliberately brief. My purpose is to underline the human tragedy in Afghanistan and the facts that the nation with which the Americans are negotiating in a "realpolitik" sense about an INF treaty is still practising atrocities that we do not consider acceptable for a civilised nation, and that we must judge the Soviet Union accordingly.

I urge the Government to continue their valiant efforts to bring peace to Afghanistan by ensuring that in every council on which we are represented we make a clear case that Western Governments find the continued Soviet presence in Afghanistan utterly unacceptable. That is why the statement in Copenhagen is so valuable and the overwhelming vote in the United Nations on 10 November so vital. I ask my right hon. Friend whether she can give us comfort by telling us whether any more can be done by individual Governments, particularly to encourage the Afghans to group around the ex-king, so that a sensible and credible alternative can be provided to permit self-determination in that so afflicted country.

1.22 am

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I agree with the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) that the timing of the debate has a happy relevance because of the superpower summit now taking place in Washington. We know that, after addressing themselves to the INF treaty, the two leaders will look at some major regional problems, and Afghanistan is the prime problem to be addressed.

As the hon. Member for Esher said, the declaration of the European Council at Copenhagen last Saturday is relevant. There is nothing in the declaration to which we take exception. Indeed, we endorse the key elements of it. The aim is to end the tragic human suffering in Afghanistan. We know that approximately 1 million people have died in that tragic and torn country. We condemn the continued violation of human rights, which have been well documented by Amnesty International over the years and which were set out graphically by the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) in his realistic and well-composed speech. The refugees, numbering approximately 5 million—the largest single exodus from any country — should be allowed to return to their country from Pakistan and Iran. The ultimate aim is to make Afghanistan a genuine, independent and non-aligned country.

We also accept the call of the Copenhagen summit for a new impetus in the peace negotiations. That impetus is set out in three specific proposals of the Copenhagen summit. The first is that the Soviet Union should withdraw all its troops by a date in 1988 in accordance with a fixed timetable, and I agree with that because we yield to no one in our condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 and its continued occupation of that country.

The summit then called for the establishment of a transitional Government whose independence could not be contested, and in our judgment it is only by the formation of such a transitional Government that the way through to the objective of a non-aligned and sovereign Afghanistan can be effected. The summit also said that the participation of the Afghan resistance was essential to a comprehensive, political settlement.

The faults of the rebels have been detailed by other hon. Members — the element of corruption, the disunity among the rebels and the presence of Islamic fundamentalism in elements of the coalition in Peshawar. All that does not fit in well with the rather naive idealistic picture of the rebels sometimes painted by Conservative Members. Nevertheless, with all their faults, the rebels represent the necessary element to build the future of that tragically torn country.

The Twelve ended their declaration by saying that they remained

"ready to contribute constructively towards the achievement of an acceptable settlement."

It is difficult to think of something specific that the Twelve can do to assist the Afghan people in that aim, but we can assist in a humanitarian manner in respect of the refugees in Pakistan. We endorse the efforts that the Government have made in that respect. There may be the possibility of helping to lean on the correct people to see whether an acceptable form of transitional Government can be achieved. However, that is probably more likely to result from the super-power summit than from anything that the Twelve can do.

As a result of our experiences in the 19th century we could have advised the Soviets on the danger of invading Afghanistan and becoming enmeshed in what is now their ninth year of occupation. The Afghan people are hardy, the terrain is hardy and the Afghan people will never lose. Even if they face reverses, their morale is now high because the Soviets have lost their air supremacy as a result of the supply of both Blowpipe and Stinger missiles to the rebels. We talk about glasnost, and everyone knows that the British Government must have connived at the transfer of Blowpipe missiles from Shorts in Belfast to the Central Intelligence Agency, and, thereafter to the Afghan rebels. In the spirit of glasnost, why will the Government not tell the British public what they are doing?

The Soviets now realise that they cannot win, and they dare not lose in a dramatic fashion. They perceive that they made a historic error in December 1979. A stalemate has been reached, but the lines of communication from the Soviet Union to Afghanistan are much easier than was the case when the United States was waging its war in Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Soviets have had to pay, and properly so, a major price over the years: an economic price, in the drain on their resources; a human price, with — it is said — between 30,000 and 40,000 casualties in the war; and, certainly, a price in terms of international good will. The vote in the General Assembly on 10 November has already been mentioned: a record majority of 104 against the Soviet position, which included even Iran. The Soviets have been working extremely hard on Iran in the context of the Gulf war over the past months, yet Iran felt the need to maintain its Islamic solidarity with the people of

Afghanistan. Let me say in passing that it is sad to see the names of some of those countries, particularly those that abstained in the vote at the General Assembly. Nevertheless, it is heartening to learn of such a record vote of protest against the Soviet position.

Mr. Gorbachev spoke in 1986 of the "bleeding wound." He himself inherited that commitment, and he finds himself in the difficult position of getting off the hook. As the United States learnt in Vietnam and perhaps has yet to learn in Nicaragua, local morale is more important than the most sophisticated military hardware. Mr. Gorbachev has now probably recognised that the stratagems that he has adopted over the past months in terms of damage limitation are clearly not working.

It seems pretty clear that the Soviets are not prepared to increase their commitment of military personnel and resources within Afghanistan. They have used a series of stratagems; for example, the replacement last year of President Babrak Karmal by Mr. Najib, who was thought to be a more acceptable individual; a so-called ceasefire; a national reconciliation; and the calling of a grand assembly of tribal leaders. All those strategems were designed, if possible, to lead the conflict along lines acceptable to the Soviet Union, but all of them appear to have failed. Indeed, it is said that Mr. Najib's position may well now be in danger.

Two weeks ago the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Vorontsov, met the United States State Department official, Mr. Armacost, and—it is said—indicated that during the current negotiations in Washington the Soviets would make a major statement about the timetable of troop withdrawals. We await with interest what will emerge from Washington. As I understand it, the position in September of this year was that the Afghans had offered a 16-month withdrawal period, while the Pakistani side announced that its maximum would be eight months. The eight-month difference would not seem to be unbridgeable if there were sufficient guarantees about what would happen during the interim period. Clearly, there has recently been a substantial degree of movement, and we hope that that can be taken further at the superpowers summit.

We ask ourselves whether the aim is clear, which is to arrive ultimately at an independent, non-aligned Afghanistan, which can chart its own future. What should now be our reaction? Do we wish to crow over the Soviets' discomfiture and exult in their embarrassment? Clearly, there are elements on the Right wing in the United States who rather use the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan for those purposes. Do we seek to score points, or do we seek as far as possible to ease the way for the Soviets to withdraw, leading to the aim that I have mentioned of national sovereignty of the Afghan people?

We recognise the Soviet mistake, that tragic blunder, of invasion, and the human rights violations, which are well documented. But surely, ultimately, the most constructive thing that the West can do is to seek to help the Soviet Union out of the hole that it chose to dig for itself. The Soviet Union is also a proud country. There is no question of the Soviets scuttling from Kabul in the way that the Americans scuttled out of Vietnam. There must be a transitional Government, though not, I stress, a Government such as the Soviets are now seeking to have; one which is effectively under the control of their own nominees and which will be simply a Soviet puppet, with perhaps elements brought in from the rebel groupings.

In spite of all the hesitations that one has about the rebel groups—and there are said to be some differences between those rebels who are fighting within the country itself and the coalition in Peshawar, which is the favoured element of the West — there are the makings of an independent, non-aligned Islamic country. Perhaps here, as has been the case elsewhere, the real political problem is that of how to effect the transition. Spain had a king, and he played a major democratic role in easing that country from the Franco regime to the happy democracy that it now enjoys.

I note what has been said, for example, by the hon. Member for Esher, that perhaps, on lines not unlike those in Spain, a suitable figure for this transition would be the king, Zahir Shah, who resides in Rome.

I understand that he has said in terms that he would not co-operate unless he had the agreement of the rebels. I suspect that I met the same rebel leader as did the hon. Member for Esher. He indicated that although he represents one of the more moderate elements in the coalition, he would be in favour of such a solution. For the classicists among us, like the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), one might devise a formula like a rex et machina to resolve the tragedy in Afghanistan.

I believe that the British Government can play a role in encouraging and helping. We should show that we have a concern for Afghanistan. I make the point in passing, that if we showed that same concern for human rights, which is very proper in Afghanistan, elsewhere in the world, in areas such as South Africa and Central America, our credibility and the force of our arguments would be immeasurably improved. That said, we should shun cold war rhetoric and seek constructively to find a way forward, as set out in the declaration of the European Council, and say that a country such as Afghanistan, though geographically in the backyard of a super power, can nevertheless achieve national sovereignty and chart its own chosen course in the world.

1.38 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am most grateful, Mr. Speaker, to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) for instigating this debate and to all my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) for their participation.

There is no doubt that the debate is timely. The eighth anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is due within days. Last month a record number of countries—123 — again made it clear to the Soviet Union that Soviet troops should be withdrawn immediately and that the Afghans should be allowed their right to genuine self-determination.

As a number of hon. Members have said, three days ago in Copenhagen the European Council of the Heads of Government of the Twelve called on the Soviet Union to withdraw all its troops by a date in 1988, according to a fixed timetable. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reinforced that message again with Mr. Gorbachev when she met him at Brize Norton.

Yet the position on the ground in Afghanistan remains the same. It is important that the international community, and the British people, as represented in the House, should pay tribute to the incredible fortitude of the Afghan people through all these long years—the same Afghan people who are the subject of aggressive military

[Mrs. Lynda Chalker]

campaigns. The United Nations special rapporteur has documented over 14,000 civilian deaths in the past year alone, and 49,000 in the previous two years. Some 5 million Afghans have fled their country, with some 3 million going to Pakistan. The exodus continues at 4,000 to 5,000 a month.

I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) in praising Sandy Gall for bringing to public attention what has been happening in Afghanistan. He and other journalists have done a valuable job.

However, it is not only what has happened in Afghanistan, it is what is continuing to happen and the costs that it is imposing on the people of Pakistan. A wave of terrorist bombing in recent months on Pakistan territory has caused hundreds of innocent deaths. We should pay tribute to the patience that has been shown by the Pakistan Government in the face of those pressures, and to the principled and moderate stance that it has taken in the negotiations thus far.

Above all, as hon. Members have said, this debate is timely because Mr. Gorbachev visited Britain yesterday and is engaged in discussions with the United States President today. The future of Afghanistan, sadly, lies in Soviet hands. It is for the new Soviet leadership to show by its actions on Afghanistan whether new thinking has permeated Soviet foreign relations.

We must recognise that there seem to have been changes in Soviet attitudes on Afghanistan in the past two years. At Soviet behest, the Kabul regime now talks of "national reconciliation" and of welcoming the resistance back. It also talks of paying due account to Afghan traditions and Islam. The Russians talk of withdrawing from Afghanistan and have dropped broad hints that a gesture on troop withdrawal might be forthcoming.

I have to ask, how far do the deeds match up with those welcome words? Do those welcome words have a foundation? The House must judge for itself. The so-called policy of national reconciliation has been on the Kabul regime's terms. It is known by the Afghan people for what it is. As my noble Friend the Minister of State said, this so-called national reconciliation is merely an invitation to capitulate.

I must tell the hon. Member for Swansea, East that I do not believe that the coming of Najib as president, under a new constitution rubber-stamped by a new assembly, shows the true face of so-called national reconciliation, particularly when one realises that he is a former secret policeman of KHAD.

It may be that outsiders are welcome in Kabul, but only if they are prepared to accept the continuing dominance of Moscow's client, the PDPA, which is the Afghan Communist party. Its leader recently made it clear that the PDPA intended to maintain the dominant position in the state. He has been appointed president under a new constitution, which gives the president sweeping executive powers.

Thus, one can sum up by saying that the efforts of Moscow and Kabul over the past year seem merely to have been designed to try to win on the political front what they have failed to win militarily. I do not believe that anyone has or should be deceived by that. The Russians have not yet withdrawn their troops. Instead, in this year's campaigns they seem to have been playing an even more active part in offensive operations. I understand that morale among the regime troops remains, understandably, at rock bottom. If they were not fighting, perhaps it would be better.

We had hoped for progress at the United Nations talks but there has been only prevarication on the part of Moscow and Kabul. As the months go by in the delay between sessions, so the next so-called concession made by Kabul is more than cancelled out. Kabul's offer at the last session in September of a timetable of 16 months, to which the hon. Member for Swansea, East referred, was so clearly not serious that it remains unclear when a new session can be expected to convene.

We support the unrelenting efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General's personal representative to bring about a successful conclusion to the talks. What is needed is a decision in Moscow that the time is now right for settlement. The Afghan people deserve no further delay.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury carefully and thoughtfully introduced the debate. I should say to him that the Government fully support the excellent work done by the Afghan information office in its efforts to provide factual reports of the situation on the ground and to build up public support in this country for the Afghan refugees and resistance. I have taken careful note of his comments and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) with regard to the need for the Government's financial support to be increased. Certainly that will be considered carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury also talked about aid for Afghanistan. He referred to the immense effort made by international agencies and by private and voluntary organisations to help the Afghans who have become victims of the war. I entirely agree. The Government pay tribute to the excellent work done year after year by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross in their efforts to help the refugees and the war wounded. However, it is the private voluntary organisations such as Afghanaid and Health Unlimited that perhaps deserve most praise. They are working to help Afghans inside the country who have been deprived of services of all sorts for eight years.

Medical facilities are deplorable in many areas and it is only the lucky ones who are adequately treated or manage to reach the border. Food is short in some areas as a result of the deliberate destruction over the years of irrigation canals and the economic infrastructure. We express our admiration for all those who work in those organisations, often at great personal risk, in order to help the Afghan people.

The evidence of the deep concern felt by voluntary agencies in this country is provided in the recent report published by the British Refugee Council, in conjunction with 10 other voluntary agencies, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, Ockenden Venture, Salvation Army and the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development. That report gives a clear account of the problems facing the largest refugee population in the world, the large numbers of displaced persons inside the country and what needs to be done. I hope that that report will be widely read and digested as a valuable source of information about the real situation and the need for still greater efforts to help the Afghan people.

The Government attach considerable importance to the successful and satisfactory resolution of the Afghanistan problem. The Government will continue to provide substantial aid to the refugees and victims of the war. We will continue to do our best to inform international opinion about the real situation in that country. Information has become increasingly hard to come by because journalists face the threat of capture or worse as the Russians try to hide the true facts from the world. We admire the courage of the Afghan resistance and we welcome the way it has grown in political co-ordination. As the House may know my noble Friend the Minister of State met two leaders of the resistance alliance in London last week. It is clear to everyone involved in the debate and, I hope, to everyone outside the House that the resistance both inside and outside Afghanistan has to be involved in any settlement that takes place. That settlement will have to be on the terms of the people of Afghanistan and not imposed from outside.

It is high time that the suffering was brought to an end. We would much prefer to devote our resources to help the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Therefore, a new and urgent impetus is needed in the search for peace.

I understand that the Russians have certain concerns. They have said of late that they do not want bloodshed in Afghanistan after their withdrawal. They say that they have security interests on their border. They no doubt want the next Government in Afghanistan to be friendly to them.

It is high time that the Soviet Union ceased playing for time. The fact is that the United Nations settlement meets their concern that there should be no "non-interference". The best way in which to avoid bloodshed is to bring about a settlement which allows the refugees to return, involves the resistance and allows the Afghans themselves to sort out their own future. As in any situation where war has prevailed for many years, the transition to peace will not be easy, but there are ways forward if only the Soviet Union will bring itself to take the necessary decisions. Those decisions are not easy, but they must be taken. There is no other way forward.

The European Council at the weekend drew attention to the need for a transitional Government whose independence could not be contested to take charge during that difficult period. Such a credible transitional Government could put in hand the necessary preparations for independence, such as for a new constitution and for a genuine test of self-determination. This surely is the best way forward to build confidence in the run-up to the restoration of independence.

There has also been talk of Afghanistan achieving a neutral status. This might be another confidence-building development to help the new Afghanistan on its way. Certainly there can be no solution which adds up to the Russians imposing a Government of their choice dominated by their stooges, on the Afghan people against their will.

Above all, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley said, and as the European Council has made clear, the Soviet Union should agree to withdraw its troops as soon as possible in 1988. It should send the Kabul regime back to the conference table at Geneva as soon as possible with instructions to this effect. That would raise confidence considerably among the refugees and the resistance. The Russians should accompany this, as the European Council has made clear, with an acknowledgement that they will allow the Afghans to form an independent Government which is freely chosen. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Swansea, East endorse what the European Council said at the weekend.

This cannot be a popular war for the Soviet Union. Almost the entire international community condemns it. Soviet men are being killed and wounded. For what? This year has been another year of military stalemate, a year of still further flows of refugees to Pakistan, and a year of grave and massive violations of human rights, as testified by an overwhelming majority of countries during deliberations on human rights at the General Assembly. It has been a year of efforts by the Kabul regime to broaden its base, without success.

Now is the time for a fresh start. The Government will take every opportunity in every forum to bring the illegal occupation of Afghanistan to an end. We shall try to contribute constructively to a settlement. A political settlement is available if only the Soviet Union can have the foresight to take it. We call on Mr. Gorbachev to do just that. We need an irrevocable guarantee from the Soviet Union.

Perhaps I may end by quoting what a Soviet father wrote to the General Secretary after losing his son in this pointless war:

> "Mikhail Sergeevich, I am not a politician nor a diplomat but only a simple Soviet citizen and it is, of course, difficult for me to make out the details of international affairs. But I would like to ask you, for the sake of what ideals and interests are the young lives of our sons being laid down in Afghanistan, how can this be combined with the perestroika which is taking place in our country? Please explain to me. I am deeply convinced of your power to stop this unnecessary sacrifice and tribute to the thoughtless undertakings of your predecessors. I implore you to stop this appalling blood-letting in Afghanistan in the same way as you have done so much that is useful in the two years of your leadership . . . Peace, Mikhail Sergeevich, is needed by both large and small countries".

I think that all those here in the House would agree heartily with that sentiment. We want to see an end to the ravage of Afghanistan and we want to see a beginning to the freedom of her people.

Rating Reform (Scotland)

1.55 am

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Let us start with a little-known fact. We meet here today on the first anniversary of the Second Reading of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987. This is a fact of which few of us are aware and I am glad to enlighten the House with that piece of information.

Once legislation is put on the statute book, even after being as bitterly contested as the poll tax legislation, people usually settle down and accept it and it becomes part of the landscape. That is not happening in this case. As more and more people realise the significance of that Act, opposition to it mounts and mounts. It is now reaching much higher levels in Scotland and will go on to take over England and Wales as well.

For example, the Saturday before last, along with other members of the Labour party in Clydebank, I conducted the collection of a petition. I was amazed — it is a common experience of my hon. Friends as well—at the passion with which people were coming up to sign it. We found that we had collected 2,500 signatures within four hours with no pressure or harassment. Word got round that here was the opportunity to protest against the poll tax legislation. What is strange to me is how those 2,500 signatures and the thousands of signatures collected by my hon. Friends across Scotland count for nothing compared with what was alleged to be a tidal wave of revolt against revaluation.

Day by day, as the implications of this complex legislation emerge, its idiocies are becoming clear. In Scotland, with 3·9 million names on the poll tax register, there will be 800,000 changes to the register each year. On average in Scotland, between 12·5 per cent. and 15 per cent. of the people move within one year. In areas such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), between 20 per cent. and 30 per cent. of the population change addresses within a year.

The measured tones of a document from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy show how bitterly resisted the poll tax roll will be. CIPFA stated, that canvassers will be required to be well trained, not only in community charge law, but also in interview techniques. They may well face resentment and, conceivably, hostility, and will need to be trained to cope with that.

We know that this legislation will be unpopular because most of the world has never had poll tax legislation, but where it has existed—for example, in Cape Breton—the poll tax has just been discontinued because it has been realised and accepted that only 30 per cent. of the theoretical take was collected by the tax authorities.

Once again, I give the Minister the opportunity to tell us what a prudent authority would allow for non-collection. The measured people of CIPFA talk in terms of only an 80 per cent. collection of the poll tax. As time goes by, that may well come to be seen as an optimistic figure. For the Government to introduce a piece of legislation in which they have made no calculation about what percentage will be collectable is the hallmark of irresponsibility.

Other idiocies are emerging. As the theme of the debate is the implementation of the poll tax, I should welcome guidance from the Minister as to his interpretation. I hope that we shall receive a reply on each of these matters.

I refer now to the exemption for the profoundly mentally handicapped. We welcome that concession, but would also welcome the Minister's interpretation of it. The CIPFA document contains a contradiction. It states that those who attend social work adult training centres need not necessarily be exempt from the poll tax because some of them, in theory, could go out to work. However, the document later states that it would be for the individual or his representative to prove severe mental handicap. It is envisaged that a simple declaration by a general practitioner will normally suffice.

The mind boggles at what may happen in GPs' surgeries. Knowing what happens now in terms of people who want to advance themselves on housing lists by trying to prove that their health is currently damaged by, for example, their nerves, we may have the unseemly spectacle, if the CIPFA advice is to be taken, of doctors being dragged in for the sad purpose of certifying, by a declaration, that someone is sufficiently mentally handicapped that they cannot understand the implications of the vote or the poll tax.

As this complex legislation reveals itself, we are also realising that the Government have thrust an enormous extra cost burden on local government. Strangely, the Government have little interest in improving the basic quality of the services that are offered by local government, but are quite happy to introduce a system of tax collection that involves enormous numbers of extra staff. If, for example, the district councils in my region of Strathclyde co-operated in acting as agents for the poll tax, they would need to take on only an extra 500 staff. However, if the districts decided that they would not co-operate, as is within their rights, with the collection of the poll tax and say that the levying authority is the region and that the region can get on with it, the regional council would have to take on an extra 1,000 staff to implement the poll tax. How can we afford this but not the many good services that would be of value?

If the Minister and the Government think that Opposition Members exaggerate the difficulties of the poll tax—I dare say they do—why have we waited so long for the Scottish Office to put out the necessary regulations and guidelines so that local authorities can get on with the job? Again, the CIPFA document stated that it was possible to bring legislation into operation on time, given some prerequisites, pre-eminent among which was the fact that the Government play their part in issuing the necessary guidelines. Where are the details of the rebate scheme? When will they emerge? I suspect that they are still a long way from unfolding.

The sheer complexities of going from a benefit system that is generally family-based, through the Department of Health and Social Security, to a benefit or rebate system under the poll tax, that is individually based, must cause the Minister more sleepless nights than Adjournment debates.

It is clear that the measure was sold in terms of accountability. That is at the heart of the Government's problems. It was said to make local authorities more accountable than they were under the previous system. A survey was published today in the *Glasgow Herald* and in *The Scotsman* showing that, if the poll tax had been introduced, 54 out of the 56 Scottish councils would have had an increase double that which would occur under the

rating system. Under the proposed poll tax system, the Government will control 80 per cent. of local authority expenditure.

It is eminently clear to everybody that the Government's actions are four times more important than those of local authorities in terms of setting local authorities' costs. The document that was produced today showed that the survey was conducted on the assumption that the Goverment will allow for 3 per cent. inflation. That is a common trick of the Government. They postulate that inflation will be 1 per cent., or 2 per cent. less than even they know it will be. That is an extra turn of the screw for local government. The effect is that, for every 1 per cent. that the Government under-fund for inflation, the poll tax will go up by 4 per cent. We have the hideous situation in which, once again, the Goverment will seek to blame local government for their actions.

The CIPFA report shows that, if the community charge had taken place in England and Wales for 1987-88, there is not one authority in England in which the change in spending would have equalled the change in the community charge. Hon. Members should think about that matter. Many local authorities in England may meet Government guidelines and behave in the way the Government want and regard as accountable, but not one is getting what the Government said they would get under the community charge — that is, an increase in the community charge that matches their actions.

I want to say a little more about the problem of under-payment. The Government are not facing their responsibilities in this respect. The CIPFA report says that about 80 per cent. payment of poll tax is expected. The consequence is that the rest of the population has to pay to make up for those who do not pay, with all the resentment that that will cause.

Local authorities face a major problem now with widespread under-payment of rates. I shall quote some Strathclyde figures for 1985-86. At the final notice stage, 131,000 people were behind with their rates, owing £80 million. At the summary warrant stage, there were 49,000 ratepayers owing £35·5 million. At the sheriff officer stage, there were 24,000 ratepayers owing £16·74 million. Many of those debtors will remain because they are business ratepayers, particularly the bigger debtors among them. The local authorities will have to take on a massive extra load of work and greater responsibility and they will be obliged to use the sheriff officers and the warrant sales system to pursue minute amounts of debt.

In Scotland, with about 400,000 people receiving supplementary benefit, those paying 20 per cent. of demands might have a bill for £50. Is it seriously suggested that local authorities should pursue debts of that size with all the associated administrative costs? If local authorities do not collect those debts, any irate poll tax payer might take them to court for not diligently pursuing debts. If authorities do not collect those debts, however, a plague of non-payment will spread the length and breadth of Scotland, as community charge demands are treated like parking tickets. That problem has to be faced.

My penultimate question for the Minister is why the idea of the uniform business rate in Scotland has collapsed. I notice that in the White Paper "Paying for Local Government" published by the Department of the Environment—it would be illegal if it was published by local authorities as it breaks the law applying to them—poll tax is being sold to the English public in terms that the non-domestic rate paid by businesses and institutions will be set by the Government at the same level across England. I seem to remember the same sort of statement in Green Papers published by the Scottish Office. The uniform business rate was a central plank in the scheme to free business from the burden of wicked local government constantly putting up the rates, and was designed to prevent the penalising of business for being in a high rates area. It was to set business free so that it could thrive in a high-rates area. What has happened to all that? Where has that idea gone? Why did the Scottish Office forget about it? Is it perhaps because it worked out what that would mean? According to figures worked out by the surveyors James Barr, in 1985-86 Strathclyde business would have benefited by £59 million. That extra money would have liberated them to create jobs, in the language of the Government.

On the other hand, Dumfries and Galloway, which may be closer to the Minister's heart, would have suffered to the tune of £5 million if the uniform business rate had been introduced. I wonder why the uniform business rate has collapsed; it was one of the two or three major justifications for the legislation. When will it be introduced in Scotland, as it apparently is still intended to be in England and Wales?

I hope that the Scottish Office will belatedly realise that the Labour party is being given a massive asset in Scotland, as it was in the general election, and, increasingly, as it is in England and Wales. At least for the sake of your self-preservation, I say to the Minister: "Realise the error of your ways".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind hon. Members that the House should be addressed through the Chair.

2.16 am

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) put well the case against a community charge or poll tax.

I want to make two points, but before I do so I want to express the concern felt by most local authorities about the sheer cost that they are incurring this year in trying to implement the legislation. In Lothian region alone, more than £1 million has had to be spent on buying capital equipment and on other staff costs. I hope that the Minister will urge his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to think again about the fact that that additional cost is attracting penalty—in Lothian's case —at the rate of £1·30 for every pound spent. It seems unfair that the region should be penalised for something that it had no wish to impose in the first place. I understand that the Secretary of State has turned his face against abolishing these penalties. Nevertheless, I urge the Government to think again about them.

The difficulties of the poll tax can be illustrated in a number of ways, but in Edinburgh and Glasgow one specific class of property or residence that will suffer greatly under the poll tax legislation is that lived in by those who are unfortunate enough to live in houses in multiple occupation. Such houses are basically bed-and-breakfast establishments that have grown up as a result of the Government's social security regulations, which are generous to landlords. Large numbers of people congregate in those houses and pay rent to people who

[Mr. Alistair Darling]

often live on the fringes of society, perhaps having drifted out of some undesirable activities. Such people are a cause of concern in both cities and have come to public attention because of some of the goings on in their establishments.

In Edinburgh, about £9 million of public money is paid to these landlords every year by way of rent. No one knows how many people live in their houses. One of the problems that the responsible officer in the local authority will meet is that of finding out how many people live in them. Until he knows that, he will not know how much poll tax should be paid. He has a choice: he can go along and knock on the front door, greet the first tenant he meets and ask him how many people live there. In my experience, and that of the district and regional councils, even the people living in such establishments sometimes have no idea of how many people live there. Alternatively, the region might take the view that in such a property the collective community charge ought to be levied. The difficulty here is that in order to fix the collective community charge, one still has to know how many people are living in the property.

Experience has shown that landlords are reluctant to say how many people are living in a property, because that might expose them to difficulties regarding fire and health regulations. It might also provide a useful indicator to the Inland Revenue about how much tax a landlord should be paying. Questions might be asked by the DHSS about exactly how much money is being paid out in respect of a property.

These properties are characteristed by the fact that the owners are very secretive. That is one of the problems that the collecting authority will encounter when it tries to excise the community charge from the residents living there. However, there is more to it than that. It applies not only to houses in multiple occupation, but to all rented property. As soon as the community charge is introduced there should be some provision to enable landlords to reduce the rent by the amount paid in rates. There is no guarantee that that will happen. Earlier in the Session I asked a question about this and was assured by the Minister that rents would be reduced. I wrote to him asking how he could be so sure, and I am still waiting for an answer. Perhaps when the Minister replies to this short debate he will be able to tell me how he can force landlords to reduce the rent by the amount payable in respect of rates. There is no guarantee that that will happen, and many tenants have no idea how much of their rent is allocated to rates.

There is also the problem of rebates. One of the problems about houses in multiple occupation is that the residents tend not to live in them for very long — perhaps for a few weeks or months at most. Rebates can take a long time to be processed by the district councils. What will happen when they are processed? How can we be sure that they will go back to the tenant? That problem will arise in future, because when a tenant is living in such an establishment he will be liable for his pro rata share of the community poll tax. If that tenant moves away, how can we be sure that the rebate will be paid to the tenant by the landlord and that the landlord will not try to take from the tenant a full year's community charge as opposed to the amount incurred for the short period during which the tenant will remain in the premises?

I do not think that the Government have addressed problems of that sort, and sometimes I wonder whether they have even concerned themselves about houses in multiple occupation. Certainly, when requests have been made about other aspects of houses in multiple occupation, the Government have been found sadly wanting. There is a small number of people involved and a comparatively small number of establishments. However, they illustrate the problems that will face regional councils within the next 18 months. They will have to employ large staffs simply to keep account of the number of people living in these premises and of the movement of people.

In my constituency there is a turnover of 20 per cent. in residents during each year. That is because the constituency is predominantly one of small houses, and people live in them for a couple of years and then move to bigger houses when they decide to start families. Elderly people die and their places are taken by new residents. It will be a mammoth task to keep account of who is living in the properties and, therefore, who should be expected to pay the community charge.

The sordid business of debt collection is likely to become a growth industry as many people struggle to meet their obligations to pay the poll tax—especially at the present time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie said, one of the problems faced by councils is that they are waiting for over 90 regulations, none of which has been laid in its final form. That presents formidable difficulties for assessors all over Scotland. One of the regulations that I would like to see soon is the one that will deal exactly with the system of rebate that we can expect to operate as soon as the Act is in force.

As a result of the social security changes tabled by the Secretary of State for Social Services recently, in the Lothian region alone about 35,000 people will lose out. Under the community charge legislation everybody must pay 20 per cent. It appears that many people, even those claiming what will then be the maximum rebate, will have to pay more than that.

I fear that neither the Government nor, sadly, a large number of people in Scotland realise that whereas many people receive 100 per cent. rebate in respect of rates, they will now have to pay something. I spoke to a man who thought his wife would not have to pay because she did not work. In fact, everybody will have to pay something, and for that reason the rebate scheme must be introduced quickly. The Government must give this matter urgent attention because it is causing great anxiety to those who will receive the rebates and those who will be expected to operate them.

The regulations are important because, to compile the register for the poll tax, the assessors will have to send forth a large number of canvassers to knock on every door throughout Scotland to find out who lives there. This should act as a warning to hon. Members who represent constituencies in England and Wales, for the Government have consistently said that this legislation will not infringe civil liberties or impinge on people's privacy.

The canvassers, at any rate as the regulations in draft form indicate, will be required to find the names of everybody—not just those who are 18 and over or even 16 and over — living in the house. I understand that, despite Government assertions to the contrary, assessors are using the electoral register as the basis of their register for the poll tax. That is understandable. It is the only register containing the names of people living in houses throughout the country. In other words, they are using the

register that gives people the right to vote to compile a register that will require them to pay for that very privilege.

There is already evidence that the number of people registering is diminishing this year. It is perhaps too early to tell—we have only the draft register—but the figures represent a disturbing trend. Nor should Conservative Members assume that those coming off are Labour voters. My information is that this reduction is occurring across the board, meaning that there is no party political advantage to be gained from what is happening.

People will take away from themselves the right to vote because they will not be able, or will be unwilling, to pay. That could have serious repercussions. If people are pushed away from the register, they will be excluded from the democratic process, and that is bound to have worrying consequences in the future.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): Is my hon. Friend aware that figures published in Fife yesterday suggest that whereas the registrar was looking forward to an increase of nearly 1,000 on the new draft register, there has been a reduction of 2,260 on the electoral register? This reinforces his argument that the poll tax is linked in the public perception with the electoral register. That could do untold damage and lessen the link between the accountability factor and the payment of the poll tax.

Mr. Darling: I was aware that the Fife register showed a reduction. I believe Fife is typical of other Scottish regions. Everyone assumed that the assessors were bound to use the electoral register as the basis for the poll tax register. It was common sense that they would, and only a few Ministers persisted in saying that that would not happen.

I want to stress another point that is a cause for concern. Ever since the poll tax was mooted, there has been a dispute between local authorities and the Government over exactly how much the poll tax would be in each region in Scotland. That same argument is now raging in England and Wales. The Government have upped their figures on two or three occasions since the first figures were published. In Lothian region the Government figure is £260 and the regional council estimates, according to current expenditure and grant levels, that the poll tax will be £350 per head.

The Government do not dispute the figures given by the regional councils which, after all, will have to set the poll tax. However, they assume that local authority expenditure will be reduced. That is a dangerous assumption, not because the local authorities have anything against reducing public expenditure and do not believe in spending public money for the sake of it, but because the need within regions and districts will not go away. If the Government believe that it would somehow be acceptable to reduce the poll tax at the expense of reducing services in schools or reducing funds for shoring up bus services, they are sadly mistaken. Those problems will not go away, and they cannot simply be pushed under the carpet.

As has been said before, and doubtless will be said again, I believe that while there has been a great deal of unhappiness in Scotland and throughout the United Kingdom about the advent of the poll tax, unlike any other piece of legislation that I can remember, the anger is mounting. It is not diminishing. It will not go away.

This legislation offends against a sense of public decency and fairness. That is one reason why the Government suffered such a rebuff at the polls in Scotland in June. Although I do not care whether the Government are rebuffed in England and Wales, people living there have good reason to be fearful about the legislation. For once, the Scottish legislation points to the fearful consequences of legislation that was born of panic and prejudice. It has brought no good to anyone in Scotland.

2.32 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I want to begin by commending the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) not just on the way in which he introduced the debate, but on having the perspicacity to choose the subject. This is an appropriate time in the political calender, if not the time of day, to discuss this very important subject. I also congratulate him on concentrating on the implications and implementation of the poll tax plans. It is not too late to mount a full-scale and continuing attack on the Government's poll tax plans. The House is well served by this debate.

I am surprised, if not astonished, that we did not hear more complaints from English Conservative Members during the introduction of the Scottish proposals. The conclusion that I arrived at was that the Conservatives in Scotland were subject to an unthinking deference to the personal whim of the Prime Minister, who, we are all aware, insisted that domestic rates should be abolished, irrespective of the consequences, simply to honour a pledge that she made in 1974. I had high hopes that when the matter was brought south of the border into the English domain, English Conservatives would have more stomach for the fight and put up more stout objections to the obvious flaws in the English Bill. However, that looks as though it will not happen and I am very worried about it.

The Government can be accused of callous indifference to the many sustained objections to the poll tax that have been raised in Scotland and England from all quarters while the Scottish legislation was before Parliament and during the progress of the English legislation. The changes have shown a total disregard for the serious and far-reaching implications that the poll tax will inevitably leave in its wake.

I confine my remarks to three areas, the most significant of which is the essentially unfair nature of the tax. A flat-rate contribution paid by all, irrespective of income, is indefensibly inequitable, and we should never forget that. Although the arguments against that aspect of the charge have been made previously, we should not allow anyone to forget that that is the principal objection to the charge.

As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) said, the proposed changes in the social security system, which mean that everybody will pay at least 20 per cent. of the poll tax bill, taken together with the proposed cuts in the housing benefit that will be implemented next spring, will undoubtedly mean a reduced standard of living for the poorest in the community, who will be offered Government loans from the social fund to make ends meet. That is scandalous. I subscribe to the view of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central that the sooner the

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

poll tax rebate regulations are laid and we can measure the extent of that poverty, the better it will be for everyone, inside and outside the House.

Increased poverty is a certain and unavoidable implication of the poll tax in Scotland. The figures issued recently by the Scottish Office, based on current estimates, show that almost 997,000 households will lose financially from the poll tax. I think the estimate is official. I know from my constituency postbag that the implications of the poll tax have not yet fully dawned on the people in my constituency. In Berwickshire, according to the most recent figures published by the Government, the poll tax charge is estimated to be £170 per head, with an additional water charge of £24 per head, and the maximum estimated rebate of £136 per head, leaving £58 per head per annum to be found. Similar figures are given for Roxburghshire; a poll tax charge of £176 per head, an additional water charge of £24 per head, and the maximum estimated rebate of £141, leaving a minimum poll tax payment of almost £60 per head. The figures have not yet sunk in on the Borders region, and I do not know whether that is the case in other parts of the country.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there will be no rebate at all, as far as we are aware, on the water charge?

Mr. Kirkwood: The hon. Gentleman has taken the words straight from my mouth, because I was about to add that that is the case. Whatever else is true, in the Borders region that fact is not yet appreciated. When it is fully appreciated, the Government may find the proposals even more unpopular than they appear to be now.

The estimates ignore several additional important factors; for example, the gearing effect which was discussed earlier. Assuming the increase in commercial rates is limited to the increase in the retail prices index, a greater burden will inevitably fall on domestic poll tax payers, and that is causing concern. In addition, the estimates ignore the effect of substantial numbers of legal non-payers, or partial payers. Students will pay only 20 per cent., and no grant from central Government will make up for the loss, which will have to be borne by local authorities. The position of Lothian region, which has 26,000 full-time students, the equivalent of 20,800 legal non-payers who will have to be carried by the local authority — has not been taken into account in the estimates.

Residents of nursing homes and hospitals and the severely mentally handicapped are technically exempt. Local authorities will have to carry the shortfall for those people and for 18-year-olds who are still at school. That does not even take account of those who may evade the tax. If such evasion is taken into account, it could mean that, after taking proper account of the additional factors that the Government have not recognised, the community charge will be 5 per cent. higher than expected.

The potential loss to local authorities should be made clear. The Government should make a realistic estimate of what the local authorities will face in regard to the percentage of poll tax payers who will evade payment with the result that its collection will be unsuccessful.

The second major factor that has been ignored by the Government is the implementation cost. That cost has been rehearsed at some length in the two earlier contributions. The Borders regional council has estimated that it will cost 50 per cent. more to administer the poll tax than the domestic rate. The Minister is aware that the Borders regional council is neither profligate nor particularly politically antagonistic to the Government. That council is not guilty of any political bias or anything else. However, it has estimated that 22 additional staff will be required, and that represents an increase in expenditure of £430,000 a year. A further cost of £300,000 will be incurred as a result of upgrading existing computer systems. Therefore, it is particularly galling to consider the costs of the propaganda campaign upon which the Government have presently embarked. That campaign makes it even more difficult to reconcile local authority costs incurred as a result of the implementation of the poll tax.

The third implication, about which I am particularly interested, is the whole question of freedom of information and personal privacy. The poll tax presents the potential for the serious erosion of civil liberties. This matter has also been rehearsed by the two earlier contributions. The system that will be used to adminster and enforce the community charge will inevitably lead to greater Government control over individuals and their civil rights.

Poll tax arrears may have to be pursued by reference to bus pass applications, the personal files of local authority housing departments or the files of housing associations. I know that in the past mention has been made of the protection of social work files. When the Minister replies, I hope that he will say something about that. I do not think that the Data Protection Act 1983, so far as it goes, affords adequate protection of safeguards against the transfer of personal information from one local government department to another. The right hon. Member for Glasgow Govan (Mr. Millan) has rightly made strong representations to the Government about this issue.

Local authority officials may well come under quite unacceptable pressure and be obliged to resort to unacceptable practices, such as the cross-examination of former neighbours in their attempts to enforce payment of outstanding poll tax arrears.

Will the Minister say something about tied cottages? In Scottish rural areas there is a great deal of uncertainty whether special provisions will apply to farm workers living in tied accommodation. Have the Government had any second thoughts about the appeals system that applies in Scotland as opposed to the appeals system that has been suggested for England? Perhaps I have missed the announcement on that matter. I should be grateful if the Minister would say something about it tonight.

I am very worried about the position of hostels for the homeless and for battered wives. As those hostels will be in the same category as houses in multiple occupation, I join the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central in expressing concern about that.

The timetable and the necessary regulations are urgently required. I hope that the Government will get on and publish those regulations so that we can learn what they really have in mind regarding the implementation of this pernicious piece of legislation.

2.45 am

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): My concern about the poll tax relates not only to its

unfairness, its attack on democracy and its erosion of civil liberties. What concerns me is its impracticality, and how it affects the low-paid, the unemployed and young people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) has given an excellent technical analysis of the poll tax. Its imposition will inevitably mean a bureaucracy of registration and collection which will discriminate against the less able in our community. Such problems are not new, however. It may be timely and seasonal to remind the House of that earlier registration exercise which so hurt the poor and most vulnerable. Let me read an extract from the Gospel according to St. Luke:

"At that time the Emperor Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Roman empire. Everyone then went to register himself, each to his own town. Joseph and Mary went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem. He went to register with Mary — she was pregnant and when the time came for her to have her baby she wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger — for there was no room for them to stay at the inn."

It is the people of today — the low-paid, the unemployed and young people — whom the imposition of the poll tax will leave with no room at the Tory inn — about whom I am concerned. The unemployed, the elderly, the young and the low-paid cannot afford further taxation on their already meagre finances. The poll tax will lead to family break-ups: many young people will have to leave their homes because of their inability to find the money. We in Scotland are about to see the creation of a new breed of nomad. Our young people will move from place to place looking for somewhere to sleep. Eventually, cardboard cities — known in other countries as shanty towns—will spring up in our communities.

This unfair and unjust poll tax must be stopped in its tracks now.

2.47 am

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): In Scotland, the poll tax legislation will be implemented on 1 April 1989, and on the best professional advice — as has already been mentioned by some of my colleagues — local authorities were told that the secondary legislation which is necessary for the full implementation was required by September 1987. The Government have still not published the regulations. Indeed, rumours are emanating from St. Andrew's house — I shall not call them leaks, for obvious reasons — that the Government have not published the regulations because they cannot work out what to put into them, so hastily prepared and ill thought out is the measure. Meanwhile, the local authorities must make necessary preparations with only the skeleton of the Act, without the meat of the detailed regulations.

This is a bad tax. It is regressive, and takes no account of the ability to pay. At its heart is the desire of the present Government to weaken our structure of local government and local democracy. The philosophy that argues that accountability does not exist in the present arrangements, and that those previously exempted from paying rates were somehow careless about how they cast their votes, is insulting and patronising. But that, of course, is nothing new for this Government.

However, I want to escape from the flawed philosophy behind the measure and consider its practical application. In the first place, there is the cost of implementing the poll tax in Scotland. The Government have blindly assured us that there should be little or no extra cost to local authorities. If there are substantial extra costs, in the Government's view they can only be further examples of local government profligacy.

Let me look at the authority that I know best, Grampian regional council — not, I regret to say a Labour-controlled council. In a recent report to the council, the chief executive stated that the cost of implementing the poll tax in the Grampian area would be a staggering £2·456 million, which is additional revenue expenditure and includes loan charges on capital equipment. Before Grampian regional council provides one single service or meets one statutory responsibility or pays one other single overhead, it will require to levy a poll tax of £6·46 for every adult in the region, a charge just to pay for levying the tax in the first place.

Secondly, there is the cost of the poll tax to the individual taxpayer. The Government, through the Scottish Office, have issued figures for anticipated rates of poll tax, as we heard discussed earlier. These apply to each region and district in Scotland. In Aberdeen city, the Government estimate is for a rate of £200 per adult per annum. The Government figures ignore two very important aspects. I have already mentioned the cost of implementing the tax; the other is the very real difficulty that will be experienced in the collection of the tax. I will go into this in some detail, because I think that it is important, particularly for my own area.

The director of finance for Grampian region has estimated, in line with other directors of finance throughout Scotland, that his region will be extremely lucky to achieve a register which is 90 per cent. accurate. There are already signs that, in order to avoid the poll tax, individuals will avoid registration. In my own constituency I have just received the latest draft electoral register: the number of electors registered to vote in Aberdeen, South has dropped from approximately 63,000 on the current register to approximately 58,000 on the new draft register. I have suddenly lost 5,000 voters. I would like to think that this drop is the result of greater accuracy in the returns, but I have severe doubts.

Then there is the problem of collecting the tax. Again in the view of Grampian region's director of finance, the region will be extremely lucky to collect 90 per cent. of the poll tax from those who do get on to the register. In round figures, only 80 per cent. of poll tax due will be collected in my area—and we must remember that that is at best. Other areas in Scotland will be no different. Someone will have to pay for the shortfall, and it will be the responsible members of the community who register and pay. Taking account of the shortfall in collection, the annual rate of poll tax in my area will be not the £200 estimated by the Government, but at least £250 per adult per annum.

Let me turn to the less advantaged — the poor, the sick and the pensioners. In 1988, for the first time, these categories of people will receive a bill for 20 per cent. of their rates. In 1989, they will receive a bill for the poll tax. The Government have sought to assure us that this group will not lose; they will, we are told, receive an extra payment as part of their income support. There is a great deal of dishonesty here on the part of the Government. In the first place, there will be no rebate on the community water charge; that is a substantial change from the present position. Presumably the Government, in separating out

[Mr. Frank Doran]

the water charge, envisage the day when the service will be privatised and water will be paid for just like every other utility.

However, despite this fundamental change, the Government have adhered rigidly to the position that the poor will pay only 20 per cent. of their poll tax. That is, at best, misleading and, at worst, outright and cruel deceit. For my constituents, who have hitherto enjoyed a full 100 per cent. rebate, the figure that they will have to pay will be not 20 per cent. but nearer 31 per cent., and on the levels of income that we are considering that is a very substantial increase.

On the Government figure of £200 per adult, £27 represents the water charge. My constituents who are eligible for the full 80 per cent. rebate will pay a total of £61·60 per annum. For a pensioner couple, that means £123·20 per annum. On the Government's figures, they had been led to believe that they would have to find £40 each, which was bad enough; a more accurate figure than that given by the Government, taking into account collection difficulties, would be £77 a year per adult—£154 a year for a pensioner couple in my constituency. That is a staggering £3 a week.

I have seen the reaction of pensioners in my area. I have talked to them about the poll tax. They were afraid of what £40 a year would mean to them. I do not know how they will react to the possibility that the true figure is likely to be £77 a year each.

Of course, the Government will tell us that the whole of the extra cost will be met by increases in the new income support. That is just not true. Firstly, the Government figures are based on only 20 per cent. of poll tax being paid, not the 31 per cent. which my constituents will pay. Secondly, even the combined effect of an increase below the rate of inflation and the application of an average amount, to take account of the poll tax payment, means a substantial reduction in the weekly pension benefit or income support.

This is a mean vindictive Government. The poor, weak and vulnerable will pay for the benefits that those who are better off will receive from the poll tax. It is clear that there is a section of society about which the Government care very deeply — those in employment or those with a substantial income who can afford private education and health care and the inflated house prices of the south-east. However, there is a section about whom the Government care little or nothing—the poor, the sick, the weak, the vulnerable, the pensioners and the low-paid, such as nurses and other health workers.

In the election in June the advantaged and disadvantaged united in Scotland in opposition to the Conservative party. One of the principal catalysts was the poll tax legislation. This arrogant, complacent and dogmatic Government have a sair lesson coming to them when they try to implement the legislation in England.

2.55 am

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) for introducing the debate and, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said, for having the wisdom to choose this subject. I thank my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire for their contributions.

We have heard—with new points having been made in the debate—yet again about the problems facing the Government and the opposition that is building up about the gross unfairness of this tax, its undemocratic nature and the its unworkability. It is on its unworkability and difficulties that local authorities face that I shall concentrate my remarks. I shall concentrate on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy report, to which some of my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire have referred.

The report came out in the summer and was greeted by the Government as the bible that local authorities would have to use to implement the poll tax. We were mocked by Ministers and the Secretary of State when, on Second Reading and in Committee, we criticised the unworkability of the poll tax. The Government said, "The experts have told us that the poll tax is workable; you were wrong all along."

The report was drawn up not by elected Members but by officials and experts who have tried to understand the poll tax system.

It is extremely difficult to obtain, unless one has £4,000 to throw around. My office has asked the Scottish Office time and time again whether I, as Front Bench spokesman on local government finance, could have a copy of it, and the answer has been a consistent no. The only way that one can read it is to go to the Library, but one is not allowed to remove it.

On page 2 the report says:

"The system of community charge is capable of an operable implementation by April 1989, given: rapid response to the issues identified in this report; adequate additional financial resources being made available to authorities by increased section 94 consents, realistic adjustment to current expenditure guidelines and rate support grants."

In other words, it is clear that it must be done quickly.

The report continues:

"A rapid response is important in: framing certain areas of regulation as identified in the report, most notably those defining liability for the community charge and the format for the register; a response by the end of September 1987 has been promised by the Scottish Office on these areas."

A further reason why it is important is in:

"defining the specification of and interface with the community charge rebate system."

Where are we in this? The timetable in the CIPFA report says that if the community charge is to be implemented on 1 April 1989, the collection of information for the register should already have started and that the canvassing and distribution of forms must start on 1 April 1988; that is, in three and a half months' time.

Some of us have been deluded into thinking that there were three separate stages to the operation: first, the register system for which one would have to devise a computer programme so that one could feed in all the information from the register once it had been drawn up; secondly, a collection system, and one would have to have a computer for that; and thirdly, a rebate system, which would also require a computer programme. However, if one examines the report from CIPFA, one sees that that is not the case—far from it. If the tax is to be collected properly and efficiently, one has to have three different computer programmes all interfaced to each other or one or two computer programmes covering all three parts of the poll tax. One cannot have one computer programme for the register, one for the collection and one for the rebate system. That will not work. They have to be

brought together. That means that the whole system has to be devised and the programmes written and drawn up long before 1 April 1988.

I accept that draft regulations have been issued to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities — and, I assume, to other local authorities—for consultation on the format of the register and the type of form that will be issued. However, although there have been some meetings, the written response from COSLA has still not been given. The final regulations on the format of the register, which are to be laid before the House, have not been published.

Some draft regulations have been issued on the collection system but, again, we have had no written response from COSLA, which is the major organisation concerned, and no regulations have been published. The only regulation published so far has been that bringing the law into force. The Government promise that there will be a response in September, but CIPFA says that the regulations have to be laid in August if the system is to work on 1 April 1989.

We have heard nothing about the rebate system. We cannot have the other two systems unless the local authorities — it probably will not be local authorities, because they will probably have to hire private companies —can feed into their computer programmes the whole rebate system. Unless they do that, the whole system will collapse and the tax will not be collectable on 1 April 1989. We have not heard one word from one Minister, either English or Scottish, on how the rebate system will operate. For example on 1 April 1988 when the new social security regulations come into force the level of benefit to be paid will be based on the family. However, the poll tax is an individual tax. Therefore, a social security system based on the family will be married to a tax based upon the individual. I do not know how that will work. The Minister has a responsibility to tell us.

Another small example is the position of students. They will have to pay only 20 per cent. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire raised an important point when he asked who makes up the rest. Will there be a grant from the Government to cover it? We do not know. What about a student who has a wife? He is jointly and severally liable and, as a student, he automatically has to pay only 20 per cent. However, is his wife elegible for rebate? Nobody knows how the rebate system will operate and, until we do, the rest of the system cannot be brought into force.

The regulations should have been laid in August. CIPFA makes it quite clear that the system of community charge is capable of implementation by 1 April 1989 only given a rapid response to the issues raised in its report. There has not been such a response. It is impossible to get the system set up in three and a half months. The Government have first to lay the regulations. We are as opposed to the tax as ever we were—more so because our people's opposition to it is growing all the time. We shall not let the regulations through without praying against them and debating them.

Local authorities will have to take on staff to study the regulations. They will have to buy computers and employ experts to write programs. Staff will have to be well trained to get the information that the new register requires. I accept that the electoral register will be an important source of information, but we believe that people are already taking their names off the register to avoid poll tax.

The new register requires much more information, however. The date of birth must be included, for example. There must be a recognised responsible person in the household. I dare say that there are some households where there are none, but what will happen with houses in multiple occupation or blocks of flats? Who will be the responsible person there? Will there be more than one?

Information about students must be recorded. Students must say where they are at college, give their address when at college, and state their course of study. The Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security may look aghast, but many people will find the form difficult to fill in. I found it difficult to follow the directions.

Hundreds of people will have to be employed to collect the necessary information. If some local authorities think that it will be possible to employ the same middle-aged, middle-class ladies to compile the electoral register, they have another thought coming with regard to areas such as Castlemilk. If I was collecting information for the poll tax register, I would not want to go near some areas of Glasgow unless I had at least four policemen or Securicor men with me. There is no question about it: such people will be in dire trouble.

All this has to be done by 1 April 1988. That is when information for the register must have been collected. It will take six months to collect the information and compile the first draft register, so we are talking about October or November. Then people will have the right of appeal to remove or add names prior to it becoming the final register for the collection of the first tax on 1 April 1989.

A local authority cannot decide what level of poll tax it will collect until it knows how many people are on the register, because it will need that information to work it out. CIPFA says that the level of tax and how and when it will be collected will have to be decided by 31 January 1989.

The Minister may dispute it, but that is even now impossible. The Government are already too late. It cannot be done. If they try to push on with the implementation of this tax on 1 April 1989, it will be an administrative nightmare. Local authorities will be in a shambles. People will be missing from the registers and people will not be in place to collect the tax. There will be no rebate system, so some will pay nothing, and those who should be getting rebates will be paying the tax in full.

I ask the Minister to promise the House two things. First——

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Scrap it.

Mr. Maxton: I should like him to do that, and in the end he may have to.

I hope that the Minister will say that it is not now possible to collect the tax by 1 April 1989 and that the Government will suspend the operation for one year and implement the tax throughout the United Kingdom on 1 April 1990. I accept that the same shambles may apply in England, but let us accept that they will have learnt from the Scottish experience.

If the Minister is not prepared to delay for a year, can he at least ask the same experts who drew up the CIPFA report to go to local authorities, investigate what is happening and give him another report on whether it is feasible to implement the tax on 1 April 1989? If not, will

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he then give the commitment that he will back off? I hope that the Minister is capable, in the time that he has left, of answering the questions that I and others have raised.

3.12 am

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I shall do my best to answer the questions that have been raised, but the timetable that I have been set is tight.

This has been an interesting and useful debate. Some of the points raised are worth developing and I shall try to cover them in the few minutes that I have to do so. Opposition Members talk about anxiety about the community charge, but they are the cause of much of that anxiety. Despite the scares, alarms and assertions that the new system cannot be implemented by 1 April 1989, I can assure the House that we remain on course to secure our objective of introducing the community charge in Scotland from that date and abolishing at that time the discredited domestic rating system.

At no time during the passage of the Act did we make any secret of the fact that the timetable that we were setting ourselves would be a tight one. Nor do I make a secret of the fact that much remains to be done. But recently, in the House and outside, we have been hearing — notably from politicians, but not from local authority administrators—and we have heard again tonight, that the timetable simply cannot be met. Their assertions are ill-founded and irresponsible. It is our firm view that the necessary preparatory work will be completed in time to enable the community charge to be brought in on 1 April 1989 as provided for in the Act.

It might be helpful if I make a few general remarks about what implementation involves. It involves three main processes. Again, it might be helpful to the House — and I am sure that it will be helpful to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) — if I were to describe these processes and explain how much we have done on each of them since the Bill was enacted.

First, the commencement order for the Act was made on 18 August, some four months ago. It brought the main provisions of the Act into force on 14 September. The main effects of the order were that, from that date, regional and islands assessors also became community charges registration officers, and that regional and islands councils came under a duty to provide them with sufficient staff, accommodation and other resources to enable them to carry out their functions. Local authorities are also required to prepare the systems for billing and collecting the community charges. It is a matter of fact that every regional and islands council in Scotland is now getting on with the job.

Secondly, there are the various sets of regulations to be made under the various powers of prescription in the Act. This point was raised by the hon. Members for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) and for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), as well as by the hon. Member for Cathcart. A number of the powers are fall-back powers in the sense that they need not be exercised unless change becomes necessary in the light of experience. However, regulations in a number of key areas are necessary to set out certain details of the new system. There are, for example, the regulations on domestic subjects. These regulations will define the properties, in addition to dwelling houses, that are to come out of rating with effect from 1 April 1989. Examples of such properties are private garages which at the moment are valued and rated as separate subjects, and residential accommodation such as nurses' homes. The regulations will also provide the basis for exemption from the community charge for the residents of residential care homes, nursing homes and hostels. A draft of the regulations has been the subject of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other interested bodies. As a result, we are considering a number of changes to the draft, reflecting the fact that the consultation process has been genuine.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I would rather get through all the points that I wish to answer. I shall give way to him, but that will mean failing to answer some of the other points.

Mr. Maxton: How long has that consultation period been? I saw those draft regulations in September.

Mr. Lang: The consultation period has allowed sufficient time for all the appropriate bodies to consult and to let us have their views on the draft regulations. As a result, we are considering a number of changes to the draft, reflecting the fact that the consultation process has been genuine.

Most of the changes that we were asked to make are of a fairly technical nature. However, one more substantive point in representations from the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations Ltd. is that the communal parts of sheltered housing complexes should come out of rating along with the sheltered housing units themselves. We can see that to do so would be consistent with the general framework of the regulations and their objectives. I expect that the regulations will be made shortly, and I hope that they can be laid before Christmas.

A second group of regulations, which are well advanced in their preparation, are those relating to the timetable for setting the community charge and non-domestic rates. These are clearly essential to the process of system design by local authorities. The regulations have also been the subject of consultation with COSLA and other bodies representative of practitioners in the field. A number of useful comments have been received, and, again, the regulations will be made shortly.

A third and very important set of regulations will deal with registration for the community charge, to which Opposition Members have referred. The regulations will, for example, prescribe the information which is to appear on the canvass forms to be used by the community charges registration officer, the form of tne register itself, and the form of the notice to be issued to persons who appear on the register. This is a complex area, and the drafts of the regulations have, again, been out to consultation.

Other matters on which we are actively engaged in preparing regulations are exemption from liability to the standard and collective community charges, the collection arrangements for community charges — particularly as regards the format of bills — and the definition of key terms used in the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, such as the term "student".

We are therefore well advanced in the process of making the various regulations required. We have been consulting widely, and will continue to do so in the coming months. The consultation process has been entirely

genuine, in the sense that we have been willing to take on board the many constructive comments that we have received. We are well beyond the point of having only the basic framework of the new system. The details are fast taking shape, so that those involved — particularly in local authorities—can get on with the job of preparing for the introduction of the community charge on 1 April 1989.

Several hon. Members asked when the rebate regulations will appear. We envisage that consultations with local authorities will begin early next year on that matter. The system will be closely modelled on the new scheme of housing benefit, on which local authorities are already working. Therefore, there is no question of damaging delay or uncertainty.

I should perhaps say a few words about the prescription of the registration canvass form, which will be part of the registration regulations. As I have explained, they have already gone out to consultation, and there has been a wide response. We are considering the detailed points that have been made. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central raised a point concerning the suggestion that the canvass form covers everyone, not just those aged over 18. That point was made by many respondents in the consultation process. It will be taken into account when the final version is drawn up. In considering the detailed points that were made, we paid particular attention to the comments that were made about the canvass form, because community charges registration officers will need to have that matter defined fairly soon so that they can get ahead with having supplies of the form printed. My officials are working closely with community charges registration officers to achieve that. They are, of course, taking account of the comments that were made about the need for the form to be as clear and straightforward as possible. I intend that when this phase of consultation is completed in the few days, we will have a final draft of the form which will be suitable for inclusion in the regulations when they are made, and I intend to make it available to registration officers to assist them in their preparations.

The third requirement is for local authorities to set up appropriate systems so that the community charge can come into operaton from 1 April 1989. We have given local authorities a valuable resource in the form of the study that the Department commissioned from CIPFA. It analysed the requirements for implementation, demonstrated that the system was workable, and how it could be designed to optimum effect. Copies of the report have for some time now been with local authorities to assist their forward planning.

In answer to the hon. Member, the CIPFA report did not say that the regulations had to be made in August. It said that we would respond by September, which we did, with consultation drafts. I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraph 1·31 on page 2 of volume 1, the management summary of the report, to clarify that point.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central raised the matter of resources. Following the commencement of the Act, all regional and islands councils, without exception, have formally agreed to proceed with its implemention. To do this, they will need to incur some capital expenditure, mainly on computer equipment and accommodation. As the House will know, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities co-ordinated a bid, which was put to my right hon. and learned Friend at his meeting with it at the end of October, seeking additional allocations of £5·5 million in the current year. I am glad to say that my right hon. and learned Friend was able to announce at his meeting with the convention last Friday that he will allocate an sum of £6 million in the current year. The convention has also shown further capital expenditure requirements next year, amounting to a total figure over the two years approaching £20 million. There will be additional resources in the general services capital block for next year, which, together with this year's extra £6 million, will be more than sufficient to cover the requirement that has been demonstrated to us. Of course, it must not be forgotten that local authorities have, in total, substantial capital allocations and considerable flexibility within them to make adjustments at the margin. That means that if the estimates that we have been given should change, local authorities will have room to make the necessary adjustments in their overall programmes.

The hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie raised the matter of accountability.

Mr Darling *rose*——

Mr. Lang: I shall not give way.

I shall try to reply to some of the points that the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie raised. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the reports in yesterday's newspapers that rate increases this year would have been much higher if they were expressed in terms of community charges seemed somehow to undermine the principle of accountability. Far from doing that, it shows the need for increased accountability. The community charge system will have a gearing effect, as the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said, but it is precisely the discipline imposed by that gearing effect that will bring sense and discipline to local authorities and recognition of the need to respond to the interests of residents in their areas.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the matter of the uniform business rate and suggested that the policy had somehow been dropped or had collapsed. I refer him to the Green Paper that came out before the legislation was brought forward. I shall quote a small section from paragraph 8.31. He will realise that the situation has not changed at all. It states:

> "The Government sees advantages in moving in time to a common non-domestic poundage in all areas and it may be desirable to harmonise valuation procedures to provide for a common standard. Where significant differences persist between Scottish and English valuation practice affecting certain types of property, further statutory changes may have to be considered to ensure fairness of valuations throughout the country. Until such moves took effect the Government would propose to retain industrial de-rating, and to control non-domestic rate poundage increases by linking these to some general index of price movements".

That policy is stated in the White Paper and has been implemented in the Abolition of Domestic Rates etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 so there has been no change in that respect.

The hon. Member for Cathcart also raised the issue of collection and enforcement. There is no evidence that the collection and enforcement system envisaged for the community charge will create major difficulties.

National Health Service

3.25 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I cannot help feeling that to address the House at 3.25 in the morning on the question of health is a contradiction in terms. I owe an apology to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security as this is the second time in a comparatively short period that I have kept her out of bed to answer a debate that I have been lucky enough to start. I should extend my apology to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) who was also here on the last occasion that I performed this dreadful rite.

The debate is about the National Health Service. It is a fine achievement. It is treating more patients and delivering a better service than ever before. For example, stillbirths fell by 49·4 per cent. between 1974 and 1986. The NHS is spending more money and building more hospitals than ever before, but it is also undoubtedly under short-term stress.

My purpose is to debate the long-term future of the National Health Service, but I shall take a quick look in passing at some of the short-term pressures affecting my constituency. First, there is the way in which the district health authorities have to play into constantly moving goalposts. When Maidstone hospital was being built, new hospitals got commissioning money. Lo and behold, when Maidstone hospital was finished, the rules changed and we received none. Under the RAWP formula, Maidstone made its plans, but ACORN came along and hundreds of thousands of pounds were taken away.

Everywhere else in the country, students coming to a district for their placements bring with them SIFT money; but not, for some reason, when they come to Medway. As I see my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) in her place, I shall say nothing further about the discouragement of good practice, as I know that it is a subject close to her heart.

A second level of debate concerns how to organise the Health Service better, to enable it to deliver its services. At this level of debate, such questions are evoked as, should we persevere with national wage scales? Should not the whole giant structure be broken down into manageable portions? I see no reason to brag that the National Health Service is the largest employer in western Europe, because that means it is 15 years or more behind successful national and multinational firms in creating devolved cost centres. National salaries and wages do not work any more. In Maidstone, agency nurses cost the authority at least 20 per cent. more than elsewhere, and in 1986 the district health authority spent almost £500,000 on agency nurses, not to mention cooks and medical secretaries. District health authorities should be free to strike their own bargains with staff according to local conditions.

The second question is, do we need a regional tier? I accept the need to equalise resources; no one who represents Medway could fail to do so. But is the regional tier as it is organised at present the best mechanism for doing this?

I cite three examples from my own region. The first concerns the capital valuation of a district health authority's capital assets. One of my district health authorities was asked to carry out a valuation of its capital assets, which it did with enormous care and the best professional advice available, only to find that the region proceeded almost at once to do exactly the same thing at great expense.

The second example concerns the creakiness of some of the machinery. In theory, regional control allows for easy movement of staff from declining areas of work to growing ones. Tell that to the district authorities that are finding it almost impossible to obtain additional staff from declining units in the region.

Thirdly, there is extraordinary slowness on the part of the regions to adjust to changing demography. Why do we continue to pay twice as much at St. Thomas's for patients who could be treated in Maidstone or Medway? Of course I accept the value of having centres of excellence, but the M25, the M20 and the M2 have all appeared since St. Thomas's was built and have radically altered the centre of gravity in the south-east of England, and the opportunities for specialist and teaching provision. It is no longer necessary to have 18 teaching hospitals within a horse-drawn carriage's distance of Harley street. What is more, the Government circular of May this year—DA (87)18 — which severely limits the redevelopment potential of green belt hospital sites, adds a huge premium to the redevelopment value of inner-city hospital sites.

My chief concern tonight, however, is to ask some of the philosophical questions that underlie all the management questions to which dismayingly little attention is paid by the public, unless or until some crisis raises a part of one of them. Let us start by being clear about two things. First, health care provision marches roughly in line with national wealth. It is therefore sentimental and muddle-headed hypocrisy to try to cut health off from other centres of the economy. The reason why the hospital building programme has surged ahead under the Conservatives, in contrast to the savage cuts that it sustained under Labour, is that the economy as a whole has been effectively improved.

Secondly, health care provision creates demand in excess of supply, and it always will. So there will always be rationing. Do the public understand that? Do we, as Members of Parliament, do enough to help them understand it? Rationing means that there will always be patients capable of life who will die for lack of treatment. That is not in question. What is in question is: which patients, and who should make the decision? At present, it seems to be made by consultants—at least, it is until the money runs out. Then it is made in the crudest possible way by the district health authorities, which seem to have no more effective financial control to hand than to close beds, wards and even hospitals. As a long, or even medium-term solution, that is unacceptable.

Perhaps we trust consultants to choose for us who shall live and who shall die. We may also want them to be free to choose whether the operations that they perform are cheap or costly. If so, we cannot for ever expect the district health authorities, which do not even employ them, to carry the can for their decisions. Still less can we expect district health authorities to endure being attacked on television by the consultants, whose actions are often so influential in determining the rate at which resources are expended. The principal argument for attaching a consultant's contract to the region is that that permits him or her to work in more than one district. Has the time come for alternative solutions to this problem to be tried? I believe that it has.

Rationing also means that not everyone can have a transplant or a hip replacement. It is irresponsible to argue, as so many Opposition Members frequently do, as if people could. Who is to miss out? Should everyone expect two replacement hips in a lifetime, or is there to be some cut-off age?

Health care can be patient-led and technology-led. Where it is technology-led, the best is often the enemy of the good. Just because the latest X-ray machine will be obsolescent in four years does not mean that it should automatically be replaced at three times the cost or that its use should be denigrated by staff and patients. Scanning procedures are expensive and it is often more cost-effective to use one on three patients than three on one patient. Such choices are often made on haphazard and capricious grounds, rather than as part of a rational use of rationed resources.

We also need to open up the humanitarian argument. In recent years we have blindly followed the line that because we can, we must. The time has come to examine the costs of that and to ask where it has led us. Because we can extend life, we do extend it. As a result, the number of people surviving into extreme old age increases rapidly. By 1996 we think that there will be 1·3 million more people over the age of 75 than there were in 1976, and double the number of the age of 85. This costs money. In 1983-84, the National Health Service spent on average £185 per head, but over-75s cost £875 per head in hospital and community services.

There are other costs besides money and it is time to begin the argument about quality of life. Some of our old people are slaves to a tyrannical technology that will not let them depart in peace. When my father died of emphysema, angina and allied ills, his spirit, as is so often the case, rallied on his final day and he greatly enjoyed happy, peaceful hours with his wife. Then he died. At that point the duty of the hospital forced him for hours into hideously undignified procedures in a vain attempt to resuscitate him in the certain knowledge that if they had succeeded he would never have been the same again.

Hon. Members should think of the cost in humane terms and in nursing and medical terms and ask whether we have balanced the debate. There is much else to be said about the long-term future of the National Health Service, and if we do not know what we want of it, we shall create only an uncertain future.

I should like to raise just two more matters, the first of which is funding. The National Health Service should normally be free at the point of receipt. Private insurance schemes will never provide a sufficient basis for health care, even of the rich. It has to exclude known conditions and must run heavy overheads in order to process its accounts. It could never carry the burden of catering for the nation's health, but, clearly it has a role to play.

It has been well said that if people wish to pay for additional amenities or for something to which they attach value, such as privacy in a single ward, we should aim at providing such facilities for everyone who wants them. Who am I to argue with Aneurin Bevan? There is so much confusion about the word "private" in health care that we should probably cease using it. Firms should be encouraged to expand the health education, screening and other facilities that many firms offer to their staffs. We should also address the ways in which we needlessly damage ourselves.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I agree that there should be more workplace-based screening. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is regrettable that a proposal to have cervical cancer screening for the many female employees of the House and nearby offices was turned down by the Services Committee? Does he further agree that this would be a good time to reopen the question whether there should be on-site cervical screening for people who work the odd hours that being employed here entails?

Mr. Rowe: There is great merit in providing screening facilities. There are difficulties in doing that here because many of those who work in the House are not employees of the House but of individual Members. But I agree that the facilities should be available and that, possibly, hon. Members should contribute to the cost of enabling their staff to take advantage of those facilities. For those employed by the House, they should be available.

I was saying that we should address the ways in which we needlessly damage ourselves. Every poll puts health at the top of people's preferences, but when people vote for health they deceive themselves; they would rather spend their increasing disposable incomes on drinking, smoking, over-eating and dangerous pastimes, including driving much too fast.

In 1986, there were 4,895 fatal accidents on our roads, 58,187 serious accidents and 184,762 slight accidents. The cost of those was estimated to have been £2·8 billion. In addition, there were 1,478,000 damage-only accidents, which cost a further £964 million.

Adjustments must be made in the balance between expecting taxpayers, be they never so temperate, to pay for the excesses of those of us who choose consistently to damage ourselves and others. Random breath testing may prove as helpful to the NHS finances as an increase in Government funding. I see no reason why those who belong to clubs which indulge in sports with above-average accident levels should not pay a modest health insurance along with their club subscription. There is plenty to be done in health promotion and prevention of disease, as the Minister passionately believes and preaches.

Huge changes are occurring in the Health Service. Men and women are entering it with one vision of what the life is about, only to find that new techniques have changed it utterly. That is stressful, and people react to that stress either by leaving the job or by seeking to hang on to their older version of it.

Much of the hierarchy in the Health Service is obsolete, and many of the job definitions with it. Many professionals have been effectively deskilled by their machines, while new professions have achieved a level of proficiency which allows them to diagnose, treat and evaluate treatment to an extent which leaves them independent of the medical profession. Yet neither in salary nor status does the service recognise the new position. These anomalies need to be addressed.

There is a further peril overhanging the future, and that is the growing trend to take cases of malpractice or mistake to the courts, where enormous damages are exacted. If we go too far down that route, we shall undoubtedly find that doctors and other professions will become increasingly unwilling to act without having the most expensive machinery, two or three alternative opinions and everything else available to them. That is a difficult area, because nobody wants to see patients left with no recourse.

[Mr. Rowe]

The National Health Service is very much alive. It has its problems and it always will have problems. It could do with some more resources in the short-term, but in the long-term its future depends on all of us becoming involved in the debate. I hope that I have outlined some of the points of that debate tonight.

3.44 am

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Any mild displeasure that I might have felt about the hour of night at which the debate was to be conducted has been entirely dispelled by listening to the very eloquent and forceful speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe). I am particularly grateful to him for securing the debate tonight and giving me an opportunity to draw to the attention of the House the problems of my constituents and the National Health Service crisis in Maidstone. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning Maidstone and for drawing attention to some of its problems. Although Maidstone general hospital is in my constituency, it serves many of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley).

As I examine the problems of the NHS tonight, I want to consider one particular aspect—what I would call the "efficiency paradox". The Government's policy has always been that resources should be directed towards patient care; that the emphasis should be at the sharp end of the Health Service; we should minimise expenditure on "hotel" services, such as catering and laundry, by achieving the most effective value for money for those services; that we should try to increase activity to as high a level as is compatible with facilities; that we should aim at fast throughputs of patients and for the lowest possible cost per patient compatible with providing an adequate, proper and satisfactory service. However, because of the way in which the Health Service is funded, and the interaction of the various tiers within the Health Service, the fact remains that the efficient are penalised and the inefficient have no particular incentive to mend their ways or to improve their performance.

Regional health authorities allocate money given to them by the Government. I must state at the outset that I have no quarrel with the amount of money that the Government are putting into the NHS or that they have been making available to my regional health authority—the South-East Thames regional health authority. However, what happens beyond that does matter, and that it what has had such a catastrophic effect on my constituents.

The regions allocate money on the basis of expected levels of activity. They try to match the amount of money required with the activity expected from individual district health authorities. That is like looking into a crystal ball once a year and allocating money to the images that form there. Instead, the allocation should be achieved through the day-to-day calculations of the slide-rule.

I have examined the DHSS performance indicators throughout the South-East Thames regional health authority for the past two years for which figures are available. There are very few instances where expected and actual activity converge on the graph. On the whole, there are large fluctuations, with some hospitals under-performing against their expected levels of activity and others, such as Maidstone general, which well and truly over-perform and return a very high level of patient care against what is expected.

Those DHSS performance indicators clearly show that Maidstone general hospital is the most efficient hospital not only in the South-East Thames region but in the country. I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to that, and take the opportunity to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling and I are grateful to the Minister for having taken on board our recent urgent representations that, because of the difference between actual and projected activity, Maidstone is no longer able to provide the services that are expected.

When regional decisions adversely affect the resources of district health authorities — my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent outlined several adverse decisions —an inefficient authority can react, because it can make cost improvements on hotel services, cut waste or take initiatives to improve efficiency and thus save money. An efficient authority, such as Maidstone district health authority, is not able to react because it has already made all the savings it can reasonably have been expected to make and did so well in advance of any Government guidelines on the subject. It has always put emphasis on patient care and has pared down and cut out anything beyond that.

The efficient authorities are effectively penalised for being efficent and the inefficient have no incentive to mend their ways, because, if their activity is less than expected and for which they have been allocated money, there is no incentive to make savings and try to close the gap, which is what faces efficient authorities. I urge the Minister to draw up firm guidelines, if not regulations, so that the two most important factors for deciding the annual allocation of money to regional health authorities should be efficiency and activity.

I do not altogether blame the South-East Thames regional health authority for wrong forecasts, particularly as it has had to make them on thoroughly out-of-date statistics. I strongly urge the Minister to revise the statistics on which allocations are made, so that data can be brought up to date and authorities do not have to use data that pertained four years ago, which in my region has redounded greatly to the disadvantage of my constituents.

Further nonsenses develop from penalising efficient authorities for their efficiency. Maidstone has a brand new general hospital, which is a very tangible demonstration of the Government's commitment to the National Health Service. It was built in 1983, having been needed for several decades before that. It is a grand, modern, well-equipped hospital, a large capital asset, but some of the main wards cannot be opened, or, to put it the other way, some main wards are now being closed. Trying to make savings by closing wards in modern hospitals is rather like trying to make savings on the railways by digging up the railway lines. Such a practice is not efficient or a proper use of capital. Therefore, we have penalised efficiency and that has led to even greater inefficiency.

If money were always used to the greatest possible advantage, more could be squeezed at regional and district level. I deplore the fact that South-East Thames regional health authority is currently spending £600,000 in rent on

empty, administrative headquarters that it left two years ago. If that regional authority would kindly hand over a similar sum to Maidstone for direct patient care we could reopen the closed wards. I ask the Minister to consider drawing to the attention of that regional health authority the vast, rambling empty premises on which it is spending precious resources and the greatly under-used wards that could relieve the suffering and sickness of my constituents.

Perhaps it is all to do with the fact that the regional health authority chose to place itself out at Bexhill-on-Sea. Perhaps, because it is such a difficult place to reach and involves so much travelling time and administrative expense, that authority is not as familiar as it should be with the actual minutiae and the day-to-day effects of some of its terrible decisions.

Nevertheless, even if it is true that South-East Thames regional authority has not been as effective as it might have been in the distribution of resources, and even though it is possible to say that that regional authority has wasted fairly large sums, the fact remains that if one spends the housekeeping on the horses one still faces the problem of feeding the family. It is unfair to blame the person who supplies the housekeeping in the first place, and, therefore, it is totally unfair for us to blame the problems of the authority on the Government who supplied the money. However, we are still left with the problem of feeding the family or, in this case, caring for the sick.

I ask the Minister to intervene in what is happening in Maidstone and throughout the regional authority. Although no blame can be attached to the Government for the present situation, surely blame must accrue if no remedy is speedily found. I am not suggesting for one moment that we should be handed a crock of gold, but my constituents need an urgent, desperate remedy from the Government for the ills that they are suffering. In the great, modern brand-new showpiece hospital in Maidstone we are dealing with nothing except malignancies and emergencies. No routine surgery of any sort is carried out in that hospital.

I know that the Minister is already considering various possibilities of help, but while that is taking place the queues are getting longer and our patients remain untreated. I urge sensible haste. In the immediate future —not the long-term future about which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent spoke—I hope that there will be a greater accent on efficiency in regional allocations.

3.58 am

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): It is a particular pleasure to take part in this debate, which has been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe). In a previous incarnation, I was a teacher in my hon. Friend's constituency and I well remember occasions when I took pupils who had injured themselves down to the local hospitals. It was interesting to listen to my hon. Friend's graphic description of the Maidstone health authority's problems and the way in which those problems have been tackled. I was also pleased to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) because before I taught at Chatham I taught at Aylesford, which is just outside her constituency, and I well remember the occasions when I had to take pupils to West Kent general hospital, which pre-dated the modern hospital that she has described.

This debate is an opportunity to discuss in a rational, less polemic manner than in recent weeks the problems that face the Health Service. One of the most frustrating aspects of the National Health Service has been that, although the present Government have devoted far more to it than any previous Government in terms of resources and manpower, there continue to be undoubted problems in health care provision. As a Conservative Member, I care as strongly about our health services as any member of the Opposition. I should like tonight to examine some of the problems, and the ways in which we might tackle them, in a dispassionate and positive way.

Let me begin by paying tribute to the work of my health authority, the Pembrokeshire health authority, which was established in 1982. Under the leadership of its chairman —Captain Bill Phillips, ably supported by the general manager, Brian Davies, and his team of administrators, nurses, doctors and other staff—the authority has led the way in Wales in obtaining maximum value for the money that it has spent. The Withybush hospital, opened some 10 years ago, continues to expand—with new wards, an additional operating theatre, and a purpose-built psychiatric day care facility—and the South Pembrokeshire hospital in Pembroke Dock has been modernised. These are just some examples of the progress made by the health authority.

Considerable savings have been achieved through putting services out to tender, and Pembrokeshire leads the way among Welsh district health authorities. All this has been achieved in spite of a 4 per cent., or £800,000, under-funding in 1986-87, on the Welsh Office's own formula. I shall be looking to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales for continuing moves towards ensuring that Pembrokeshire receives equal funding on that formula with other health authorities throughout Wales.

It is not only the health authority that has been working strongly for health provision in Pembrokeshire. The people of Pembrokeshire are fiercely independent, and maintain a strong tradition of support for what was the county hospital and is now the district health authority's main hospital. Indeed, the establishment of the Pembrokeshire health authority in 1982 was as a result of that independence—the wish for a separate identity, rather than being merely a part of the wider county of Dyfed.

The strong support shown by the people of Pembrokeshire for their local health service has meant that the gamma camera appeal has now raised £100,000 towards the £120,000 cost of the camera. That is the equivalent of £1 for every man, woman and child in Pembrokeshire, and is an excellent example of what voluntary contributions and help do for our Health Service.

However, I do not wish to speak only about the achievements of Pembrokeshire. I should like also to mention a major problem, on which I hope that the Government will show some flexibility in the near future. That is recruitment. Because of the location of Pembrokeshire in the west of Wales, some distance from Cardiff and the major centres of population, there are difficulties in recruiting nurses and doctors to work in the health authority. There is no establishment problem; the authority cannot recruit staff up to the establishment that it is allowed. That means that, in the current year, the health authority has already had to spend nearly £200,000 on agency staff salaries. I hope that the Government will make rapid moves to get rid of the national pay

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

negotiating system and introduce pay negotiations on a district level, so that it is possible to take account of the vast variations in the supply of staff for different health authorities.

Let me now leave the problems and achievements of Pembrokeshire health authority and make some positive suggestions on how we can help to improve the Health Service. We must, start with the basic principle that health provision must be available nationally to all, regardless of income and at all times. That is not questioned by Conservative Members any more than it is by Labour Members. However, it should not blind us to basic questions about the Health Service and how it is operated. It is important that we ask a number of questions for the Minister to examine with her civil servants—although naturally I do not expect a detailed answer tonight—and see whether solutions are possible.

We should start with aims and objectives. I believe that the first aim of the Health Service must be the prevention of ill health, the second the maintenance of good health, the third the cure of illness, and the fourth the relief of pain. If we can put the emphasis, as we have done in our recent White Paper, on the prevention of ill health, that will be the key to improving health. It is far better to have prevention rather than having to seek cures when we have failed to prevent the illnesses in the first place.

It is rather ironic that every time we talk about the Health Service and issue the statistics—we are all guilty of it—we talk about the number of in-patients, the number of out-patients, the number of operations, the amount of treatment that is given. If the Health Service were to be properly judged, we ought to be talking about fewer in-patients, fewer out-patients, fewer operations, because we had prevented the illnesses in the first place. It can be argued that the more illness and the more in and out-patients, the greater the sign that the Health Service is perhaps not doing its proper job. I particularly welcome, therefore, the recent White Paper on primary health care, with its accent on prevention. Primary health care also, generally speaking, is a far more efficient and cost-effective system than hospital-based treatment.

I want, however, to direct most of my remarks to the hospital side of the National Health Service, because this is where the majority of the expenditure is to be found and the biggest percentage of staff employed. I should like to start by looking at the management structure. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone talked about the regional health authority; I think that the time has now come for us to ask whether we need this tier of management. In Wales we are happy to do without it. District health athorities are responsible directly to the Secretary of State. There is great merit in the argument that we could perhaps get rid of regional health authorities and go for a system which allocated the money to the districts rather than to the regions.

Secondly, we must ask ourselves whether we have gone too far in diversifying individual services to individual hospitals and whether we ought now to go back to having a number of major centres of excellence round the country, which will perhaps take back some of the burden put on the district hospitals.

Thirdly, we must look at the outcome measurements and the statistics in the Health Service. I recently asked a series of parliamentary questions on child intensive care units and their costs, and the cost of abortions, in each district health authority. In neither case was the information available. We need to ask the Department of Health and Social Security to request regional and district health authorities to break down the figures on relative costs of treatments within each hospital and each service. It is essential that we have performance indicators to measure the success and failure of competing demands and treatments. The time has now come when we must start asking the difficult questions on finance.

For many years, services such as education, social services, police and health repelled any question about financial accountability through measures like cost-benefit analysis by the argument that they were qualitative services and not susceptible to measurement by crude quantitative yardsticks. The Griffiths inquiry into the management of the National Health Service in 1983, for example, reported:

> "We have been told that the National Health Service is different from business in management terms, not least because the NHS is not concerned with the profit motive and must be judged by wider social standards which cannot be measured."

The report found that these differences could be greatly overstated. Academics like Alan Maynard in 1983 and A. L. Cochrane in 1972 looked at the lack of evaluation of health care systems and concluded:

> "the majority of medical therapies in use today have not been evaluated in a scientific manner . . . the link between health care inputs and outputs unclear".

We must also provide more information about the behaviour of health care systems:

> "It will be a poor investment in scarce resources unless managers can be induced to use this information and change the behaviour of decision makers for the better".

Again, the Griffiths inquiry, reporting in 1983, said that the National Health Service management of the time lacked

> "any real, continuous evaluation of its performance criteria".

and that the National Health Service is about

> "delivering services to people. It is not about organising systems for their own 'sake'. The accountability review process . . . should start with a unit performance review based on management budgets which involve clinicians at hospital level."

After noting that many hospitals

> "do not yet have budgets",

the report recommended that

> "each unit of management has a total budget and that procedures should be established for the development of the budget and monitoring performance against them, rules for virement between unit budgets and individual budgets within the unit, authorisation limits and the flexible use of total resources; and the financial relationship between unit budgets and any district-wide budgets for functional services on which the unit may call."

There are signs that people in the Health Service are considering the cost of provision. In another article, in 1986, Alan Maynard argued that over the past few decades the way of financing the service had changed only marginally. In a fascinating article entitled "Balancing the budget and maintaining standards of care", he suggested that the Health Service should consider "Quality adjusted life years", or QALYs. That is something that the Department should consider carefully. It involves health care inputs, such as expenditure on hospital beds, drugs, doctors, nurses and ancillary staff, the health care activities or processes involved in the measurement of

throughput, such as the number of GP consultations, the number of out-patient visits, the number of in-patient stays and the length of stay.

Those matters in turn affect health status outcomes, which are the measures of impact, both positive and negative, of inputs and activities on the patient's health status, or the amount of life that he will continue to have as a result of the treatment. We must consider those matters if we are to measure the effectiveness of the treatment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent talked about consultants, which is a sector that we must tackle and challenge. At the moment, rational decision-making is often being thrown out of the window by one or two consultants who spend their time waving shrouds and arguing not on the basis of rational decisions but on the basis of what they consider politically expedient at the time.

I regret that in debates on the Health Service we are often subject to emotional outcries — rightly in many cases—but we do not dispassionately ask how we spend money and why we got into the position in the first place. Sometimes, consultants have a lot to answer for in the way that they make decisions on hospital expenditure.

Many of my friends are nurses, and what comes through from their experiences is that the present shift system in the Health Service is in need of radical overhaul. On the afternoon shift, there is often an overlap of three or four hours between different shifts, but that is the only time of the day that it occurs. It often means that nurses are standing around with little to do, instead of being properly utilised.

We must consider the work that nurses are asked to undertake. All too often we ask people who are highly trained, and who have joined the Health Service well motivated and ready to help with patient care, to be no more than ward orderlies. We must examine the role of ancillary staff and ensure that the trained staff are used properly for nursing.

I am most concerned about the proposals in Project 2000. The idea that we should turn nursing from a practical on-the-job profession into some sort of quasi-academic skill, where nurses rarely see a patient and spend most of their time in colleges of further education being taught in a classroom, is not the best way of utilising skilled and motivated young people.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that several years ago when I was working in Scotland for the Department of Health a study was done that showed that people went into nursing or medicine as a career because they longed to help patients. At that time, the medical profession's training meant that they did not see a patient for two years, which was changed.

Mr. Bennett: That is an extremely valuable point, and it backs up what I am saying. We must ensure that those who have a vocation and desire to help patients do not have that desire stifled by being thrust into a classroom away from the people whom they want to help.

It is unrealistic to believe that we can have an all-graduate nursing profession. Insufficient people are interested in working in nursing to supply the necessary number of graduates. I do not think that it is necessary to have people educated to degree level to work in nursing. The evidence we have about the present nursing force shows that we get very good nurses who come in with five O-levels or a couple of A-levels. That seems to be about the sort of academic standard that we should be demanding. The idea that we should go all the way up to degree level will put off a large number of able young men and women who want to come into nursing now.

We have to look at the appointments system in hospitals. I was interested to read in the debate on the Health Service a few weeks ago that one of my hon. Friends referred to the fact that many hospitals call up 40 people at the same time for an appointment. I understand why they do that—because many people do not turn up at the time for which they have been called and the hospital wants to ensure that there are sufficient patients to be seen by the doctors at a certain time. However, there is another side to the argument. When 40 people are called at the same time, people know that there is no point in coming at 9.30 am; if they are not seen until 2.30 pm, there is a natural reluctance to turn up. I believe that hospitals have to look again at the appointments system to see whether they can work out a far more rational way of calling people for such appointments.

Friends of mine who work in the hospital service and in accident and emergency wards and casualty departments tell me that another area to be looked at is the number of people who come into casualty departments who should not be there. I am told that up to 75 per cent. of people who come to accident and emergency units at local hospitals should have gone to their general practitioner. They come to the hospital at all times of the day and night because they do not want to wait in a doctor's surgery. That is a dreadful misuse of the trained, skilled staff in the accident and emergency units. I welcome the experiments that I understand are being carried out at Oldchurch hospital in Romford to ensure that the accident and emergency department is used by those for whom it is intended.

I suspect that some doctors shuffle off their more irritating patients to the local hospital or send them along for an X-ray or whatever in order to get them off their hands. Doctors should be aware of how much an individual patient costs every time they are sent to the hospital for some form of treatment. Therefore, I also welcome the proposals in the White Paper on primary health care, which will enable doctors to do much of what is currently done by hospitals.

I believe that the main aim of the Health Service must be to be responsive to patients. At the moment, there is little connection between the needs of patients, the cost of the service and the provision offered. We need a re-examination of the financing of the Health Service to ensure that we get far more competition into it and that private money is used more widely. We need to look at the way in which we fund the Health Service, at the insurance system and the role of private health insurance and private health care schemes. If we do that, we will perhaps get better value for money from the £21 billion we are spending. Conservative Members as well as Opposition Members are frustrated by the fact that that money does not seem to be spent as wisely as it could be.

4.18 am

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I thank the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) for once again bringing before the House an important topic for discussion. It is important that he should have raised the

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

issue of "because we can we must" and whether we should continue with treatment simply because we have the medical knowledge and technology to do so. It is right to consider what have now been called quality adjusted life years. However, one of the problems of discussing that issue in the current climate is the fear that it is being raised not through concern about the patient and relatives but about the Exchequer and public spending. It is difficult to disentangle the two.

The starting point when discussing whether treatment should be engaged in or intervention in relation to someone who may be dying should be proceeded with must be the well-being of the patient and considerations for the family rather than whether it will cost too much. There is a great deal of suspicion that the sinister ulterior motive behind these issues being brought forward now is the desire to save money.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) talked about people unjustifiably clogging up casualty departments. In London and many other large cities people go to casualty departments because of a breakdown in the primary health care system, particularly at night. People cannot get their GP to come out to see them. They know from experience that, under the deputising service, it will take hours for the doctor to arrive, that, as they are paid according to the number of visits they make, they will stay only a few minutes and be exhausted from overwork. Such people are therefore worried about the quality of service when the doctor does finally turn up — and they are voting with their feet. They end up getting a cab, or borrowing a friend's car or taking their own, to the casualty department.

We should not blame the victim and complain that people have not been prepared to sit in a GP's surgery. If GPs provided a good service, day and night, people would go to them first. When people go to casualty departments, they inevitably face a long wait to see a doctor who they do not know and who is not familiar with their case, but the alternative is worse.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: There is a great deal of truth in what the hon. Lady says, but a friend, who is a nurse in an accident and emergency department in a major London teaching hospital, told me that people are going during the day with headaches and cut fingers — things that it would not occur to most people to go the doctor with. I admit that those are extreme cases, but we must deter people from turning up at accident departments for trivial reasons.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman is doing a blame-the-victim number. He must understand that people sometimes turn up during the day because they have telephoned their doctor for an appointment and been told that they cannot go for two weeks because the doctor is so busy. Of course doctors and nurses are frustrated, when there are real accident emergencies to deal with, by receiving people who should be dealt with by the primary health care system.

It is important, however, that we do not blame the victim of the primary health care system. Rather, we must ensure that people are able to go to their family doctor and receive a good service day and night. The hon. Member for Pembroke said that he is concerned that we are not getting good value for money and that we are spending too much money——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I did not say that.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman said that we are not getting good value for money. We must remind ourselves that the British Health Service is run on a shoestring compared with other European countries and the United States. Yet, despite the comparatively low level of funding, the quality of service is still high. Therefore, rather than asking whether the Health Service is inefficient, we should be recognising that, despite all the constraints on it, it is still efficient.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether we should be considering more insurance-based schemes and private funding. We have only to look to America, where such schemes are operating, to see the price that is paid if that is the path that is trodden. The United States spends roughly twice as much of its national wealth on its health service as we do on ours, but it does not get such a good system. Moreover, because the United States has a multiplicity of insurance-based schemes, it spends a great deal on the administrative costs of constantly sending out bills to insurance companies or assessments and bills to individuals. The system becomes overloaded, and that is a disadvantage that we do not have.

In a system that is a mixture of private funding, insurance-based funding and the public sector, it is difficult to plan for developments in health care, whether in the primary or hospital sectors. It is clear that the individual patient gets a much better deal from a system if it is planned in advance and developed sensibly. In the United States it is impossible to plan sensibly and to have a strategic approach to health care because it is such a jumble of a number of different systems. Therefore, not only is it very expensive, but it does not give the individual patient a good deal at the end of the day. It would be wrong to assume that the poor get a bad deal in the United States, but that it is all right for the rich.

When a health care system involves a large element of profit, whether it be insurance-based schemes or straight payment over the counter, those techniques or treatments that are most profitable tend to be developed most strongly. All sorts of medical interventions and treatments are developed for the patient, not necessarily in response to the patient's condition but because the system has developed the the habit of overtreating so that more bills can be sent to the insurance company and thus more money is made. That is a real distortion in the development of medical care in the United States because of the involvement of commercial medicine and insurance-based schemes to which Britain has not, as yet, fallen victim, for which I am thankful.

My sister had two children in an NHS hospital in London and had twins in the United States. She was astonished at the level of intervention after the children were born. Every test was performed on them every half hour from head to toe, logged up and charged to the insurance company. I am well aware that some of those tests are engaged in because everybody is trying to cover his back so that he will not be sued if anything goes wrong. The legal system has a part to play in this, but that is not the whole story. The more treatment a patient receives, the more the service is paid, so a great deal is done.

It is ironic that there seems to be a growing recognition that the Health Service is under-funded, simply to provide a platform from which people can launch themselves with suggestions for alternative funding. I would argue that the recognition that the Health Service is under-funded should lead to pressure for more funds to be put into the Health Service and not necessarily to demands to change the system by which the Health Service is funded. Wherever the funds come from, they will be part of the national wealth that is being put into the Health Service. We might as well build on a system that uses resources efficiently —that is, their use by the public sector—rather than put those resources into the private sector which would still take resources from the national wealth but result in a much more expensive health care system that could not provide such a good deal.

I turn now to waiting lists. The hon. Member for Pembroke mentioned "shroud waving". It is unfortunate that if consultants, who after all are trained to treat patients, save lives and ease suffering—that is why they went into the Health Service and chose that type of work — speak out because they are concerned about the deterioration in patient care and their inability to do their job properly because of spending restrictions, they should be accused of shroud waving. It is absolutely unacceptable to challenge their good faith in that respect.

I spoke the other day to a heart surgeon from Guy's hospital who told me of the heartbreak and frustration that he feels because he has been told that he must reduce the number of patients on whom he operates although the theatre is available, as are the nurses. Indeed, the whole system is geared to provide coronary bypass operations, for which there is a large waiting list. Despite those facts, that surgeon has been told to reduce the number of operations that he performs in order to save money.

He told me that, when explaining to a patient why he or she needs an operation, he may have to say that if they do not have the operation they could die. Obviously, the risks must be explained. When a patient is told that he can have an operation that will save his life, the consultant is immediately asked, "When can I have the operation, doctor?" The consultant replies, "Six months, if you are lucky." So, having explained to the patient that he or she needs that operation and that he advises it because the patient might die without it, he must then explain that the operation cannot take place for at least six months. Of course, the patient knows that during that time there is a chance that he or she could die or become more ill and less able to recover when the operation does take place.

The consultant said that the next question is often, "If I go private, when could I have the operation?" The consultant is able to reply, "If you go private, you can have the operation next week." We are getting into an invidious situation if people then feel that they must borrow money from the bank, take out a loan or borrow from their relatives because for about £4,000 that possible death sentence of a six-month wait can be lifted.

When consultants bring such issues into the public arena, it is a travesty to be told that they are shroud waving. Those consultants are raising an important matter for debate. Indeed, it is their public duty, and I welcome the fact that they do so. To accuse them of shroud waving is to try to stifle the debate because the Government are trying to avoid criticism.

Mr. Rowe: Some consultants do shroud wave. There is no question about it. Some consultants play on the emotions of the public over cases which, it is true, are very sad. However, that is often done by consultants who, for one reason or another, have chosen to play very little part in the administration or responsibilities of the unit in which they operate. Although there are plenty of good consultants who raise perfectly responsible points, there are far too many of the other kind as well.

Ms. Harman: Incidentally, the surgeon from Guy's hospital, to whom I spoke the other day, has actually taken on the management of his unit as well as doing all his surgical work. However, he is still told by the district authority that he must cut down the number of operations that he has to carry out.

Conservative Members talk with disdain about emotional cases, as though they are somehow unpleasant. Of course, the fact that last year 24 premature babies died after being denied intensive care cots is emotional. There is something wrong with people who do not think that that issue is emotional and deserves an answer. It is certainly an emotional issue for parents who see the chance of life for a premature baby being denied because of a lack of intensive care cots. We must recognise their feelings and respond to and be concerned about them, rather than condemn them as emotional and, therefore, not something that should be part of the debate, or regard consultants as shroud waving. It is worrying that waiting lists remain high.

I saw the junior Minister's comments about going private reported in the newspapers yesterday. We can clearly see that private insurance companies are issuing leaflets stating, "Can you afford to wait so long on the waiting list? By the time you get your treatment, you might just be inoperable or will have lost your job. You had better go private." At the same time, the Government are failing to attack the long wait for treatment that many people have. We also see the junior Minister urging the well-off—those on over £18,000 a year—to go private. That is shameful. The point about a taxed-based system is that the more one earns, the more one pays. One is entitled to use that system, whether one pays nothing—because one does not pay any tax because one is not earning—or whether one pays a great deal. We should not develop the arguments that somehow people who are not paying taxes are scroungers and should not be entitled to use the system, or that people who have paid an awful lot should not be entitled to use the system because they are too well off. We should recognise the benefits of a comprehensive national health care system and build on that base. The Health Service is a tremendous asset. We should build on it rather than try to chop it off piecemeal and allow it to disintegrate.

Talking about things disappearing piecemeal, I wish to get some answers from the Minister on family planning. District health authorities, faced as they are with real difficulty in balancing their budgets, are looking around for services that they can cut and from which people will not die as a result. Clearly, many general managers have lit upon family planning. They think to themselves, "Well, we can cut the odd session here and the odd clinic there and nobody will die as a result." Or they may think, "Well, people can go to their GPs and get family planning advice." What is the Minister's view about the dire threat that hangs over the district authority provision of family

[Ms. Harman]

planning facilities? We should try to improve contraceptive advice and reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies. We should not allow family planning to go into retreat. It is not an answer for people to see their general practitioners for advice. It would reduce women's choice. Women might choose not to go to their GPs for contraceptive advice. They might particularly want to have a woman doctor giving them contraceptive advice but have a male GP, or their husbands might have had vasectomies and they may feel embarrassed about asking their GPs for contraceptive advice. There might be a whole load of reasons.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): In that case, they would not need contraceptive advice.

Ms. Harman: Indeed, they might need contraceptive advice, even if their husbands have had vasectomies. That is precisely why they might not want to go to their GP.

The other reason why it is not a good idea in current circumstances for people to be forced to go to their GP for contraceptive advice without the opportunity to go to a clinic is that most GPs are not trained to provide contraceptive advice. I am sure that nobody here would relish the idea of being fitted with an intra-uterine device or a cap by a doctor who was not trained to do so. Many GPs who are not trained to fit IUDs or caps do not relish the idea either, so when people ask for contraceptive advice they are dished out with the pill. That distorts the sort of contraceptive prescription they are given. They might be given what the GP is able to provide rather than what might be best for them in their circumstances.

I should like to have a very firm reassurance from the Minister tonight that she regards family planning services as a central part of mainstream National Health Service provision and that it will not be abdicated to the charitable sector. That sector has done much to move the Health Service sensibly into this sphere, but it does not wish to take a step backwards and be left carrying the can. Will she assure us that we will not be left with untrained GPs and no choice in the provision of contraception? I hope that she will show the House tonight her recognition of the dire situation facing family planning services in district health authorities and tell us what she is going to do to ensure that they do not carry on down that path.

I know that the Government issued a circular recently to district health authorities about terminal care. I very much welcome the recognition that the Health Service must be caring and that the Government value the work it can do for patients who will not recover as well as for those who will. We have a long way to go in this respect, and a path has been well charted for us in the Health Service by voluntary and charitable organisations which have been working in this sphere for a long time. They, like me, want to see the Health Service assimilate and take up the experience and expertise gained within the voluntary and charitable sectors. However it does not make sense for the Minister to issue circulars to district health authorities saying that there should be more concern for the terminally ill when DHAs are hardly able to maintain their level of services for those with some chance of recovery.

The Minister ought to be honest enough to recognise that the hopes kindled when she talked about the importance of terminal care have been dashed in practice. As someone said, it is like rearranging the furniture on the Titanic; if the ship is not safe as a whole, it is difficult to develop services and add to them.

I hope that the Minister will be honest enough to recognise the situation that nurses are in at present. Far from being able to go on training courses to learn how to deal with terminally ill patients and find the time to look after them when they come back to work, that is just not happening.

I should like to finish by saying something about agency nurses. They are not just more expensive than directly-employed nurses, although it is an important feature that a health authority pays much more for agency nurses than for its own employees; there will not be such good quality of care.

Agency nurses are less likely to know where things are and whom to contact, because they are not part of a team. So they do not work as well as part of a team and they cannot nurse as well as people who are part of a mainstream team. Ideally, a ward will have nurses who know where everything is, know whom to call when they need someone, and know the people with whom they are working. They should have a continuous relationship with patients who have been in the ward for some time and they should know their way around. That does not happen with agency nurses.

Another point about agency nurses that has not been sufficiently highlighted is that when they have done a full week's work in the National Health Service and are working at the weekend, they are likely to be exhausted and unable to provide a good quality of care.

I hope that the Minister will say something tonight about the recruitment freeze, which is already affecting nurses. District health authorities are imposing such a freeze on nurses in a vain attempt to meet their budgets, and the freeze is threatened to continue next year. It should be recognised, too, that we cannot enhance the grading structure and improve pay at the top of the scale by taking from poorly paid nurses at the bottom of it. I hope that the Minister will take time to answer some of the points that I have raised.

4.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): In the few minutes that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) has left me — she made a 27-minute speech — I shall endeavour to do just what she has asked.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on once again having got me up in the middle of the night to talk about an important subject. I hope that he will win the ballot next time, too, but be kind enough to choose a subject such as the arts in Manchester. I shall work through the questions in my hon. Friend's important and valuable speech.

My hon. Friend asked whether we could have local bargaining for pay. If that was agreed, pay rates would rise in the home counties. If my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) is right, they would rise in rural Wales, too. Unless funding followed, the problems of balancing income and expenditure would make things worse, so we should be wary, because that is perhaps a slightly simplistic approach. We rely heavily on recruiting young women—and, increasingly, young men—into the Health Service. One problem is that the number of school

leavers is dropping sharply. We shall have difficulty in recruiting staff whatever the pay rates, now or in the future.

My hon. Friend asked, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke, whether we needed regions. I tend to feel that restructuring is the last resort of those who have no idea of what to do next. I am reluctant to have another reorganisation of the Health Service, having gone through more than one in my time in it. The last reorganisation had a strong element of everyone swapping around on musical chairs, getting paid £3,000 a year for doing the same job. Meanwhile, the old lady with the hip operation or the old gentleman with the heart attack were still waiting outside the door for treatment. So I am not sure that reorganisation solves problems—sometimes it creates them.

My hon. Friend asked about the slowness in moving patients and money out of London. I do not know whether he has had a chance to read the *Official Report* of the Adjournment debate that took place on 27 November about St. Thomas's, in which we aired some of these difficulties. The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), who raised that issue—his constituency is in London—felt strongly that the money should stay in London. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) suggested in an equally interesting and well thought out speech that we put the burden back on the major centres and stopped taking the money out of them. So my two highly intellectual hon. Friends have demonstrated the problem of choosing which solution is right.

It has been said several times tonight that primary care reform should help, partly by scrutiny of the referral rate of GPs, and partly by GPs doing more themselves. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke was right to talk about the pressures on casualty departments. He forgot to say that about one third of the patients who roll into casualty departments are drunk, and many of the problems are caused by alcohol. Therefore, whatever we do about GPs or hospitals, we have a distinct problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent asked about who should hold consultant contracts and whether it was appropriate for them to be held by the regional health authority. I used to be the chairman of a teaching district and I held the consultant contracts. I can assure my hon. Friend that we had exactly the same problems. It is a question not of who holds the contract, but of who can enforce the contract and who can persuade, preferably, the consultants concerned that we all have an obligation to keep within our budget. Indeed, we all have an obligation to have budgets and it is an important part of health care to know what it is costing every time one does an intervention of some kind.

My hon. Friend asked about the cost of technology. I intervened to suggest that one might have more than two hip operations in one's lifetime. I was quite serious about that. The early operations lasted about a decade. If I get my first hip replacement in my fifties and, God willing, I live to be in my nineties, I might expect to have several renewals; I know of constituents who have had several. That puts the matter in context.

Most admissions to acute hospitals—about 60 per cent.—are elderly people. We are pleased about that and they are substantial recipients and the demanders of health care. Life expectancy is rising at about two years per decade.

My hon. Friend asked about caring for the terminally ill. The hon. Member for Peckham spoke about the circular that I issued earlier this year. I agree with my hon. Friend and with other hon. Members about the terminally ill. We do not care nearly well enough for our terminally ill. Frequently, we do not care for them at all. People should die with dignity—and, indeed, most deaths in Britain occur at home.

One of the most distressing aspects of some of the recent discussions has been that the shroud waving is done with people who are dying. To have patients who are terminally ill with cancer rolled up before me as if it is my fault that they will not survive is wicked. It is a cruel way of trying to wring money out of the Health Service, often for quite inappropriate purposes, because often it would be much better if the patient were able to go home to his or her family to receive appropriate home and palliative care to meet the end with some peace. I feel strongly about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent asked about prevention. He was right to do that and I am glad that he did. I say to the hon. Member for Peckham that if we just continue putting more money into surgery and fail to tackle prevention, then we fail those people who are heart patients. The number of people needing care and treatment, particularly for heart disease which is our major killer, is not under control and is among the highest in the world. We fail not only the people who wait for care, but their families, sons and daughters, as well because there seems to be a family proneness to heart disease. Unless the nation tackles the matter of the prevention of preventable diseases, especially heart disease and cancer, all that we will continue to do is to build more and more hospitals and cut up more and more veins and arteries but not improve the quality of life for our people as a whole.

I am afraid that I shall not have time to deal with all the points made in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone made an eloquent speech and spoke about the highly efficient hospital in her constituency which, as she knows, I visited last year. Historically, Maidstone has had a surprisingly low level of locally provided hospital health care. The nucleus-designed Maidstone hospital was opened in 1983 and replaced two and a half old hospitals. Things began to improve, took off at a rate of knots, and activity has risen phenomenally since the hospital opened. Overall, activity is about 30 per cent. up.

Some types of day case work has gone up by over 200 per cent. The key point is that last year alone in-patient treatments rose by 13 per cent. Nobody could plan for that level of increase in demand or for that level of increase in expenditure—13 per cent. in 12 months. I know that the hospital is well in the forefront of cost improvement programmes and I know about all the things that it is doing. I have before me a note which the chairman prepared for my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who will appreciate the kind remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone. The chairman says that they are re-examining all possible cost improvement ideas, exploring all legal and soon-to-be-legal income-generating ideas, and that they would welcome more insurance-based patients. She says that they note that their two local private hospitals are running well below capacity. They are reviewing all existing services with a view to paring the low priority areas, and even recognising that there would be some concern about those.

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

I am able to help my hon. Friend with one problem about the storm damage. We hope to make announcements shortly about some financial help being given to those regions that have suffered particularly from storm damage. I cannot tell my hon. Friend tonight how much it will be—it will be given to the regions and they will decide but it will be substantial. We hope that that will assist with solving the problems of districts such as Maidstone, especially their immediate short-term problems.

Any reading of debates on health care, going back to the time when the whole thing was founded 40 years ago, leads one to the conclusion that all Ministers who stand at this Dispatch Box have had exactly the same problem: the money goes up, and the demand goes up even faster. It is never likely that the demand will decrease and, under a Conservative Government, I suspect it is unlikely that the funding will decrease either. It will carry on going up, but it will never be enough.

London Ambulance Service

4.56 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am glad to follow the last debate on the National Health Service as a whole by initiating a debate on the London ambulance service, although this is a debate that should not be necessary. First, one would expect any ambulance service in the United Kingdom to be conducted in such a way that a debate in public on its efficiency and proper funding would be unnecessary. Secondly, any Government's view of this public service should be so high that criticism or controversy of the sort which I am afraid I must initiate tonight should be unnecessary.

This debate, as with the previous debate, is about resources. Ideally, I suppose, ambulance services, being domiciliary and local, should be a matter not for Parliament but for some form of local government. Indeed, until not long ago in London that was the case, coming as they did under the LCC for many years and, later, the GLC, which the Government have dissolved.

Somewhere in the Consolidated Fund there is an amount for the London ambulance service, because as from April of this year that service became directly funded by the Department of Health and Social Security and not by a levy on the four regional hospital authorities which constitute the London area, and I shall conclude my remarks by discussing the budget.

This is not the first debate on this topic in this House. On 15 May 1986 the hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) raised this issue from the Government Benches. I have had two Adjournment debates on it—on 3 October 1986, beginning at column 258 of the *Official Report* for that date, and on 14 May 1987, beginning at column 477. Both dealt primarily with the non-emergency service, which was put into a state of disruption, particularly in the summer of 1986, and I raised the matter of the so-called "walking cases" with the Minister.

We have had major differences of opinion on these issues, and I now believe, as a result of subsequent correspondence and parliamentary answers, that we have a major disagreement about some of the facts. I shall probe these matters tonight because there might be a prima facie case of maladministration. I do not want to say that that is so until I have given the Minister a chance to reply tonight, and subsequently in writing if she wishes to do so. I appreciate—although I do not apologise for bringing her here at this hour to answer the debate—that she may wish to reflect on some of the points I shall make.

It is unfortunately necessary for me to raise other topics, including that of the emergency service in 1987 and particularly from the spring of this year. Then I shall look at the so-called ORCON standards and the relationship of that to London. My next subject will be equipment and the control of the London ambulance service, and finally I shall return to the important matter of finance and the budget because here is one service, the emergency service, which nobody would deny must be demand led. That is a very unusual service for any Government to provide, especially for this Government.

I want to begin with the question of the non-emergency service. I revert to the debate on 31 October 1986 when the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security said:

"A report in *The Guardian* of 27 October confirms some of the events. It says that the London Ambulance Service is

carrying 30 per cent. fewer non-emergency patients today than it was two years ago. It says that only 27,500 patient journeys per week were being made this year compared with 39,500 in 1984. About 10,500 fewer walking patients were being transported—a reduction of 44 per cent. I am more than happy at that development." — [*Official Report*, 31 October 1986; Vol. 103, c. 666.]

Walking patients are those who do not have to be carried on stretchers or by wheelchairs, but are certified by a medical authority as requiring ambulances to take them to out-patient departments at hospitals. I challenged the whole basis of that with the Minister on 31 October. I said that the matter had arisen as the result of a Rayner-type scrutiny which had no proper basis in fact.

On 6 November 1986 I asked the Secretary of State for Social Services:

"what studies he has made and what evidence he has received, concerning alleged non-appropriate use of the non-emergency ambulance services in London; and by what percentage those calls have changed between 1984 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: No formal studies have been made, as far as I am aware. The London ambulance service has drawn district health authorities' attention to the criteria set out in HC 78 (45) which states . . . we have no information on alleged non-appropriate use of non-emergency ambulance transport."— [*Official Report*, 6 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. *598*.]

That was the Minister's justification for the massive cut of 44 per cent. which affected many people in east London. Elderly ladies wrote to me saying that they had had no fewer than eight out-patient appointments cancelled during 1986 because the non-emergency ambulances did not arrive.

I have no sympathy whatever for the Minister having to reply to two debates tonight—*[Laughter.]* This is no laughing matter. The Minister is laughing, yet the amount of disruption and dismay that she has caused in my constituency alone as a result of this hard-hearted, hard-boiled attitude is almost unbelievable. I fight with words here, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have no sympathy with the Minister for being here, but I have some sympathy with her because she laughs at such a serious and important matter.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I am laughing at the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Spearing: I do not mind if the Minister laughs at me, but she dare not laugh at my constituents.

Mrs. Currie: I am not laughing at the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mr. Spearing: I am glad to hear that.

In a letter to me on 26 June 1987, after the second debate on these matters, the Minister wrote in response to my claim that the massive cut was a result of the Rayner Studies. She said:

"With such a vast organisation as the National Health Service there are inevitably areas which can be managed more effectively. This is why Norman Fowler established a series of scrutinies on similar lines to the programme Lord Rayner had introduced in Whitehall. The scrutinies were designed to look at areas in which services to the public and value for money could be improved."

Fine; we would all go along with that. The Minister continued:

"Therefore, as you will appreciate, the scrutiny of the non-emergency ambulance service you referred to was initiated by this Department. The scrutiny suggested that there was misuse of the service."

That is directly contrary to the written answer that the Minister gave me on 6 November 1986. Either there was evidence of misuse or there was not. I notice the words

"The scrutiny suggested that there was misuse of the service".

I have yet to see that evidence, and I ask the Minister to produce the evidence now or later.

During the debate I also asked how regional hospital authorities check on the private contractors employed to take up some of the demand that the London ambulance service was prevented from meeting. In an answer dated 6 May 1987, the Minister said:

"Health authorities are responsible for day-to-day management of National Health Service ambulance services. It is for them to arrange the most appropriate efficient and cost-effective means of transport for each of the patients the ambulance service is asked to convey. This may involve the use of taxi, hire car or other private contractors as well as volunteers. Standards of safety and payments to private contractors are not set centrally: health authorities are responsible for negotiating contracts locally and for setting standards of service, patient care and safety." — [*Official Report*, 6 May 1987; Vol. 115, c. *429*.]

I have no doubt that taxi drivers and mini-cab drivers are good-hearted people, but they are not trained to provide the service for which at one time the non-emergency service of the London ambulance service was responsible. Even if the Minister turns out to be right and there is some evidence of misuse, it is quite wrong not to lay down central standards for the use of private contractors, particularly when sick people have to be taken to out-patient departments, as they must be if they are to recover and regain their health.

The second area I outlined was emergency services. Unfortunately, the emergency services are now in trouble, despite what the Minister said in the debate on 14 May 1987:

"The new salary structure for ambulance men came into effect in March 1986 and it changed radically the pay arrangements for ambulance personnel. It provided an opportunity for all ambulance services to rid themselves of inefficient working practices. With the introduction of the new structure, the London ambulance service took steps to improve the front line — in other words, the emergency service that it provides. This meant that temporarily staff resources had to be transferred from non-emergency services to be redeployed on front-line work."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1987; Vol. 116, c. 482.]

The hon. Lady was saying that we had to change the standard of the non-emergency services to keep the front-line service going, but in the early part of this year the front-line service was not kept going.

We now have difficulties with the emergency service — arguments and allegations have been made about shortages of vehicles. In the debate from which I have just quoted, I said that I had received evidence that since April of this year the DHSS had cash-capped the ambulance service, and the managers, in order to keep within the cash cap, had cut the budgets from the top, so that all managers of ambulance services were told how much overtime could be worked in their stations. Ambulance men were standing by at home, not able to go out, when vehicles were available.

There was much argument about that, and the Minister may wish to contest the facts, but it is clear from her letter to me of 8 September 1987 that there had been difficulties. She challenged some of the facts I had given, and she may have been right in making some corrections. Her letter said:

[Mr. Spearing]

"Officials have looked into the articles you enclosed in your letter"—

I had enclosed numerous press articles—

"and they inform me that, for example, during the 24 hour period mentioned for 29 May 58 vehicles and not 52 were single manned for some period; of these 30 were single manned for one hour or less; 11 for one hour, but less than two; two for more than two hours, but less than three and three were single manned for less than five hours".

The figures may have been marginally wrong, but for that number of ambulances to be single-manned at that time shows that there was something wrong. We know that, since that time, there have been arguments within the service, which is not noted for its lack of concern for the public. No ambulance man will do things against the public interest without good reason, otherwise he would not, I am sure, be accepted for the service.

In a written answer on 10 July 1987 the Minister again said:

"No emergency ambulance shifts were lost due to constraints of finance"—[*Official Report*, 10 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. *311*.]

I find that difficult to believe. Indeed, I received a copy of a letter from the National Union of Employees after our last debate on this subject, which had been sent to one "J. Moore, MP, Secretary of State". In that letter, dated 16 June, the union made various allegations about the number of ambulances that were single-manned. It said that, on 24 May, there were 39 single-manned ambulances and that the number of ambulances "unmanned or immobilised" was 26. The union sent the evidence to the Minister and asked him to do something about it.

I do not know what has happened since then, but I hope that there has been some change. I have been given to understand that, since about June, there has been a change in the arrangements for overtime and the manning of ambulances. There has been some relief of the conditions and this may be due to what I call "cascade capping" of ambulance stations. If so, that is welcome. It may have had something to do with the questions that I have asked. It may have had something to do with the previous debate. I hope that it was.

It is also true that, since that time, there have been other problems as a result of additional demand. I suggest that additional demand occurs if hospitals are closed, as they often are, and therefore journeys are longer. I have been told that quite a lot of the work of the emergency ambulance service is now to fill in the gaps in the non-emergency service. That work involves the transport of patients from one hospital to another because of the closure of wards, the shortage of nurses and the fact that operations must be done elsewhere or not at all. In other words, there is a cascade effect on the ambulance service as a result of all the problems of which we are aware. There is a knock-on effect, or, more graphically, a knock-back effect.

I am told that, as a result of those problems, there were discussions with the ambulance men about spreading the resources in different ways. There were new ideas about shifts and transferring ambulances from areas that were relatively well off to those that were not. I believe that that meant that resources were spread more thinly. It is no surprise to learn that there have been some industrial problems, and the Minister may refer to them. However, I understand that they have been resolved.

The question of spreading resources brings me directly to the standards that are laid down by the Department of Health and Social Security. I hope that the Minister agrees that those standards are right and that the service and its budget should be built upon them. The basis for those standards is derived from the ORCON standard, and to show how that standard applies to London I wish to quote from the report made to North East Thames regional health authority at its meeting in September 1987 regarding the ambulance service. Paragraph 11 states:

"The Emergency Call standard is that 95 per cent. of calls must be activated within 3 minutes of the receipt of the call"—

that is, activated from the central control.

"For the L.A.S. as a whole the current standard achieved is 91 per cent. and for the North East Division, 93 per cent.

In addition in metropolitan areas it is recommended that for 95 per cent. of emergency calls the scene should be reached within 14 minutes of the receipt of the call. For the North East Division the figure is 17 minutes with 87 per cent. of emergency calls responded to within 14 minutes. In the service as a whole, 89 per cent. of calls are reached within 14 minutes."

Most of those standards, therefore, are not reached.

Paragraph 12 states:

"The activation times for emergency calls achieved by the L.A.S. leaves room for improvement and it is expected that when the Central Emergency Control has been updated activation times will be reduced. However, the project is now running two years behind schedule and consideration is being given to bringing some of the new components, such as up-to-date telephones, into the existing Control.

Given traffic congestion in London, which is particularly bad in the North East Division it is unrealistic to expect that 95 per cent. of all emergency calls will be met within a response time of 14 minutes. The L.A.S. Short-Term Programme for the current year proposed a figure of 90 per cent. as a target and this has been accepted by the managing authority. Achievement of this target in the North East Division will be assisted by the review of the A. and E."—

that is, accident and emergency—

"rotas currently being undertaken."

In plain language, that means that, because of traffic congestion in north-east London — and we all understand the problems — instead of upping the equipment and manpower, the service is reducing the standard. As an east London Member, I do not consider that satisfactory. It should be the other way around. I am not saying that every year the standard will be hit: that will not necessarily always happen. However, deliberately to reduce the standard is surely to go about matters in the wrong way, and it is not untypical of what has been happening.

Let me now deal with the problem of equipment. There is dissatisfaction with some of the vehicles, which, I suppose, is to be expected. I understand that Britain does not produce an ambulance chassis: I do not think we ever did. That is a great pity. We might have led the world, and I am sure that design and practice in London could have led Britain—as, I believe, it used to in the days of the London County council, when our great Daimler ambulances were much admired throughout the world. Why can we not bring that back? I am sure that there would be plenty of enthusiasm among staff and experienced officers if it could be done.

The question of control equipment was mentioned in the extract that I have just read. I have also been told that for the sake of economy, less experienced people have been employed in the control room. I can think of nothing that would reduce the morale of ambulance men more than for people to be in control who had not been out on the job.

If I may be a little imprudent, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is rather like someone occupying the Chair in the House without having been a Member of Parliament. I cannot imagine hon. Members agreeing to that for a moment.

Why should ambulance men out on the job speak over the radio to people who have little insight into the job that they have been doing? Surely that is absolutely wrong. I believe that it has happened, but that there may be second thoughts about it; if so, I hope that there will be some very quick thinking.

Let me now refer to the vexed question of defibrillators. I shall not go into alternative descriptions of them, as the Minister is here tonight. However, I understand that they are a life-saving apparatus used in cases of heart failure, and there is a possibility that they can be placed in all emergency ambulances. Indeed, I understand that some ambulances already contain them. I am told that in the East Ham depot, in my borough of Newham, there is one defibrillator; in West Ham there is none. I understand that in some parts of the country most ambulances are fitted with them. What I do know is that ambulance men are encouraged to go round with begging bowls and ask the public, industrial firms and charitable bodies to give money for defibrillators to be fitted in their ambulances. I am told that they cost between £2,000 and £3,000 each. What is that—one-tenth of an ambulance man's pay for a year? I do not know, but it is something of that sort.

I should like to know from the Minister — if not tonight then at a later time—what the national policy is on defibrillators. Can they not be fitted to every ambulance, or need they not be fitted? Are they being over-publicised? Or is it just a gimmick? Do the Government really think it meet and proper for ambulance men to spend their hard-earned spare time going round running raffles and doing all these charitable works which are sometimes advocated by hon. Gentlemen on the Government Benches to get extra equipment for their ambulances? Nothing could be more demeaning, and nothing could demean the Government more if that is their policy. If it is their policy for machines which are unnecessary, it is worse; and worse still if the machines are necessary and are not supplied out of public funds.

The mention of public funds brings me back to the budget. I quote from another reply that the Minister gave me on 10 July 1987:

"**Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he has made with the London ambulance service to provide it with sufficient funds for the year 1987-88 to enable it to respond to the annual pattern of emergency service demands for its services within the established standards of response times.

Mrs. Currie: We have made no arrangements direct with the London ambulance service. The South West Thames regional health authority is responsible for managing and funding the London ambulance service and will no doubt take into account the expected levels of emergency calls and the minimum response times that the Department recommends in setting the budget."—[*Official Report*, 10 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. *312*.]

That is an extraordinary answer because, as the hon. Lady told me in the debate, the South West Thames regional health authority had ceased to precept on the other four regional health authorities for funds.

I quote now from the same North East Thames regional authority's report, paragraph 8:

"With effect from 1987-88 the South West Thames RHA receives a financial allocation for the LAS directly from the DHSS, replacing the former method of proportional allocations from each of the Thames RHAs. The revenue cash limit for 1986-87 was £14·714 million and an overspending of £0·541 million will be a first call on the 1987-88 budget. The LAS is subject to a 0·25 per cent. p.a., budget reduction over the Strategic Plan period."

I read that as meaning that out of the £14·714 million for 1987-88 £541,000 has to be paid back for an overspend in the previous financial year. Of course, it could have been taken account of in the allocation by the Department of Health and Social Security, but it was an allocation by the DHSS which the Minister seemed to dodge in the answer to the question that I have just quoted.

But, in addition, we are told, there is a 0·25 per cent. budget reduction — I believe that it is called the "efficiency factor" or something like that. It is quite obvious, therefore, that the London ambulance service is being funded by a method which is not clear to this House.

As I have suggested—and I do not think that anyone could possibly disagree—the London ambulance service must be demand led. It must keep to the ORCON standards, and be so managed and equipped with vehicles as to enable it to meet that demand. It may be that the demand for emergency services is increasing. It is within the discretion of the doctor to decide what is an emergency. There will be more road accidents, and difficult cases may have to be transferred. Heaven help us if there is another disaster, but the risk factor must always be taken into account. We must remember that another disaster such as the one at King's Cross may occur, so there must be sufficient ambulances to ensure that, while that disaster is being dealt with properly, other places have sufficient ambulances to cope.

I accept that there must be a balance, but surely when a budget is made it must be based on experience of demand, with the ORCON standards being applied, and it can then be decided how many vehicles and men are necessary. I have no evidence from the debates that we have had — I hope that another debate will not be necessary and that this will be the last—that that is the process that occurs in the DHSS, South-West Thames regional health authority or at ambulance headquarters at Waterloo.

The Minister went to King's Cross and praised the ambulance service and the other services. I hope that she will consider what happens at ambulance headquarters at Waterloo. The office is working under considerable difficulties, because it is trying to eke out the money that is made available and dealing with industrial relations problems that have arisen because the money is not sufficient to do the job. I hope that the hon. Lady will translate her words at King's Cross into action at Waterloo.

5.26 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The debate is important and timely. It is appropriate that we should be discussing this subject, and I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) for his assiduous work in continually exposing the cuts that have taken place in the London ambulance service over the past few years and for speaking up for the people of London on this matter.

I am sponsored by the National Union of Public Employees, which has a large number of London ambulance service employees in its membership. It is in that regard that I am speaking, but I also represent a constituency in which the level of car ownership is one of

prospect of additional radio services at national, local and community level. The new stations would operate alongside existing independent local radio services under a lighter regulatory regime. I hope shortly to be able to announce our conclusions in the light of the consultatives process. New legislation would be required to give effect to proposals for a new framework for radio.

In the meantime, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) has suggested that, in the current improved financial climate for independent local radio (ILR), it would be sensible for the authority to resume progress with the development of ILR in accordance with its statutory duties. Of the 69 areas approved in principle for ILR purposes by the Government by 1981, 13 remain unserved. The IBA proposes to advertise new ILR contracts in a form which will invite applications from local groups or existing ILR contractors, and to leave it to applicants to propose whether the new services would be free-standing or involve a link with another station. With a view to keeping these costs to a minimum, the IBA proposes to provide services on a single waveband rather than two, and to review its procedures and technical requirements. Contracts will be offered for the period until December 1994, when the last of the IBA's existing ILR contracts expires.

The IBA's aim will be to provide an ILR service to at least some of those areas which do not have one at the present. The provision of such services will, of course, be compatible with the opening of further local radio services under new legislation as part of the expansion of radio foreseen in the Green Paper. I have invited the IBA to proceed case by case. The first two contracts to be advertised will be Cambridge and Newmarket and Eastbourne-Hastings.

Prisoners

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners suffering from mental disorders were transferred to hospitals *(a)* before sentence and *(b)* after sentence, for the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The information for 1985 and 1986 is given in the table. Information for earlier years was published in table 3 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 31/85, copies of which are in the Library.

Persons[1] compulsorily admitted to hospital following transfer from Prison Department Establishments in England and Wales under Sections 47 and 48 of the Mental Health Act 1983

	1985	1986
Persons subject to special restrictions on discharge:		
Prior to disposal of case	33	50
After sentence	87	84
Persons not subject to special restrictions on discharge, admitted after sentence	13	23

[1] Excluding civil prisoners.

Juvenile Offenders

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many 14-year-olds entering detention centres in 1986 had had (i) no previous court appearances, (ii) one or two previous court appearances, (iii) three to five previous court appearances and (iv) six or more previous court appearances, respectively.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* The available information is given in the table:

Males aged 14 received into Prison Department establishments under detention centre orders; by previous convictions, England and Wales 1986

Number of previous convictions	Number of persons
0	72
1 to 2	148
3 to 5	188
6 and over	54
Not recorded	71
Total	533

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many 14-year-olds entering detention centres in 1986 had been convicted of (i) crimes of violence, (ii) sexual offences, (iii) robbery, (iv) burglary, (v) theft and (vi) other offences, respectively.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* The available information is given in the table.

Males aged 14 received into Prison Department establishments under detention centre orders; by offence, England and Wales, 1986

Offence	Number of persons
Violence against the person	45
Sexual offences	3
Burglary	284
Robbery	19
Theft, handling, fraud, forgery	117
Other offences	65
Total	533

Prisoners (Assisted Visits)

Mr. Charles Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new arrangements are planned for administering the programme of assisted visits to prisoners; when these changes will come into effect; and if those in receipt of supplementary benefit who are currently eligible for assistance will remain eligible under the new arrangements.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* New arrangements are being introduced for the administration of the scheme for assisted visits to prisons by close relatives. A new unit of the Home Office prison department will administer the scheme for England and Wales. Because it would be uneconomic to have a separate unit to administer the scheme for Scotland, the Home Office unit will act as an agent of the Scottish Home and Health Department. For administrative convenience, the new arrangements will begin to operate from 1 March 1988 in respect of visits to inmates in Scotland and from 11 April in respect of visits to inmates in Great Britain as a whole. Applications and payments will be handled by post rather than within DHSS local offices as hitherto. In order to take account of forthcoming changes in the social security system, financial eligibility will be based upon

entitlement to income support, which replaces supplementary benefit, family credit or a low-income certificate, but apart from this the principal terms and conditions of the scheme will remain the same.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Tourism

95. **Sir Peter Blaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education run tourism-related courses; and what is the number of students involved.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986, a total of 35 universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education ran tourism-related courses involving 820 students in universities in Great Britain and 5,620 higher education students in polytechnics and colleges in England.

96. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the number of graduates entering the tourism industry.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986, a total of 610 first degree graduates entered the category of hotel, catering and leisure management occupations which includes tourism.

Religious Education

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the extent to which the requirement of the Education Act 1944, for a daily period of religious education to take place in maintained schools, is being observed.

Mrs. Rumbold: There is no requirement in the 1944 Education Act for a daily period of religious education in maintained schools. Section 25(2) of the Act provides that religious instruction shall be given in every county and voluntary school. Section 26 and schedule 5 of the Act require that such instruction in county schools is given in accordance with an agreed syllabus, determined by a conference appointed by the local education authority. The evidence available suggests that a small minority of county schools may not be providing religious instruction in accordance with their locally agreed syllabus. Clauses 6 and 15 of the Education Reform Bill are designed to reinforce the relevant requirements of the 1944 Act.

ENERGY

Wind Turbines

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has of the relative costs per kilowatt installed of 60 m diameter wind turbine generators compared with 3·5 m rotor diameter equipment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The installed cost for 3·5 m diameter and similar machines is of the order of £500 per kilowatt. The larger machines of around 60 m diameter are all prototypes and no data are yet available of the installed costs for production-run machines of this size. Part of my Department's wind energy research and development programme is to investigate the optimum size of wind turbine generators for electricity production in this country.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what experiments are being carried out as to the effectiveness of the Danwin wind turbine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Danwin machine, which is 23 m in diameter and rated at 180 kW, is one of many commercially available machines and is paralleled closely by similar 25 m machines being manufactured by British companies for centralised electricity generation. My Department's research and development programme in wind energy includes investigations of the relative merits of machines of different sizes and types.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what study he has made of the development of windpower in California; and what were his conclusions as to the application to the United Kingdom of the system used in California.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department is well aware of the expansion in the use of wind energy for power generation in California over recent years and is following developments there closely. Visits have been made to Californian wind energy sites by my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) by officials from my Department and from the Energy Technology Support Unit, including programme managers, and by the chairman of the advisory Wind Energy Steering Committee. In addition, two British manufacturers, who are involved in my Department's wind energy research and development programme, have installed a number of machines in California: we are monitoring their progress.

Power Stations

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all Central Electricity Generating Board closed stations, annotating the station's original installed capacity, the year in which it was closed, and its present condition as mothballed, decommissioned, demolished or other status.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list Central Electricity Generating Board coal and oil stations whose lives have been extended beyond their planned 40 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None of the Central Electricity Generating Board's coal and oil stations has been extended beyond its planned life of 40 years.

Generating Costs

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will provide an itemised account, for the last financial year available, of Central Electricity Generating Board costs of generating electricity from nuclear fuel and coal, itemising fuel costs, capital charges, interest during construction, provision for decommissioning and all other costs, together with the total number of kWhs generated from each fuel, and calculate an average cost per kWh of each fuel.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest analysis of comparative generation costs made by the CEGB gave data for

1983-84. This included an assessment of all costs arising from the construction, operation and decommissioning of power stations, before, during and beyond their lifetime. For plant commissioned between 1965 and 1979 the resultant costs, expressed as an average over lifetime and adjusted to March 1987 prices, are as follows:

	p/KWh	
	Coal	*Nuclear*
Fuel costs	2·30	1·09
Capital charges (including interest during construction and decommissioning)	0·48	1·55
Other costs	0·24	0·40
Average cost per KWh	3·02	3·04
Total electricity generated (GWh)	175,117	31,260

For the more modern plants at Hinkley Point B and the first stage of the coal-fired station at Drax the average cost on a comparable basis was 2·82 p/KWh and 3·03 p/KWh respectively.

Hydro Power Schemes

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies his Department has undertaken on the potential for small-scale hydro power schemes of less than 5 MW in Scotland; and if he will list the main conclusions.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department of Energy has commissioned a study of the potential of small-scale hydro electricity in the United Kingdom, including Scotland. The work is being carried out by Salford university and is expected to be completed towards the end of 1988.

Coal Imports

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column 576, he will list the countries of origin of the coal imported through Sunderland and the destination of the coal.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The countries of consignment of coal imported through Sunderland in each year since 1979 are shown in the following table. The country of consignment is the place from which the coal was dispatched to the United Kingdom and is not necessarily the country in which it was originally mined. I regret that information on the breakdown of coal imports through Sunderland by country of origin or the final destination of these imports is not available.

Coal imports through Sunderland by country of consignment

Thousand tonnes

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Australia	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13·6
Belgium/Luxembourg	0·5	0·7	—	—	3·0	—	—	11·0
Denmark	—	—	—	0·4	—	—	—	—
German Democratic Republic	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·0	—
Federal Republic of Germany	2·0	8·5	5·9	16·1	19·8	6·1	15·4	10·7
Netherlands	5·3	—	—	9·6	8·8	—	47·6	157·0
Poland	—	—	—	16·8	67·6	17·0	10·6	42·3
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	—	—	—	0·5	—	—	—	—
United States of America	14·4	3·4	—	—	—	—	2·5	8·3
West Africa	—	—	—	—	2·3	—	—	—
Total	22·3	12·6	5·9	43·4	101·5	23·1	88·2	242·9

Total may not equal sum of constituents due to rounding.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many oral questions Ministers in his Department have answered *(a)* orally and *(b)* in writing in each Session from 1979-80 to date; how many questions for written answer have been so answered over that period; and how many questions tabled for answer in the House of Lords Ministers in his Department have answered over a similar period.

Mr. Eggar: Following is the information requested, for both the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office which have been drawn from departmental records:

House of Commons

	Oral	*Oral/Written*	*Written*
1979-80	258	[1]303 (112)	1,926 (354)
1980-81	174	[1]257 (66)	1,012 (196)
1981-82	197	[1]348 (89)	1,113 (180)
1982-83	162	[1]262 (71)	843 (217)
1983-84	251	[1]477 (93)	1,562 (537)
1984-85	162	[1]564 (119)	1,286 (468)
1985-86	143 (66)	629 (74)	1,248 (315)
1986-87	62 (30)	315 (37)	660 (107)
1987-88	33 (19)	126 (45)	480 (127)

House of Lords

	FCO Oral	*FCO Written*	*[2]ODA*
1979-80[3]			
1980-81[3]			
1981-82[3]			
1982-83[3]			
1983-84	83	146	34

	FCO Oral	FCO Written	[2]ODA
1984-85	72	101	23
1985-86	79	113	25
1986-87	38	65	6
1987-88	15	43	7

[1] Figures for ODA parliamentary questions prior to the Session 1985-86 are not readily available in the form requested and have been compiled from such records that exist. They include all oral parliamentary questions and those which subsequently received a written reply.
[2] Includes both oral and written answers.
[3] Figures are not available.

African National Congress

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether an invitation was received to attend the African National Congress conference in Tanzania recently.

Mrs. Chalker: The high commission at Dar Es Salaam was invited to be represented at the opening session of the conference.

Polish Citizens (Visas)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total number of Polish citizens waiting for visas to enter the United Kingdom from Poland and the average length of time taken to process these applications; what special provision has been made to ensure that Polish citizens can visit relations in the United Kingdom during the Christmas period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The British embassy in Warsaw has approximately 1,000 applications awaiting decision, the current average processing time being three to four weeks. However, the embassy is giving priority handling to applications for travel during the Christmas and new year period.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contact Her Majesty's ambassador in El Salvador has had with opposition and human rights groups since July.

Mr. Eggar: As part of their normal duties, Her Majesty's diplomatic staff accredited to El Salvador maintain regular contact with human rights and other organisations including political parties, trade unions and the Roman Catholic Church.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Cwm Clydach Estate (Prosecutions)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Attorney-General whether any criminal prosecutions have arisen from incidents at the Cwm Clydach estate, Craig-cefri-parc, West Glamorgan, over the last three years.

The Attorney-General: Records kept by the Crown Prosecution Service do not enable criminal prosecutions to be identified as emanating from a particular geographical location. The information requested by the hon. Member could not therefore be obtained without incurring disproportionate costs.

Mr. H. A. R. Philby

Mr. Allason: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make it his policy not to grant an immunity from prosecution to Mr. H. A. R. Philby in the event of his return to the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I can foresee no circumstances in which, in the hypothetical event suggested by my hon. Friend, it would be my policy to offer immunity to Mr. Philby.

Mr. Duncan Campbell

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will seek from the High Court a variation of the injunction of 27 November against Duncan Campbell so that the disclosure or publication of the material or information as defined therein by or to a right hon. or hon. Member shall not be constituted a breach of the order.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General whether he will seek from the High Court a variation of the injunction of 27 November against Duncan Campbell so that a fair and accurate report of proceedings in Parliament or of a court sitting in public shall not be constituted a breach of the order.

The Attorney-General: I propose to invite the court to take such a course when the matter is next before it.

Classified Information

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General if he has any plans to take steps to seize material relating to GCHQ, the same as that transmitted to Mr. Duncan Campbell by others and the subject of the injunction of 27 November, now in the possession of the hon. Member for Workington.

The Attorney-General: The Attorney-General has no powers of seizure.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on prosecution of such right hon. or hon. Members as in the course of their work receive material classified restricted and do not return it to the appropriate authorities;

(2) what criteria he uses in deciding whether to prosecute under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act such persons as come into the possession of official information classified restricted and do not seek to return it to the appropriate authorities;

The Attorney-General: This is a matter not for the Government but for the Crown Prosecution Service and for me. In applying the code for Crown prosecutors to such circumstances account would be taken of all relevant factors.

WALES

Labour Statistics

97. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the level of unemployment in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: At 8 October 1987, unemployment in Wales had fallen in each of the previous 17 months and, at 148,050, was 26,055 lower than a year earlier—a fall of 2·2 percentage points.

Rates

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many members of Welsh local authorities are not liable to pay rates.

Mr. Peter Walker: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has had any meetings since June with representatives of Nirex in relation to the possibility of dumping nuclear waste in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: There has been no such meeting. Responsibility for identifying and developing a deep site is for Nirex, which should be in a position to make recommendations to Government in about a year's time.

Council House Sales

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total of council house and flat sales in Wales since May 1979 to the latest available date under both right to buy and voluntary provisions.

Mr. Grist: 57,152 council houses and flats have been sold in Wales between May 1979 and June 1987.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column 654, he will take steps to collect the available information of the proportion of patients attending sexually transmitted diseases clinics in Cardiff that have been tested, and have proved HIV positive.

Mr. Grist: No. Numbers of positive HIV antibody tests are reported to the communicable diseases surveillance centre by the relevant microbiologist. Cumulative totals of positive tests by region of report together with totals split by sex within patient characteristics are published quarterly. Shortly, the Government plan to seek Parliament's approval for an amendment to the AIDS (Control) Act 1987 which will require each district health authority to publish in an annual report the number of positive HIV antibody test results for their district.

Community Physiotherapy Service

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those areas of Gwynedd in which a community physiotherapy service is available and those areas where the only service available is by reference of patients by their doctors to the orthopaedic department of a district general hospital.

Mr. Grist: These are matters of operational policy for Gwynedd health authority and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman writes to the district general manager.

Nurses' Pay

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing *(a)* in current terms and *(b)* in constant money terms, the expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales over each of the past 10 years, indicating the sum within each figure which is represented by nurses' pay.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the table:

£ million

	Total net expenditure on the National Health Service		*Expenditure on nurses' pay*	
Year	*Actual*	*[1]Constant prices*	*Actual*	*[1]Constant prices*
1976-77	306·7	752·3	70·6	173·2
1977-78	346·8	746·9	77·2	166·3
1978-79	398·0	774·3	87·2	169·7
1979-80	465·9	775·5	106·6	177·4
1980-81	599·1	841·2	150·5	211·3
1981-82	682·9	873·3	162·3	207·5
1982-83	751·0	895·9	176·6	210·7
1983-84	797·2	909·1	185·2	211·2
1984-85	862·0	941·6	201·9	220·5
1985-86	920·7	948·4	215·0	221·5
1986-87	989·3	989·3	235·4	235·4

[1]Actual expenditure revalued to 1986-87 prices using the GDP deflator.

Primary Schools (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available additional moneys to improve the staffing ratios in Clwyd primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* No. While provision for Clwyd's grant-related expenditure has been increasing in real terms with a continuing slow fall in pupil numbers, its primary sector pupil-teacher ratio has been rising. Decisions on staffing levels are for the local education authority and it must decide how to manage its resources.

Civil Defence

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his reasons for excluding an assessment of, and guidance on, the likely effects of deep psychological trauma on the public and medical personnel on the civil defence plan-making duties of the health authorities.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I am not aware of any psychological effects of civil defence plan-making.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his reasons for excluding an assessment of the likely effects of the nuclear winter on the civil defence plan-making duties of the health authorities.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Since the likelihood of the effect known as nuclear winter arising is still a subject of debate, it would not have been right for reference to it to have been included in the circular "Emergency Planning in the NHS: Health Service Responsibilities in Civil Defence".

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to draw up a staged programme of

implementation of the civil defence duties of health authorities as set out in the circular "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service."

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many health authorities have followed the recommendations of his Department in appointing an emergency planning officer.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The Department has not recommended that health authorities appoint emergency planning officers. A health emergency planning officer for Wales, whose remit includes all emergency planning matters, has recently been appointed at the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his estimate of the financial, staffing and resource implications of the circular "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service."

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* As health authorities are already responsible for responding to major incidents, and have in place the arrangements necessary to undertake that responsibility, it is not expected that the circular "Emergency Planning in the NHS: Health Service Responsibilities" will have significant resource implications.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding his Department's circular "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service: Health Service Responsibilities in Civil Defence" issued on 14 September.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much civil defence grant was paid to each health authority in each of the last five years; and what proportion these sums constituted of the total emergency planning budget of each health authority.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* No civil defence grants are paid to health authorities.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with representatives of the medical professions on the moral and ethical problems associated with the policy of triage after nuclear attack; and when he will issue guidelines on the implementation of triage after nuclear attack.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I have had no such discussions and have no plans to issue guidelines.

Housing

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to take steps to ensure that only housing associations based in Wales will receive finance for developing housing in Wales through the approved development programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I approve the Housing Corporation's development programme on the basis of its meeting specific housing needs and policy priorities. The vast majority of projects receiving funding under the approved development programme are undertaken by housing associations based in Wales, but I do not intend that any association should be excluded if it has been identified as the best one to meet a specific need.

Pre-school Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list by local authority the proportion of the total number of under-fives in pre-school education represented by *(a)* three-year-olds and *(b)* four-year-olds.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The information in respect of full-time and part-time pupils in all maintained and independent schools as at January 1987, is as follows:

Percentage

	3 year olds[1]	*4 year olds*[1]
Clwyd	45·7	54·0
Dyfed	33·2	61·8
Gwent	39·3	59·1
Gwynedd	24·2	73·8
Mid Glamorgan	39·2	53·7
Powys	24·2	75·5
South Glamorgan	29·5	66·0
West Glamorgan	44·8	47·4

[1] Ages as at 31 August 1986.

SCOTLAND

Labour Statistics

98. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for unemployment in the Glasgow, Pollock constituency.

Mr. Lang: On 8 October 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Glasgow, Pollock parliamentary constituency was 6,856.

99. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest figure for unemployment in manufacturing industry in the Motherwell, North constituency.

Mr. Lang: Information on unemployment by industry grouping is not available. However, the total number unemployed in the Motherwell, North constituency in October 1987 was 5,610; this represents a fall of 1,063, or 16 per cent., since October 1986.

Votes

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of voters in each Scottish constituency on *(a)* the current electoral register and *(b)* the recently-compiled draft electoral register.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Number of electors

Constituency	*1987 electoral register published in February*	[1]*1988 draft electoral register*
Aberdeen North	63,751	61,714
Aberdeen South	63,293	58,425
Angus East	61,597	61,687
Argyll and Bute	49,272	49,175

Constituency	Number of electors: 1987 electoral register published in February	Number of electors: [1]1988 draft electoral register
Ayr	67,224	66,723
Banff and Buchan	62,867	63,071
Caithness and Sutherland	31,519	30,978
Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley	57,196	56,457
Central Fife	56,666	56,267
Clackmannan	49,583	49,071
Clydebank and Milngavie	50,824	49,868
Clydesdale	62,429	62,524
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	46,140	46,126
Cunninghame North	55,544	55,277
Cunninghame South	50,538	50,210
Dumbarton	59,705	58,859
Dumfries	59,992	59,845
Dundee East	61,351	60,934
Dundee West	62,453	61,331
Dunfermline East	51,688	50,868
Dunfermline West	51,581	51,113
East Kilbride	63,998	63,749
East Lothian	65,603	64,938
Eastwood	62,713	62,877
Edinburgh Central	59,757	57,507
Edinburgh East	49,236	48,142
Edinburgh Leith	60,687	59,220
Edinburgh Pentlands	58,649	58,178
Edinburgh South	64,225	62,988
Edinburgh West	62,730	61,817
Falkirk East	53,040	52,662
Falkirk West	50,706	50,564
Galloway and Upper Nithsdale	53,994	53,486
Glasgow Cathcart	49,832	48,64[illegible]
Glasgow Central	51,562	50,62[illegible]
Glasgow Garscadden	48,486	46,861
Glasgow Govan	51,151	49,983
Glasgow Hillhead	58,246	57,254
Glasgow Maryhill	52,948	51,508
Glasgow Pollok	52,021	50,686
Glasgow Provan	44,394	42,677
Glasgow Rutherglen	58,075	56,875
Glasgow Shettleston	54,224	53,589
Glasgow Springburn	52,164	50,116
Gordon	74,199	75,134
Greenock and Port Glasgow	58,490	57,031
Hamilton	63,155	63,011
Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber	67,336	66,650
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	63,441	63,037
Kincardine and Deeside	64,219	64,156
Kirkcaldy	53,922	53,742
Linlithgow	60,014	60,218
Livingston	57,231	57,414
Midlothian	61,130	60,700
Monklands East	50,406	50,175
Monklands West	51,613	51,200
Moray	62,917	63,401
Motherwell North	58,539	58,336
Motherwell South	52,842	52,475
North East Fife	52,770	52,023
North Tayside	54,464	54,460
Orkney and Shetland	31,332	31,142
Paisley North	50,020	49,139
Paisley South	51,834	50,389
Perth and Kinross	63,965	63,869
Renfrew West and Inverclyde	56,958	56,750
Ross, Cromarty and Skye	52,808	52,174
Roxburgh and Berwickshire	43,646	43,606
Stirling	58,441	58,600
Strathkelvin and Bearsden	63,579	63,064
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale	38,283	38,404
Western Isles	23,685	23,093
Total	3,994,893	3,948,865

[1] The figures in this column exclude overseas electors of whom there are approximately 800 in the 1987 register.

Private Medicine

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost to public funds in the current financial year of efforts to expand the private sector of medicine in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Efforts to expand the private sector of medicine are a matter for commercial operators. No public funds are targeted — or have been spent in this financial year — for the purpose set out in the question.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates are availble to him of the number of likely AIDS cases in 1991 in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report of the working party on Health Service implications of HIV infection in Scotland (the Tayler report), which was published in May 1987, projected that the cumulative total of AIDS cases in Scotland by the end of 1991 would be between 725 and 1,251. It also provided a projected best esimate of 557 living AIDS cases in 1991. The working party pointed out, and the Government agree, that the base upon which these projections were made is very limited; and the projections are being kept under review.

Nuclear Attack (Health Care)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Government's policy towards the health care priorities after a nuclear attack in Scotland; and what circular or guidance has been issued on this subject.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The immediate provision of treatment for the sick and injured is the Government's primary health care priority following a nuclear attack. Guidance on the development of a recovery programme for the Health Service after such an attack is given in the Scottish Home and Health Department's circular SHHD/DGM (1987) 41.

Population Decline

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the economic impact of the expected decline in the Scottish population over the next three decades.

Mr. Lang: None.

Rating Reform

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish industry and commerce about the implications of separate English, Welsh and Scottish uniform business rates.

Mr. Lang: Representations have been received from a number of bodies about the effects of introducing a separate Scottish uniform business rate on the distribution of the overall rate burden on Scottish business. There are no plans to introduce a separate uniform business rate for Scotland.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of separate uniform business rates in Scotland, England and Wales on the Scottish industrial and commercial sectors; if he will express the estimated Scottish uniform business rate as a percentage of the estimated English uniform business rate in the first year of the simultaneous operation of both; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: There are no plans to introduce a separate uniform business rate for Scotland, and accordingly no such assessment has been made.

Social Work (Scotland) Act

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department maintains a central record of all applications made under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The returns provided by local authorities show only total expenditure incurred and the number of persons assisted.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Millan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a breakdown of the estimated outturn figure of £8,220 million for 1987-88 as given in his statement on public expenditure on 9 December, *Official Report*, column 439, under the same categories of expenditure as used for the other public expenditure figures given in that statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest estimate of net outturn for 1987-88 is as follows:

	£ million
Agriculture	195
Industry	257
Tourism	13
Transport	616
Housing	699
Other environmental services	656
Law, order and protective services	621
Education	2,131
Arts and libraries	85
Health and social work	2,686
Other public services	117
Nationalised Industries external financing	135
TOTAL	8,212

Note: Individual figures do not add up to the total, due to rounding; and the net outturn figure of £8,220 million shown in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement represented a rounding to the nearest £10 million of the estimate at that time.

A1 (Cockburnspath)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet in a position to announce a date for the proposed realignment of the A1 at Cockburnspath.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A start date for the A1 Tower to Dunglass diversion cannot be determined until the outcome of the proposed public local inquiry is known.

Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has considered the representations he has received about the operation of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 and its subordinate regulations.

Mr. Rifkind: I have now completed my consideration of the representations I have received, and my response, containing detailed proposals to amend the Act and subordinate legislation, is today being sent to the Scottish Legal Aid Board and the Law Society of Scotland. Copies are also being sent to other bodies which made representations.

A copy of my response has been placed in the Library.

Stadiums

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many stadiums with a capacity of at least 5,000 people there are in Scotland; where they are located; and what kind of access the public have for practising sports or athletics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 December 1987]:* The number of stadiums and their location is set out in the table. Information on public access is not available centrally.

(1) Region	*(2) Number of designated sports stadia with spectator capacity of 10,000+*	*(3) Number of non-designated outdoor sports stadia with spectator capacity of: 5,000-10,000*	*10,000+*	*(4) Number of other outdoor sports grounds with spectator capacity of 5,000+*
Central	5	2	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	1	—	—	—
Fife	4	1	—	—
Grampian	1	1	3	—
Highland and Islands	—	4	1	—
Lothian and Borders	4	14	—	—

(1) Region	(2) Number of designated sports stadia with spectator capacity of 10,000+	(3) Number of non-designated outdoor sports stadia with spectator capacity of: 5,000-10,000	10,000+	(4) Number of other outdoor sports grounds with spectator capacity of 5,000+
Strathclyde	13	27	6	3
Tayside	4	11	3	—
TOTAL	32	60	13	3

Notes:
1. The sports stadia in column (2) are designated under the Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 and include 31 Scottish Football League grounds, plus Murrayfield rugby stadium.
2. Sports grounds in column (4) are grounds where the spectator capacity exceeds 5,000 and where the spectator accommodation does not surround the activity area.

Schools Inspectorate

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he takes to ensure that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools in Scotland has recent, relevant and successful experience of teaching in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* other sectors which it inspects.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Good, successful and varied teaching experience is an essential qualification for entry to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. The work and training programmes of inspectors give each of them continuing experience of the educational process in the classroom and elsewhere, in each of the sectors of education with which they deal. This ensures that they have a thorough knowledge of current learning and teaching practice.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the current programme of staff development for members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* After extensive induction training, the inspectors undertake a phased programme to extend their experience supplemented by courses on current educational issues. In addition, 36 inspectors are currently participating in the Scottish Office senior management development programme.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current number of inspectors in post in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools in Scotland; how many inspectors have teaching qualifications and experience at *(a)* pre-school, *(b)* early stages of primary school and *(c)* colleges of education; and how many members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools have experience of management in higher education.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

1. there are 109 inspectors currently in post;
2. four inspectors have qualifications in pre-school and the early stages of primary school; these inspectors and a number of others have teaching experience in pre-school and the early stages of primary school;
3. there are no qualifications specifically geared to teaching in colleges of education; 30 inspectors have experience of working at Scottish colleges of education;
4. 19 inspectors have experience of management in higher education.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make arrangements for more detailed maps than those indicated in the NIREX consultative document, "The Way Forward", to be placed in the Library for those areas indicated as exhibiting geological potential for the possible disposal of nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* This is a matter for NIREX. However, as I indicated to the hon. Gentleman during Scottish Question Time on Wednesday 9 December my officials have drawn your comments to NIREX's attention.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much low and intermediate radioactive waste is produced in National Health Service hospitals in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Virtually all the waste from the use of radioactive substances in medical practice consists of low or very low-level material, which is disposed of either locally, as it arises, or via the national disposal service. Details of such disposals are kept by health boards but are not held centrally. Any waste not suitable for disposal, including the very small quantities of intermediate level waste in the form of redundant radioactive sources, is stored; the amount is included in the national waste inventory published in the annual reports of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, which are available in the Library.

DEFENCE

Departmental Running Costs

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what change is proposed for the 1987-88 running cost limit for his Department.

Mr. Younger: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, the 1987-88 running costs limit for the Ministry of Defence will be increased by £75,000,000 (or about 1 per cent. above the current provision) from £5,113,259,000 to £5,188,259,000. This increase arises from a number of factors including increased civilian redundancies arising from contractorisation, adverse fluctuations in exchange rates, increased forces' travel; and increased expenditure on maintenance of the defence estate. The revised limit also takes account

of the transfer to £58,000 to the Treasury Solicitor's Department for work arising from the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. The increases in running costs will be met by the defence budget and there will be no increase in public expenditure.

Armed Forces (Fines)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose the money paid in fines by members of the armed forces is used.

Mr. Freeman: The money is appropriated in aid of defence Votes.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 9 July, he will give for the 81 fines imposed by courts martial for 1985 and for the 46 fines imposed in 1986, the amount of the smallest, the largest and the median fine imposed for each category of offence.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will carry out a sample survey in order to estimate for *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Royal Marines the annual number of fines summarily imposed by commanding officers; and if he will categorise the fines according to the nature of the offence and whether the fine falls into one of the following categories: (i) up to £100, (ii) £101 to £250, (iii) £250 to £500 and (iv) over £500.

Mr. Freeman: The number of summary awards in 1986 for which a fine was the most serious punishment, together with the category of offence involved, are already known. Details are as follows:

	Numbers
Army	
Total	1,889
Offences against person (excluding sexual)	76
Sexual offences	0
Drug offences	1
Offences against property	102
Desertion and AWOL	175
Drunkenness	196
Other offences against discipline	1,264
Other offences	75
Royal Air Force	
Total	2,706
Disloyalty/Security offences	23
Violence	165
Sexual offences	4
Drug offences	3
Criminal damage/negligent damage	139
Theft	74
Fraud	144
Desertion/AWOL	84
Drunkenness	222
Disciplinary	1,317
Driving and motor vehicle offences	509
Other offences	22
Royal Marines	
Total	622
Disloyalty/security offences	3
Violence	28
Sexual offences	—
Drug offences	—
Criminal damage/negligent damage	52
Theft	5
Fraud	5
Desertion/AWOL	42
Drunkenness	21
Disciplinary	414
Driving and motor vehicle offences	22
Other offences	30

Categorisation by size of fine could only be achieved at disproportionate cost.

Bullying

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 9 December, if he will categorise the action that was taken regarding the 89 cases of alleged bullying that were referred to his Department during 1986.

Mr. Freeman: The 89 cases were referred to the Ministry of Defence during 1986 and 1987. All of these allegations were investigated. A total of 32 cases were substantiated, 40 were not substantiated and 17 are still under investigation. Of the 32 allegations substantiated, courts martial relating to nine of the cases are still pending or incomplete, one case resulted in an acquittal, and 11 resulted in convictions. Eleven cases were dealt with summarily.

Contracts

Mr. Mates: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contractual restriction prevents or inhibits defence contractors complaining publicly or to any third party about the treatment they have received from his Department; and whether any change in contractual terms to this effect is planned.

Mr. Sainsbury: Defence contractors are able to discuss with officials of my Department to the appropriate level any complaints that they may have about the treatment they have received. Any dispute or difference between the parties is normally resolved by negotiation. However, if this is not possible our contracts include a provision which enables either party to refer the case to arbitration. Few such references are made. There are standard conditions of contract which preclude disclosure by the contractor of the contract or its provisions to third parties without my Department's consent. No changes are planned.

Exercise Mallet Blow

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence until what time night air activity was authorised during Exercise Mallet Blow 87-3.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying activity within the Mallet Blow 87-3 exercise area was planned to end by 21.10 hours, although, in the event, all exercise activity was completed by 17.30 hours.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the latest time of day up to which exercise activity was permitted during Mallet Blow exercise since 1978.

Mr. Freeman: For all Mallet Blow exercises up to and including Mallet Blow 87-2, low-flying activity within the exercise area was planned to end by 17.30 hours.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to increase or decrease the night flying element of future Mallet Blow exercises.

Mr. Freeman: There has never been any night flying, that is flying between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am, in Mallet Blow exercises, nor are there plans for any in future Mallet Blow exercises.

Jaguar Crash (Roxburghshire)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is yet in a position to publish the findings of the board of inquiry into the reasons for the Jaguar crash in Roxburghshire last November.

Mr. Freeman: I expect to do so shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Sports Governing Bodies (Grants)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant changes, in percentage terms and real terms, have been made to sports governing bodies in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Sports Council grant-aided sports governing bodies and related organisations to the tune of £8·293 million in 1986-87 and £9·045 million in 1987-88. This represents a percentage increase of 9·1 per cent. and a real increase of 4·6 per cent. between the two years. Details of the grants given to each sport are provided in the Sports Council's annual report. The report for 1986-87 will be placed in the Library shortly. More detailed and up-to-date information is available from the Sports Council.

I recently announced an increase of nearly £2 million in the Sports Council's grant-in-aid for 1988-89, to a total of £38·8 million. It is for the Sports Council to decide how much of these increased resources will go to governing bodies next year.

Council House Sales

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, if he will detail the number of council house and flat sales by each London borough in each 12-month period from 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The number of sales reported by each authority in the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 appear in the table placed in the Library on 11 December in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). The corresponding table covering the earlier years was placed in the Library on 26 May, since then the 1984-85 figures for Brent and Tower Hamlets have been raised to, respectively, 246 and, right to buy sales only, 144.

I regret that in my answer of 8 December at column *275*, the total sales for Southwark was incorrect and should have been 1,545.

Rating Reform

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place regarding the payment of local government taxation by central Government Departments after a national non-domestic rate has been introduced; and when he expects to announce a decision.

Mr. Howard: We anticipate that contributions in aid of rates in respect of Crown property should continue to be paid broadly as at present, at the national non-domestic rate poundage. Consultations with local authority associations have proceeded on that assumption.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the numbers of 18 to 25-year-olds gaining and losing given amounts, in pound sterling per week, with the full replacement of rates by community charge, on a similar basis to table J.8 in Cmnd. 9714, but based on individuals rather than tax units.

Mr. Howard: It is not possible to make these comparisons on an individual rather than on a householder tax unit basis. The family expenditure survey, on which our estimates are based, collects information for tax units and households only and the rate rebate system similarly calculates entitlements on a tax unit basis.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *420*, the income after tax of £75 per week referred to in his answer includes state benefit.

Mr. Howard: Yes. For a full explanation I refer the hon. Member to page 103 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714).

Mr. Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of the community charge for 1988-89 for the borough of Thamesdown equivalent to the rate-cap limit of £51·10p, announced on 9 December.

Mr. Howard: It is necessary to have information about the spending of all local authorities in an area before community charge figures can be produced. We shall be able to calculate illustrative figures for 1988-89 next spring when information on budgeted expenditure for all authorities is available.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps, in the light of the information given in the answer of 12 November to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on the difference between the contribution to local taxation of the highest and lowest paid, *Official Report*, column *190*, to correct the figure given in his publication "Paying For Local Government."

Mr. Howard: No. Both figures are correct. Under the new system, the 10 per cent. of households with the highest net incomes would pay six times as much in community charges, after rebate, as the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest net incomes; in all, they would pay 16 times as much towards the cost of local services, including contributions via the grant system from national taxation.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the changes made by the Government in their proposals for a community charge to replace domestic rates between 11 June and the First Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill.

Mr. Howard: Since 11 June we have announced new transitional arrangements and a special measure to protect the confidentiality of battered wives' and political refugees addresses. There have been no major changes to the community charge policy.

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that those who will be entitled to 80 per cent. rebates of the proposed community charge will receive comparable rebates for their water rates.

Mr. Moynihan: No. Assistance towards water charges will be subsumed in the basic personal rates of the new income support structure to be introduced next year.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will estimate *(a)* the average community charge payment for Britain as a whole and *(b)* the average water charge payment or water rate payment.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 14 December 1987]*: In 1987-88 I have estimated that the average community charge in England would have been £224. The average household bill for water and sewerage is estimated to be £97. The figures for Scotland and Wales are matters for my right hon. Friends. It is not sensible to average the figure for England and Wales and for Scotland because of differences in the charging structure for water supply and sewerage services.

Protected Species

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those species recommended by the Nature Conservancy Council in 1986 for inclusion in schedules 5 and 8 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which he has decided not to include; if he will give his reasons for rejecting its advice; and in the case of those species, if he will list those organisations which made representations for them to be listed.

Mr. Moynihan: The species recommended by the Nature Conservancy Council and which have not been included in schedule 5 are the adder (vipera beris), allis shad (alosa alosa), basking shark (cetorhirius maximus) freshwater pearl mussel (margaritefera margaritefera) and 22 species of British butterflies (rhopalocera).

As I informed the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on Tuesday 8 December the Secretary of State is currently giving further careful consideration to the case for these species.

Those making representations against the NCC recommendations included some local and statutory authorities and fishing interests in Scotland.

My right hon. Friend has accepted all the recommendations made in respect of plants to be listed in schedule 8.

Water

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the capital investment programme of each water authority in England and Wales to meet the requirements of the European Economic Community directive on the quality of bathing water.

Mr. Moynihan: I have recently received information from the water authorities about their capital investment programmes for schemes related to the improvement of coastal bathing water quality. The returns are being analysed and will provide the basis of discussions with the authorities concerned.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be in a position to list the capital investment programme of each water authority in England and Wales to meet the requirements of the European Economic Community directive on the quality of drinking water, as recently interpreted.

Mr. Moynihan: It is difficult to distinguish expenditure required to comply with the directive from the substantial on-going programme of asset renewal. However, we will be reviewing the investment programmes of water authorities in the light of my right hon. Friend's statement of 2 December.

Water Research Centre

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy that the Water Research Centre continues to support the water industry as a whole;

(2) what is his intention on the extent to which the Water Research Centre should receive support from public funds after the water utilities are privatised.

Mr. Moynihan: The manner in which water undertakings support the Water Research Centre is in the first instance a matter for them, and for the centre itself. However, in the consultation paper "The National Rivers Authority" published in July 1987, the Government stated that when the water industry was restructured the Government would expect the Water Research Centre to continue to be an attractive research contractor for the Government themselves, for the utility companies and for the National Rivers Authority.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how it is intended that the research activities of the Water Research Centre will be funded after the utilities are privatised; to whom the results will be made available; and on what terms.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer to his question on 10 December 1987, at column 275. The Water Research Centre currently derives its income from subscriptions and contracts, with contract income an increasing proportion in recent years. The future balance is among the issues being considered by the managers and members of the Water Research Centre and by the council. The policy of making the results of publicly funded research generally available will not change.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who are currently the directors of the Water Research Centre; what income it receives from public funds; and if he will place in the Library a copy of its memorandum and articles.

Mr. Moynihan: The directors of the Water Research Centre are the members of its council. They do not receive remuneration for their work on the council other than expenses allowable under clause 4 of the memorandum of association. I am arranging for copies of the memorandum and articles of association to be placed in the Library, together with copies of the Water Research Centre annual review, which contains a list of council members.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme and Job Training Scheme

9. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the structure of the merged job training scheme and community programme.

Mr. Fowler: I have received a number of representations about the new adult training programme which I announced on 18 November and I am currently awaiting the comments of the Manpower Services Commission.

54. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from employers on the community programme and the job training scheme.

Mr. Cope: We have received a number of representations from managing agents and other employers about the operation of the community programme and the new job training scheme.

55. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to receive comments on the job training scheme/community programme from the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked the Manpower Services Commission for its detailed proposals by 15 January.

YTS

16. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to how many people in the borough of Southwark have obtained jobs during or immediately following their period on a YTS scheme.

Mr. Cope: 54 per cent. of young people who left YTS schemes in the borough of Southwark between April 1986 and June 1987 were in jobs when surveyed several months later.

37. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what basis the transitional allowance has been calculated for the YTS.

Mr. Cope: The proposed YTS bridging allowance is designed to provide short-term payments for young people who have to wait for a few weeks for a YTS place after leaving a job or a previous YTS place. The allowance will be paid for a maximum of eight weeks, during which time the offer of a YTS place will be made. The allowance will be set initially at £15 per week—more than twice the level of child benefit.

56. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people currently on the YTS have employed status.

Mr. Cope: Manpower Services Commission records show that at the end of September 1987 there were 46,900 young people on YTS with contracts of employment. This represents 11 per cent. of the total number of young people on YTS. The Government hope that still more employers will place their young employees on YTS for the quality training which the scheme provides.

59. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the proportion of YTS trainees obtaining jobs at the end of their training period.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission conducts regular follow-up surveys of all young people leaving YTS. The latest results cover those leaving during the period April 1986 to June 1987 and show that for Great Britain 72 per cent. of those who completed their entitlement to training were in a job at the time of the surveys.

This is welcome news as is the fact that many employers are placing their young employees on YTS for the high quality training which the scheme provides.

69. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of YTS places unfilled at present.

Mr. Cope: It is estimated that 172,000 YTS places were unfilled on 31 October 1987.

70. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: At the end of October 1987 there were some 431,000 young people receiving high quality training on YTS schemes, the highest figure ever for the programme. The latest information on those young people leaving YTS between April 1986 and June 1987 shows that 74 per cent. were going into work or further education and training.

This is welcome news as is the fact that many employers are placing their young employees on YTS for the training which the scheme provides.

75. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places on YTS schemes on Merseyside he plans for 1988-89.

Mr. Cope: 21,645 YTS places are planned on Merseyside for 1988-89.

80. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage of young people who have failed to complete the youth training scheme since the introduction of two-year YTS.

Mr. Cope: Some 765,400 young people started YTS schemes between April 1986 and October 1987. Of this number, 326,200 young people had left their scheme more than four weeks before their expected completion date. This represents 43 per cent. of those who have started the two-year YTS. Of those who left YTS early, 66 per cent. left to go into a job or on to another YTS scheme.

81. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest statistics for YTS participants gaining employment at the end of their courses.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission conducts regular follow-up surveys of all young people leaving YTS. The latest results cover those leaving during the period April 1986 to June 1987 and show that for Great Britain 72 per cent. of those who completed their entitlement to training were in a job at the time of the surveys.

Labour Statistics

17. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of unemployment in the Greater Manchester area.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Greater Manchester metropolitan county, expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed, was 13·2 per cent.

22. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of youth unemployment in Tyne and Wear.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants aged 18 in the county of Tyne and Wear was 4,670. Figures of the number of employees under 18 years needed to calculate an unemployment rate are not available.

27. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the fall in unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside over the past 12 months; and what has been the comparable position in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Lee: The number of unemployed claimants in Yorkshire and Humberside has fallen by 44,500 since October 1986. The comparable fall in the United Kingdom as a whole was 485,800.

36. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the fall in the numbers of unemployed in the west midlands in 1987 to date.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the west midlands region, adjusted for seasonality and excluding school leavers, was 278,300, a fall of 47,000 since January 1987.

43. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the fall in numbers of unemployed in the east midlands from June 1983 to date.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the east midlands region adjusted for seasonality and excluding school leavers was 169,000, a fall of 7,100 since June 1983.

45. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the fall in the numbers of unemployed in the north-west region from June 1983 to date.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the north-west region, adjusted for seasonality and excluding school leavers, was 372,100, a fall of 37,600 since June 1983.

50. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the fall in unemployment in the 18 to 25-year-old age group since January 1987.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the 18 to 25 age group in the United Kingdom was 783,849. A fall of 186,702 since January 1987. This change will be affected by seasonal factors.

60. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to deal with the high unemployment rate amongst young black males.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government's sound financial and economic policies are bringing new job opportunities to all sections of our community. Since March 1983 the number of jobs has grown by over 1,300,000 and unemployment over the last 16 months has fallen by almost half a million. In addition, we are offering individual unemployed people, irrespective of their racial origin, positive help towards employment and training measures, on which we are spending some £3 billion this year.

However, we recognise that unemployment rates for ethnic minority groups are generally higher than for white groups with similar charactistics. It is against that background that the DE group implements a policy of ensuring access to programmes and services are open and available to all regardless of racial orgin. Additional help to ethnic minority job seekers includes outreach and case-load approaches by specially appointed jobcentre staff in inner-city offices.

My Department's race relations employment advisory service continues to give help and guidance to employers and others on issues concerned with equality of treatment both in regards to access to work and progression within employment.

65. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current state of employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: In June 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 24,904,000 people in the employed labour force in the United Kingdom. This represents an increase of 1,352,000 since March 1983. The figures are adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

66. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job vacancies were registered with job centres in November 1987.

Mr. Lee: The information is not yet available. The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres between 7 November 1987 and 4 December 1987 will be available on 14 January 1988.

79. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the latest trends in the number of vacancies reported to jobcentres.

Mr. Lee: The number of new vacancies notified to jobcentres in the United Kingdom increased by 7 per cent. over the past 12 months to reach 235,900 in the month ending October, the highest figure since the current series began in 1980.

86. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which regions are showing the greatest fall in youth unemployment.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants under 18 years of age at 9 October 1986 and at 8 October 1987 respectively, together with the change over the year, expressed numerically and as a percentage.

Region	Unemployed claimants under 18 years			
	October 1986	October 1987	Change	Percentage change
South East	34,329	21,451	−12,878	−37·5
South West	9,954	6,598	− 3,356	−33·7
East Anglia	4,498	2,991	− 1,507	−33·5
East Midlands	11,511	8,044	− 3,467	−30·1
West Midlands	20,406	14,543	− 5,863	−28·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	22,573	16,402	− 6,171	−27·3
North West	25,900	19,260	− 6,640	−25·6
Wales	10,667	7,970	− 2,697	−25·3
Northern	13,374	10,408	− 2,966	−22·2
Scotland	27,368	22,157	− 5,211	−19·0
Northern Ireland	5,940	4,995	− 945	−15·9

93. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional action he is taking to improve unemployment in the area of the Dearne valley.

Mr. Lee: All my Department's employment, training and enterprise measures are already available in the Dearne valley. Although unemployment in the area remains too high, we have been encouraged by its continuing fall in recent months. In the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area, unemployment has fallen by over 2,750 in the last year.

Restart Programme

18. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the progress of the restart interview programme.

Mr. Lee: Since April this year some 1·3 million people have been interviewed under the restart programme. A total of 2·6 million people have been interviewed since the start of the programme in July 1986.

Since the programme began, a positive offer that might lead to employment has been made to nine out of ten of those interviewed. As from April next year, we shall be issuing a questionnaire to all those invited for their restart interview both to enhance the effectiveness of the restart process and to help establish that those interviewed remain available for work.

28. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of offers of training are taken up by those interviewed on the restart programme.

Mr. Lee: Since the national introduction of the restart programme, 331,000 people have received offers of training during restart interviews.

We do not know how many of those interviewed are ultimately placed on a training programme.

Inner-City Initiative

19. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contribution his Department has made to the Government's inner-city initiative; and if he will make a statement.

42. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contribution his Department is making to inner-cities initiatives.

Mr. Cope: This Department and the Manpower Services Commission make a substantial contribution to Government inner-city policies through our wide range of employment, training and enterprise programmes. It is estimated that expenditure by this Department and the commission in urban programme authorities exceeds £1·1 billion.

Tourism

20. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many overseas visitors came to the United Kingdom in the first six months of 1987; and how this figure compares with the figure for the first six months of 1986.

Mr. Lee: 6,790,000 overseas visitors came to the United Kingdom in the first six months of 1987, an increase of nearly 16 per cent. of the 5,872,000 who visited in the same period in 1986.

21. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the amount of money spent by overseas visitors on British carriers.

Mr. Lee: Spending by overseas visitors on fares with United Kingdom carriers was approximately £1,300 million in 1986.

25. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to encourage the improvement of the presentation of tourism sites.

Mr. Lee: As the Minister responsible for tourism I have taken every opportunity to encourage the highest possible standards for all tourism facilities. Proper attention to presentation and quality are essential to the success of every tourism business. The English Tourist Board is similarly encouraging the industry to improve its product through its marketing and advisory services and its section 4 scheme of financial assistance.

26. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if there are any plans to create a national tourism day or week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I am considering a number of ideas for raising the profile of the tourism industry. I have no specific plans in this area at present.

29. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the number of overseas visitors to York in 1986 and their expenditure.

Mr. Lee: Such information is not available. However, I understand that a study of tourism in Yorkshire is currently being undertaken by York university which is expected to provide specific information on individual tourism spending by town.

30. **Mr. Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding co-operation agreements for tourism between Britain and other countries.

Mr. Lee: The United Kingdom Government have no formal agreements for tourism co-operation with other countries. The British Tourist Authority does from time to time enter into practical agreements with national tourist organisations of other countries, to promote and develop bilateral tourism.

40. **Mr. Allason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest information he has on the percentage of total employment accounted for by the tourism industry.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on 20 November 1987 at column *508*.

46. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to encourage the tourism industry to be aware of the need to have a wide spread of markets.

Mr. Lee: Both my Department and the English Tourist Board are actively working to encourage the industry to invest in a range of new and improved facilities and attractions to appeal to all sectors of the domestic and overseas tourism market. The English Tourist Board's development and marketing strategy "A Vision for England" identifies the key developments necessary to encourage and promote the market appeal of England as a tourist destination.

48. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to ensure that the Channel tunnel stimulates tourist traffic throughout the whole of Britain.

Mr. Lee: My Department is represented on the British Tourist Authority's Channel tunnel national tourism working party which is studying the tunnel's implications for tourism and identifying how best to exploit its tourism potential to the benefit of the whole country.

51. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of people at present employed in the tourist industry; and what was the corresponding figure for 1979.

Mr. Lee: The latest estimate of employees in employment in the industries most directly related to tourism relates to June 1987 when there were approximately 1·4 million employees. The corresponding figure for June 1979 was 1·2 million. These figures exclude the self-employed in tourism-related industries, for whom comparable estimates are not available.

52. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage tourists to visit industrial sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The success of those companies which have marketed themselves as tourism attractions in addition to their main manufacturing activities demonstrates that industry possesses considerable potential for tourism development. I have referred to the opportunities for further exploiting this potential in a number of recent speeches. In addition, I shall be meeting the president of the CBI, Sir David Nickson, in the new year to discuss this issue.

57. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the provision of all-weather leisure facilities for tourists in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: The national tourist boards are encouraging the development of all-weather leisure facilities in order to help extend the tourist season, increase employment opportunities and to help spread the benefits of tourism throughout the country.

62. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Manpower Services Commission doing to encourage the training of employees in the tourist industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: As sponsors of the tourism industry, my Department takes every opportunity to promote training in this important sector. In particular, through the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) we are supporting training through a wide range of youth and adult programmes. I also recently launched a conference of representatives from the tourism industry which considered the training needs of employees in the tourism industry. Following this conference, the MSC has undertaken to work with the industry in looking at how training and qualification for this sector can be further developed.

68. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on Britain's position in the world in terms of international tourism earnings.

Mr. Lee: In 1986 the United Kingdom's earnings from international tourism were about 6 per cent. of the total world tourism earnings and 11 per cent. of Europe's tourism earnings. Compared with other individual countries, the United Kingdom's earnings from tourism were the fourth highest in Europe and the fifth highest of OECD countries.

71. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding new overseas marketing initiatives proposed by the British tourist authority.

Mr. Lee: The British Tourist Authority has recently drawn up its marketing plan for 1988 which contains a number of marketing initiatives. These are designed to meet the Government's objectives of spreading the benefits of tourism throughout Great Britain, particularly to those areas of unexploited tourism potential, encouraging the development of tourism during the off-peak months.

78. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to encourage major institutions such as pension funds, insurance companies and building societies to invest in tourism projects.

Mr. Lee: I have had informal meetings with representatives of financial institutions in order to draw their attention to the good investment opportunities offered by the tourism and leisure industry. I have also highlighted these opportunities in the many contacts which I have had with different sectors of the industry. The English Tourist Board has also had discussions with a wide range of financial institutions in order to encourage financial backing for tourism and leisure projects. More recently, the board gave a presentation of its new development strategy "A Vision for England" in London which was aimed specifically at the City financial institutions.

82. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will be encouraging the opening of more tourist information centres on motorway service areas similar to the one recently opened at the Forton motorway service area on the M6 in Cumbria.

Mr. Lee: As Minister responsible for tourism I was pleased to open the Forton tourist information centre in July. I understand also that in addition to the six currently operating, the English Tourist Board has plans to encourage the opening of other tourist information centres in motorway service areas on the M11, the M25 and the A1(M).

84. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in tourism industry jobs between 1979 and 1987; and what percentage of these jobs are part-time.

Mr. Lee: The number of employees in employment in the industries most directly related to tourism increased by 200,000, or 17 per cent., between June 1979 and June 1987 to a level of 1·4 million. Of these 1·4 million jobs, approximately 54 per cent. are part-time. All of these figures exclude the self-employed in tourism-related industries for whom comparable estimates are not available.

Community Programme

23. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the numbers of people, as a proportion of the work force, in north-west Durham who are employed on the community programme.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to give the information in the precise form requested. The "denominator" figure for the county of Durham in mid-1986, the latest date for which figures are available, is 229,708. On 30 October 1987 there were 6,036 filled places on the community programme in the county of Durham of which 1,288 were in north-west Durham.

24. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his plans for the future of the community programme.

Mr. Fowler: I announced on 18 November that I propose to bring together existing programmes for unemployed adults, including the community programme, into a new adult training programme. I have asked the Manpower Services Commission for its comments on the detailed arrangements for the new programme and proposals for introducing it from September next year.

Community Newspaper

31. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the Manpower Services Commission's policy on the funding of community newspapers.

Mr. Lee: There are no separate instructions for the funding of community newspapers under the community programme. All proposals for funding of projects to be run under the community programme must satisfy the normal rules of the programme and have the approval of either the local area manpower board or local officials of the Manpower Services Commission with delegated responsibility.

Black Economy

32. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning employment in the black economy.

Mr. Cope: My Department has received a number of representations, both from organisations and individuals, suggesting ways in which these working in the black economy might be detected and also ways in which these working in the black economy might be encouraged to join the open economy.

Maternity Leave (Job Security)

33. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to discover how many women since 1981 have been refused the right to return to their job after maternity leave under section 12 of the Employment Act 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Employment Protection Act

34. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons have benefited from the insolvency provisions of the Employment Protection Act in Birmingham during the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available for Birmingham. However, the midlands regional finance office of the Department has made payments to 9,623 people in the first eight months of the current financial year.

Jobcentres (Vacancies)

35. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of job vacancies registered at jobcentres in Yorkshire.

Mr. Lee: On 2 October 1987, the number of unfilled vacancies registered at jobcentres in the counties of North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire was 15,547.

Hotel Developments (British Business)

38. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of goods, services and labour in new hotel developments are provided by British business.

Mr. Lee: No precise figures are available but estimates suggest that some 80 per cent. of the value of construction of new hotels in Britain is undertaken by British businesses.

Job Creation

39. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created since June 1983.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. Between June 1983 and June 1987 (the latest date for which figures are available) the employed labour force in Great Britain increased by 1,321,000. The figure has been adjusted for the effects of seasonal variations. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and members of Her Majesty's forces.

Long-term Unemployment

41. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what regional variations there are in the rate of reduction of long-term unemployment.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the number of unemployed claimants who have been unemployed for over one year at 9 October 1986 and at 8 October 1987, together with the change over the year, expressed numerically and as a percentage.

Claimants unemployed for over one year

Region	October 1986	October 1987	Change	Percentage Change
South East	283,303	242,732	−40,571	−14·3
East Anglia	28,223	23,584	−4,639	−16·4
South West	68,843	57,563	−11,280	−16·4
West Midlands	161,417	136,272	−25,145	−15·6
East Midlands	80,917	69,755	−11,162	−13·8
Yorkshire & Humberside	130,122	118,711	−11,411	−8·8
North West	199,305	172,359	−26,946	−13·5
Northern	105,188	90,520	−14,668	−13·9
Wales	73,043	59,671	−13,372	−18·3
Scotland	146,394	136,185	−10,209	−7·0
Northern Ireland	64,251	64,884	633	1·0
United Kingdom	1,341,006	1,172,236	−168,770	−12·6

53. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the reduction in the number of long-term unemployed since January 1987.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987 the number of long-term unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 1,172,236, a fall of 162,194 since January 1987. The change will be affected by seasonal factors.

Manufacturing Industry

44. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created in manufacturing industry, for each year since 1974; and how many of them have been in Scotland.

Mr. Lee: There are no figures for job gains and job losses. The net changes in the numbers of employees in employment in the manufacturing industries for each of the years and areas specified are as follows:

Employees in Employment in the Manufacturing industries

	(a) Great Britain		(b) Scotland	
	Number of employees	Net change in number of employees since June of previous year	Number of employees	Net change in number of employees since June of previous year
June of each year				
1974	7,722	—	683	—
1975	7,351	−371	645	−38
1976	7,118	−233	615	−30
1977	7,172	+54	622	+7
1978	7,138	−34	611	−11
1979	7,107	−31	604	−7
1980	6,801	−306	564	−40
1981	6,099	−702	510	−54
1982	5,751	−348	477	−33
1983	5,418	−333	444	−33
1984	5,302	−116	434	−10
1985	5,258	−44	430	−4
1986	5,137	−121	410	−20
1987	5,071	−66	398	−12

Some of the decrease in the figures will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services, and road haulage, previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by subcontractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment.

London (Domestic Visitors)

47. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the number of domestic visitors to London in 1986.

Mr. Lee: I understand that English Tourist Board figures show that London attracted some 13 million domestic visitors in 1986.

Temporary Work Scheme

49. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether participation in the new temporary work scheme for the long-term unemployed will be voluntary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: There are no proposals for a new temporary work scheme.

Small Businesses

58. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small businesses are currently trading in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: The best estimate available of the number of small businesses currently trading in the United Kingdom

is from VAT information. At the end of 1986 there were an estimated 1,468,000 businesses registered for VAT, 96 per cent. of which are thought to be small under the definitions laid down by the Bolton committee. At the same time there were an estimated 2,677,700 self-employed people in the United Kingdom, many of whom were not registered for VAT.

More significant is the fact that during the seven years 1980 to 1986 the number of businesses registered for VAT in the United Kingdom increased by 13·9 per cent., which represents an average net increase of around 500 firms per week. Regional estimates for 1980 to 1985 show that the number of firms registered for VAT increased in every region and country of the United Kingdom.

Such figures reflect the efforts this Government have made to promote a more vigorous enterprise culture and the various measures they have taken to stimulate the development of new businesses and self-employment.

67. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the policy of his Department on the purchase of goods and services from small businesses.

Mr. Cope: The purchasing policy of this Department places special emphasis on the role of small firms in achieving value for money. This policy is set out in guidance and training to all the Department's staff who now have greater discretion to use commercial suppliers since we have signed new customer agreements with the central procurement agencies.

More generally, as Minister responsible for small firms, I am concerned to promote their role in Government purchasing as a whole. Small firms can face particular difficulties when trying to break into these markets but to overcome this the Department is encouraging simplified procedures for Government purchasing and improved information such as the small firms service's booklet "Tendering for Government Contracts."

72. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the small firms service.

Mr. Cope: The small firms service through its information and counselling arms works to promote viable and profitable small businesses. In 1986-87, in England, it handled 283,537 inquiries and gave 38,210 counselling sessions. With the development of local enterprise agencies, it is increasingly developing its counselling activities with established businesses.

Copies of the annual report on the service for 1986-87 were placed in the Library in July.

Youth Training

61. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss youth training.

Mr. Cope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Ministers in the Department often meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss a wide range of training issues, including youth training. A date for the next meeting has not yet been arranged.

Holiday Villages

63. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many holiday villages have been established in the United Kingdom since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: Detailed figures are not available. However, there has been investment both in a number of new self-catering developments and in improvements to existing holiday villages since 1979. The opening of Center Parc's all-year round holiday village in Sherwood forest earlier this year has introduced an innovative concept to the United Kingdom which I hope will stimulate further new developments and improvements.

Job Training Scheme

64. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the voluntary sector on the proposal to merge the job training scheme and the community programme.

Mr. Lee: None.

77. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from trade unions on the job training scheme/community programme.

Mr. Lee: We have not received any representations from trade unions about the proposal to replace the new job training scheme and the community programme with a new adult training programme.

New Employment Service

73. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the new employment service.

Mr. Lee: The new employment service is making good progress in its objective of helping unemployed people get back into work. The merger into one organisation of jobcentre and benefit office work has been achieved over a remarkably short period, at no additional cost to the taxpayer, while maintaining services to the public.

Hotels

74. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many establishments in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland are in the hotel classification scheme.

Mr. Lee: I understand that the number of establishments classified under the national tourist boards' voluntary crown classification schemes are: in England 8,700, in Scotland 2,388 and in Wales 2,502. In Northern Ireland, where registration with the tourist board is compulsory, the figure is 1,066.

Apprentices

76. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of industrial apprentices taken on in 1979 as compared with 1987.

Mr. Nicholls: Information from the youth cohort study indicates that nearly 80,000 young people in England and Wales who reached minimum school-leaving age in the

academic year 1984-85 were undertaking an apprenticeship in spring 1986. This is an underestimate as some of the young people in the survey were unsure of their apprenticeship status and none of these have been included. In addition, some other young people will have been taken on as apprentices when older. Corresponding information for spring 1987 is not yet available. Information from the new entrants to employment survey indicates that just over 90,000 young people in England and Wales who reached minimum school-leaving age in the academic year 1978-79 had by the end of 1979 entered an apprenticeship in their first employment.

Enterprise Allowance

83. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope *[pursuant to his reply, Official Report,* 17 November 1987, c. *506]*: There are now over 300,000 unemployed people who have started their own businesses with the help of the enterprise allowance scheme.

88. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals to change the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We are currently considering a number of proposals, the aim of which is to increase the effectiveness of the scheme by increasing the survival, growth and job generation prospects of business supported. Consideration of these proposals is at an early stage and announcements of any changes will be made in due course.

Health and Safety Executive

85. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received regarding the Health and Safety Executive manpower cuts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received a number of representations on the subject of resources for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive. For 1988-89 it is planned that their total expenditure will increase by £6·7 million compared to the previous White Paper provision for that year. This will allow the number of inspectors to be increased by 60 above present levels.

Steel

87. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to the total number of redundancies in the steel industry in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of redundancies, involving 10 or more employees, reported to the employment service confirmed as due to occur in the metal manufacture (Class 22 of standard industrial classification 1980. Includes non-ferrous metal manufacturing industry) between January 1979 and October 1987 (Includes provisional figures for September and October 1987) are *(a)* 37,361 in Wales, and *(b)* 197,343 in Great Britain. Figures for Northern Irelnd are available only from 1984).

Manpower Services Commission

89. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Cope: The Government's plans for the future of the Manpower Services Commission were set out in our manifesto. In line with our manifesto commitments, the Employment Bill will enable us to increase employer representation on the commission. The Bill also renames the commission "The Training Commission" to reflect its new emphasis on training.

Job Clubs

90. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs are now in operation.

Mr. Lee: By 10 December 1987 there were 1,133 job clubs in operation.

Seaside Resorts

91. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the standard of accommodation in United Kingdom seaside resorts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I have received no specific representations. However, if seaside resorts are to retain their market share it is essential for them to provide a standard of accommodation and range and quality of facilities which is as good as, if not better than, our competitors.

Theme Parks

92. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many theme parks have been established in the United Kingdom since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available. However, there has been significant investment in a number of new attractions and improved facilities at existing theme and amusement parks since 1979.

Ionising Radiation Exposure

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, in the light of the recent recommendation of the National Radiological Protection Board, he will consider revising the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 to make the maximum permissible whole body exposure of workers to ionising radiation 15 mSv instead of 50 mSv; and if he will revise the regulations to make the investigation level above which an investigation is triggered 5 mSv instead of 15 mSv.

Mr. Nicholls: As announced on 18 November, the Health and Safety Commission has set up a working group on ionising radiation which met for the first time on 9 December. The working group will consider the recent guidance from the National Radiological Protection Board as part of its remit and will advise the commission on an appropriate course of action. I am content to await any subsequent recommendations.

Hazardous Materials

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to be enforced by the fire service and road authorities, to require

companies involved in the production, storage or use of chemicals to keep an updated and easily accessible record of all potentially hazardous materials above an agreed limit, on site, specifying *(a)* the location on site of all potential hazardous substances, *(b)* a list of their chemical names and trade names, *(c)* their properties, and *(d)* manufactures' or suppliers' names and emergency telephone numbers; if, pending passage of the legislation, he will introduce a voluntary code of practice approved by the Health and Safety Executive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984 (CPLR) dangerous substances are required to be labelled for both supply and/or conveyance by road. The labelling requirements are such that both users and transporters are warned of the possible dangers that could arise when dealing with the substance and the necessary safety precautions to employ.

In particular, conveyance labelling alerts the emergency services to the immediate hazards of a substance in cases of an accident. The regulations are enforced by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive, and the local trading standards authorities.

Under both the Notification of Installations Handling Hazardous Substances Regulations 1982 (NIHHS) and the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations 1984 (CIMAH) details of installations which are capable of presenting major accident hazards are already passed to the fire authorities. Information regarding such sites includes their location, the address of the person or organisation responsible for operation and details of each notifiable substance held on the site. In addition, under the CIMA regulations occupiers of sites defined by the regulations as having the greatest major accident hazard potential are required to draw up on and off-site emergency plans in consultation with appropriate bodies such as the emergency services. They in turn are required to prepare off-site emergency plans on the basis of information from occupiers. Such plans will include the major accident hazards presented by the chemicals held on site. Both sets of regulations operate where potentially hazardous materials are kept at or above a prescribed limit and are enforced by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive.

The Health and Safety Commission is also developing proposals for regulations for the notification to the Health and Safety Executive of sites (other than sites otherwise notified), and for the erection of warning signs at sites, containing an aggregate quantity of 25 tonnes or more of dangerous substances. The intention is that notifications will be made available to local fire brigades to enable them to inspect and gather detailed information about such sites for their own purposes. The proposals, which will take account of comments on a consultative document published by the commission, are expected to be submitted to Ministers as early as possible in 1988.

I see no advantage at this stage in diverting resources to the development of an interim code of practice.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radiation Levels

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received from the National Radiological Protection Board regarding radiation levels in the United Kingdom after the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The NRPB has informed me of the outcome of a programme of whole body monitoring of radioactivity levels in people recently undertaken in Yorkshire, from which it concludes that no one in Yorkshire is at any significant risk from Chernobyl fallout.

Deer

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to take measures to encourage the raising of deer by farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have no plans at present to do so. Grants are already available to farmers for approved investments in deer enterprises under the agricultural improvement scheme.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Darling: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sightings of oil pollution in United Kingdom territorial waters were reported by the aircraft and vessels of the fisheries protection service in 1984, 1985, 1986 and so far in the current year.

Mr. Gummer: The fisheries protection service is required to report any sightings of oil pollution to the appropriate authorities. Records are not kept of the number of such sightings.

EC Surpluses

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will consult representatives of the retail trade to obtain their co-operation in organising the distribution of any surplus EEC food through shops and supermarkets.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I am consulting on the free food scheme at this moment and I shall announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Special Sales (Butter)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 775-6, what amount of the total of 500,100 tonnes of special sales of butter to the Soviet Union between February and November was from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* None.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 775-6, what was the average purchase price and storage cost, expressed in pence per pound, of the 500,100 tonnes of special sales of butter sent to the Soviet Union by the European Economic Community from February to November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The average purchase price of the butter sold by special sale to the USSR was approximately 88p per pound. I regret that information on the storage cost of the butter concerned is not available.

European Community (Food and Wine Exports)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of food and wine exported by the EEC to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe respectively, in the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; and what were the comparable totals for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The information requested is contained in the tables.

European Community[1] exports of the main agricultural commodities to the Soviet Union

000 tonnes

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	January-May 1987
Wheat	1,573	3,822	4,937	4,753	4,990	4,290
Barley	6	610	673	2,577	1,510	1,150
Wheat Flour	596	178	187	..	..	0
Rice	..	..	..	108	..	..
Malt	140	227	79	..	0	0
Wholemilk Powder	25	1	5	6	10	15
Skimmed milk powder	..	0	..	0	0	..
Condensed milk	..	..	..	0	..	..
Butter (including butter oil)	..	40	86	162	105	108
Beef and veal	67	112	75	84	141	24
Pigmeat	0	5	..	0	..	..
Poultrymeat	46	46	..	2	23	..
Sugar total (white equivalent)	1,092	786	589	..	7	0
(of which, refined sugar)	(896)	(644)	(452)	..	..	(0)
Olive oil	4	8	4	13	12	8
Wine	135	63	72	35	4	..

Notes: [1] 1982-5 = EC10, 1986-7 = EC12
.. denotes trade under 500 tonnes
Source: EUROSTAT

European Community[1] exports of the main agricultural commodities to the Eastern Bloc (excluding USSR)[2]

000 tonnes

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	January-May 1987
Wheat	1,986	1,787	1,634	1,056	623	851
Barley	51	154	65	902	811	14
Wheat Flour	129	23	..	..	8	..
Rice	31	10	8	0	7	1
Malt	0	1	..	10	..	0
Wholemilk Powder	4	1	1	..	5	..
Skimmed milk powder	1	..	..	..	1	..
Condensed milk	..	..	..	0	..	..
Butter (including butter oil)	40	7	..	..	18	9
Beef and veal	53	45	57	13	70	6
Pigmeat	8	26	2	..	1	1
Poultrymeat	27	12	6	3	..	..
Sugar total (white equivalent)	60	18	1	15	..	(3)
(of which, refined sugar)	(60)	(6)	(1)	(2)	..	(3)
Olive oil	5	1	1	..	..	..
Wine	27	15	14	28	130	39

Notes: [1] 1982-5 = EC10, 1986-7 = EC12
[2] German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Bulgaria, Albania
.. denotes trade under 500 tonnes
Source: EUROSTAT

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anthony Hughes

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary on the circumstances in which Anthony Hughes was shot by the security forces at Longhall, County Armagh, on 8 May.

Mr. Stanley: As is the case in any shooting incident in Northern Ireland causing civilian deaths or injuries, and involving members of the security forces, the Chief Constable of the RUC is carrying out an investigation into the shooting of Mr. Hughes, and the results of that investigation will be reported to the Director Public Prosecutions who will decide if any criminal proceedings should be brought.

Peripatetic Remedial Reading Teachers

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many peripatetic remedial reading teachers are currently employed to serve small primary

schools in the Ards peninsula; whether the current service is deemed adequate to meet the needs of children in this area; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The deployment of peripatetic teachers in this area is a matter for the South-Eastern Education and Library Board. One full-time peripatetic remedial teacher is so deployed. Provision for children with reading difficulties may also be made either by the teachers employed in the school or by the appointment of part-time teachers. At present part-time teachers are providing remedial education in six primary schools in the area. The provision required for individual children is kept under review by the school authorities.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions have taken place with QED Design and Development Ltd. on the supply of British Army-style equipment and clothing to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* For some years the Police Authority for Northern Ireland has purchased cold weather items of equipment and clothing for the Royal Ulster Constabulary from a number of civilian firms, including QED Design and Development Ltd. The last such purchase from this company was in 1985. Discussions were confined to the normal supplier/customer relationship.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what procedures exist for the acquisition by the Royal Ulster Constabulary of British military uniforms where such uniforms are to be used in training.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* The provision of equipment for the Royal Ulster Constabulary is the responsibility of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, which follows normal Government tendering practice. No military uniforms have been acquired. What was purchased was items of cold weather clothing and equipment most suitable for training and operations outdoor and in bad weather conditions. Many of these are also used by the Army for the same reasons.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what clothing and other equipment similar to that supplied to the British Army is currently in the possession of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* Some items obtained from a number of commercial organisations are still held in stock. These are for use in training or operations in the field where circumstances or bad weather conditions so require, and include such articles as arctic sleeping bags, parkas, rucksacks and insulated suits.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contracts Frank Turner and QED Ltd. have had with the Royal Ulster Constabulary since 1981.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* Three orders were placed with QED Ltd. in 1982; two in 1983; two in 1984 and one in 1985.

Police (Clothing)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what purposes over the past five years the Police Authority for Northern Ireland has ordered green, black, khaki and green marine berets, Parka jackets, Streamlight torches and camouflaged thermal clothing.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* A total of 24 assorted berets were acquired in 1983 to add realism to the training of officers who might have to deal with, for example, illegal vehicle check points carried out by paramilitaries in the guise of military patrols. The other items were obtained for RUC operational training purposes, and may be used in the field when circumstances and weather conditions require.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the Police Authority for Northern Ireland paid in cash for British-style military uniforms in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* I have no evidence of any payment in cash.

Artificial Insemination

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to close any of the artificial insemination offices in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* As part of general Government policy on transfer of responsibilities from the public sector the Department of Agriculture is considering the position of the AI Service.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Employment of Children Act 1973

94. **Mr. Archer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring into effect the Employment of Children Act 1973.

Mrs. Currie: The Government have no plans to implement the Employment of Children Act 1973. All local authorities (except Isles of Scilly) have byelaws which regulate the hours and conditions of children's employment. The majority of byelaws follow departmental guidance of 1976 which is based on the proposed content of regulations under the 1973 Act.

Social Fund

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will correct the figure for the allocation for the social fund to his Department's Glasgow, Provan office, announced in his reply on 4 November to the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), *Official Report*, columns *774-81*.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the figures for the social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 for the Department's Glasgow, Provan office, announced in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81*, were incorrect. The correct figures are as follows:

	Grants budget £	Loans budget £
Glasgow, Provan	447,797	1,059,669

The correction of these figures brings the total allocations to offices in Scotland to £11,506,069 for grants and £27,143,347 for loans.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what training is being given to his Department's staff in preparation for the introduction of the social fund in 1988.

Mr. Portillo: The training to be provided for clerical staff will consist of self-instruction and microcomputer training which is likely to last one week.

The main training for social fund officers (SFOs) will cover a three-week period. During week one each officer will complete a series of linked self-instructional texts each concentrating on a particular aspect of the social fund. They will also study the social fund manual and undertake some background reading.

During weeks two and three prospective social fund officers will attend a training course at one of the Department's training centres. This course provides an opportunity for staff to develop the use of discretion and judgment in decision making; this will cover an understanding of the needs of the many client groups who are likely to apply to the social fund—for example, the elderly, the mentally ill and those suffering from drug and alcohol addiction. In addition, the social fund officer's liaison role with other statutory and voluntary welfare agencies will be examined. Training will also be given to equip those administering the fund with the knowledge they need to offer money advice to those applications who need it. The review process will also be included. Case studies will feature prominently within the course to help develop further the interviewing skills and technical knowledge of social fund officers. Training on the social fund microcomputer programme will also be given.

Higher executive officers, the immediate line managers of social fund officers, will receive training with the addition of a one-day seminar on management, the review process and budgetary issues.

Local office managers who will be responsible for the management of the local social fund budget will attend a two-day residential seminar during which their personal role, including liaison with other agencies, budgetary profiling and ongoing budget management will be examined.

A video film describing the principles of the social fund is being prepared and will be sent to the Department's local offices during February 1988. Arrangements are being made for those staff not directly involved in the administration of the social fund to see it.

Charing Cross Hospital

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the estimate of the annual running costs contained in the initial feasibility study on the rebuilding of Charing Cross hospital; and what have been the annual running costs since its completion;

(2) what was the estimated cost, both in money of the day and real terms, given in the original feasibility study of rebuilding Charing Cross hospital; and what was the final actual cost.

Mrs. Currie: Responsibility for the planning and construction of health buildings is delegated to regional health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to approach the regional chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority to inquire what information is available.

Occasional-use Pushchair

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when a definitive reply can be expected to the representations made by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe concerning the decision to issue the Andrews McLaren occasional-use pushchair; if he will summarise the adverse comments from disabled people about the chair following its field trials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I have received a letter on this subject from the right hon. Member which I have passed to the chairman of the Disablement Services Authority. The right hon. Member will be aware that that authority has full responsibility for the supply of wheelchairs for disabled people within the National Health Service. I am confident that the chairman of the authority will reply fully to him shortly.

London Ambulances

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many miles were covered each year since 1979 by the London ambulance service in *(a)* emergency services, *(b)* non-emergency services, *(c)* mini-cabs and *(d)* volunteer drivers;

(2) how many emergency-equipped London ambulances were available at 6 pm on 18 November; and what was the equivalent for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the tables.

Table 1: Miles covered each year

		Non Emergency			
	Emergency	[1]Ambulances	Hired cars	Ambulance car service	Total
1979	Data unavailable due to an industrial dispute				
1980	3,098,285	7,680,021	283,550	1,138,328	9,101,899
1981	3,132,119	8,231,233	262,285	1,012,161	9,505,679
1982	3,246,434	8,055,365	273,202	1,021,006	9,349,573
1983	3,389,731	8,201,627	189,123	1,039,784	9,430,634
1984	3,500,909	8,445,408	45,319	1,136,482	9,627,209

	Emergency	Non Emergency			
		[1] Ambulances	Hired cars	Ambulance car service	Total
1985	3,695,393	8,011,723	82,498	1,457,380	9,551,601
1986	3,702,688	6,406,224	240,170	1,763,843	8,410,237
1987[2]	3,767,080	6,155,357	222,679	1,860,959	8,238,995

[1] Includes vehicles on loan to day hospitals.
[2] Data for 1987 projected.

Table 2: Number of emergency equipped ambulances available on 18 November 1983 and equivalent dates since

	Rostered	Actually available
Wednesday 23 November 1983	134	134
Wednesday 21 November 1984	134	134
Wednesday 20 November 1985	134	133
Wednesday 19 November 1986	[1]154	152
Wednesday 18 November 1987	154	[2]125

[1] Front-line ambulances on late turn increased by 20, as a part of the ambulance staff review, in March 1986.

[2] The difference between rostered ambulances and available ambulances was due to a ban on voluntary overtime. This action took place between 4 November 1987 and 2 December 1987.

Hospital Beds (London)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current bed availability, by district health authority, for London as at the latest date and the comparative figures for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table. The number of in-patient cases treated in London rose 5·7 per cent. between 1979 and 1986 from 1,045,877 to 1,105,481.

Average daily number of available beds, National Health Service hospitals, London 1979 to 1986

Health authorities	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
North West Thames								
Barnet	2,841	2,800	2,771	2,748	2,670	2,551	2,445	2,324
Harrow	908	902	914	938	935	878	905	886
Hillingdon	1,628	1,480	1,528	1,526	1,499	1,406	1,378	1,329
Hounslow and Spelthorne	[1]	[1]	[1]	1,548	1,497	1,447	1,382	1,356
Ealing	1,709	1,713	1,753	1,725	1,663	1,622	1,543	1,509
Brent	2,316	2,332	2,263	2,273	2,203	2,059	1,939	1,883
Paddington and North Kensington	1,365	1,276	1,236	1,216	1,211	1,187	1,211	1,208
Riverside[2]	[1]	[1]	[1]	3,946	3,845	3,708	3,465	3,091
North East Thames								
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	3,283	3,238	3,183	3,095	3,033	2,984	2,878	2,765
Hampstead	[1]	[1]	[1]	1,963	1,919	1,894	1,875	1,818
Bloomsbury	[1]	[1]	[1]	2,487	2,490	2,344	2,116	1,971
Islington	[1]	[1]	[1]	1,177	1,105	1,018	917	866
City and Hackney	1,990	1,867	1,743	1,887	1,884	1,853	1,754	1,686
Newham	941	924	936	887	845	877	880	876
Tower Hamlets	1,561	1,484	1,605	1,433	1,396	1,363	1,355	1,290
Enfield	1,234	1,217	1,137	1,087	1,114	1,076	1,069	1,055
Haringey	1,236	1,122	1,143	1,157	1,109	1,028	986	1,072
Redbridge	1,655	1,655	1,650	1,633	1,644	1,630	1,617	1,553
Waltham Forest	3,311	3,318	3,245	3,051	2,842	2,667	2,508	2,407
South East Thames								
Bexley	1,653	1,667	1,635	1,585	1,543	1,468	1,435	1,386
Greenwich	1,777	1,666	1,623	1,598	1,611	1,586	1,517	1,334
Bromley	2,591	2,491	2,466	2,377	2,296	2,116	1,989	1,887
West Lambeth	[1]	[1]	[1]	2,100	2,119	2,066	1,993	1,887
Camberwell	1,432	1,366	1,332	1,289	1,279	1,232	1,264	1,232
Lewisham and North Southwark	2,336	2,257	2,208	2,185	2,194	2,058	2,048	1,910
South West Thames								
Croydon	3,192	3,089	3,006	2,929	2,860	2,728	2,637	2,397
Kingston and Esher	[1]	[1]	[1]	1,564	1,517	1,457	1,416	1,378
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	[1]	[1]	[1]	979	970	916	868	860
Wandsworth	2,871	2,689	2,543	2,476	2,494	2,534	2,338	2,234
Merton and Sutton	2,687	2,610	2,510	2,495	2,477	2,390	2,332	2,235
Special Health Authorities								
The Hospital for Sick Children	517	506	544	494	474	418	410	402
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	357	355	345	356	351	341	349	338
Moorfields Eye Hospital	208	204	204	208	210	181	163	152
Bethlehem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	472	492	497	501	498	506	504	511
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	603	570	577	556	552	540	449	423
The Royal Marsden Hospital	361	361	350	340	343	333	344	354

Health authorities	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	[1]	[1]	[1]	891	900	917	868	845
London[3]	64,376	62,205	61,356	60,697	59,591	57,381	55,144	52,708

[1] Comparable figures not readily available due to National Health Service restructuring in 1982.
[2] Hammersmith and Fulham district health authority and Victoria district health authority prior to 1985.
[3] Figures for 1979 to 1981 include data for districts which were split up in the 1982 National Health Service restructuring.

Local Offices (Staffing)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual turnover of staff, by grade, for each year since 1979, for *(a)* Highgate, *(b)* Finsbury Park and *(c)* Dalston offices of his Department.

Mr. Portillo: The Department does not have a Dalston local office.

The following tables give the total number of staff, in each grade, leaving the Highgate, Finsbury Park and Hoxton local offices of the Department, for all reasons, during the period 1 October 1985 to 31 October 1987.

The information requested is not available prior to 1 October 1985.

Grade	Number of staff leaving local office: 1 October 1985 to 31 December 1985	January 1986 to December 1986	January 1987 to October 1987
(a) Highgate Local Office			
LOI	1	9	9
LOII	3	26	32
AA	2½	11	16
Typist	—	3	—
Other	2	5	4
Total	8½	54	61
(b) Finsbury Park Local Office			
LOI	1	23	4
LOII	4½	40	10
AA	1	14	4
Typist	—	1	1
Other	—	3	4
Total	6½	81	23
(c) Hoxton Local Office			
LOI	3	8	3
LOII	4	19	19
AA	—	17	14
Typist	1	—	—
Other	2	3	3
Total	10	47	39

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the staffing levels, by grade, of his Department's offices at *(a)* Finsbury Park, *(b)* Highgate and *(c)* Dalston for June in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: There is no social security local office at Dalston. Information is provided for those offices serving the hon. Member's constituency which are Finsbury Park, Highgate and Hoxton. Records of staffing levels for 1982 and 1983 are unavailable as they have been destroyed by fire. For the remaining years since 1979 the numbers of staff in post at these offices as at 1 June are as follows:

Grade	1979	1980	1981	1984	1985	1986	1987
Finsbury park ILO							
Principal	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
SEO	1	2	1	1	1	1	1
HEO	9	7	6	8	8	10	6
LO1	44	43	37	42	48	52	52·5
LO2	82	92	84	83	100	93·5	107
AA	30	32	28	31	31	36	50
Typist	2·5	3·5	3·5	4	4	4	4
Security Guard	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
Messenger	4	3	4	4	3	4	5
Total	174·5	185·5	165·5	173	196	201·5	226·5
Highgate ILO							
Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
SEO	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
HEO	9	10	8	7	8	7	9
LO1	52	57	56	50	49	49·5	56·5
LO2	102	94	94	99	106	98·5	103·5
AA	35	41	39	36	38	35	39·5
Typist	3	3	4	5	5	5	6
Security Guard	1	2	2	5	4	3	4
Messenger	4	4	4	3	5	5	5
Total	209	214	210	207	217	205	225·5
Hoxton ILO							
Principal	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Grade	1979	1980	1981	1984	1985	1986	1987
SEO	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
HEO	6	6	6	6	6	6	7
LO1	35	35	37	37	35	34	40
LO2	59	69	65	65	66	71	62
AA	24	23	24	26	26	24	30
Typist	4	3	4	4	3	4	4
Security Guard	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
Messenger	2	1	2	3	3	3	3
Total	133	141	142	144	142	145	149

Abbreviations:
ILO—Integrated Local Office.
SEO—Senior Executive Officer.
HEO—Higher Executive Officer.
LO1—Local Officer 1.
LO2—Local Officer 2.
AA—Administrative Assistant.

Rate Rebates

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the lowest paid 10 per cent. of households are receiving full rate rebates under the present system.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

Pregnancies

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show for each of the last 10 years the number of pregnancies which were alleged to have occurred as a result of rape; of these, how many were ended by abortion; and in what age groups, and what numbers in each of those age groups, such pregnancies and abortions occurred in each of these years.

Mr. Newton: The number of pregnancies which were alleged to have occurred as a result of rape is not known. Statistics of the number of mentions of rape on the abortion notification forms can be provided reliably only for 1987 and subsequent years. The figures for 1987 are expected to be available after May 1988.

NHS Consultants

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what controls apply to National Health Service consultants being financially involved in commercial agencies supplying locums to the National Health Service hospitals in which they practise; and if he has any plans to alter the present position.

Mr. Newton: There are no specific controls. It is for health authorities to determine locally whether any individual abuses his position. There are no current plans to change this.

Locums

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available about the amount of payments made to locums by health authorities; and if he has any plans to ensure that better value for money so spent is obtained.

Mr. Newton: In 1986-87, expenditure on directly employed locums and agency locums, as indicated by health authorities in their provisional accounts, was £39·7 million and £26·06 million respectively. These figures represent 3·46 per cent. and 2·27 per cent. of the total pay bill for medical and dental staff. Several health authorities are engaged in initiatives to reduce the proportion of spending on agency locums and we are monitoring carefully their progress.

Severe Weather Payments (Scotland)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of severe weather payments paid by benefit offices in Scotland in 1986-87; if he will break down this figure by week of payment; and if he will estimate the total number of claimants involved.

Mr. Scott: The total and weekly number of exceptionally cold weather payments made by local offices in Scotland last winter is given in the table. With regard to the number of claimants involved I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 22 July at columns *248-252.*

Number of exceptionally cold weather payments made by local offices in Scotland by week of payment in the Winter of 1986-87

Payment made in week commencing	Number of £5 weekly payments made
20 January 1987	9,173
27 January 1987	92,698
3 February 1987	58,769
10 February 1987	60,560
17 February 1987	28,895
24 February 1987	17,984
3 March 1987	6,280
10 March 1987	6,748
17 March 1987	3,965
24 March 1987	2,021
31 March 1987	1,679
7 April 1987	898
14 April 1987	[1]—
21 April 1987	235
28 April 1987	255
5 May 1987	380
12 May 1987	293
19 May 1987	100
26 May 1987	90
2 June 1987	61
9 June 1987	64
16 June 1987	6
23 June 1987	5

Payment made in week commencing	Number of £5 weekly payments made
30 June 1987	18
Total	291,177

[1] Industrial dispute.

Irradiated and Novel Foods

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government will give a date for the publication of the report of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Government's consideration of the report of the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods and of the committee's further advice following representations on the original report is almost complete. An announcement will be made shortly.

Nurses (Special Duty Payments)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the future of special duty payments for nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the Nurses and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council is currently reviewing all allowances for patterns of working including special duty payments.

Fluoridation Society

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was provided in grants to the Fluoridation Society by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Health Education Authority and Health Education Council during 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mrs. Currie: The Department provided the society with grants of £20,000 in each of the years 1986-87 and 1987-88. The Health Education Council provided a grant of £15,000 in 1986-87 and the Health Education Authority a grant of £13,000 in 1987-88. We intend to increase the centrally funded payments for the addition of fluoride to water, as set out in the White Paper — "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) — as we regard it as an important and cost-effective measure against dental caries.

Aycliffe School (Diet Experiments)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *444*, what information he has as to whether the proposed experiments into children's diet and health at Aycliffe community school, County Durham, will be directly or indirectly funded by a health food company whose products form part of the experiment.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that, if the study proceeds, funds for the cost of the research time and any additional food costs are to be provided by an organisation called the British Society for Nutritional Medicine, which intends to raise the money from a variety of sources including the "health food" industry and suppliers.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *444*, what information he has as to the membership of the steering committee established to oversee the proposed study into diet and behaviour at Aycliffe community school, County Durham, and their qualifications.

Mrs. Currie: I am informed that the membership of the academic steering committee which has been established to oversee the proposed study is as follows:

Professor I. Kolvin — Professor of Child Psychiatry, Newcastle.
Dr. Eastham — Consultant Nephrologist and Paediatric Dietician, Newcastle district health authority.
Professor Dickerson — Emeritus Professor of Nutritional Biochemistry, Surrey University.
Dr. Damian Downing — Dietician, Secretary of British Society of Nutritional Medicine.
Mrs. Caroline Fitzgibbon — Reader in Statistical and Research Methodology, Newcastle University.
Dr. M. S. Hoghughi — Clinical Psychologist and Principal of Aycliffe School.

Cancer Screening

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the implications for his policy on cancer screening within the National Health Service of the Sharp intercollegiate report on cervical cytology screening facilities, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mrs. Currie: We shall shortly be issuing to health authorities consolidated and revised guidance on cervical cancer screening. We have agreed with the president of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists that copies of the inter-collegiate report on cervical cytology screening, which has been placed in the Library, should be enclosed with that circular. The Department will pay for the necessary copies and distribution. Together these documents will give health authorities sound advice on ways of improving their screening programmes in order to reduce mortality from cervical cancer.

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys

Mr. Forth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures have now been taken to clarify the relationship between the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and Ministers, and to ensure that the work Office of Population Censuses and Surveys undertakes for customer Departments reflects their requirements, as recommended in the machinery of government review, *Official Report*, 18 November 1986, columns *86-7*.

Mr. Moore: The relationship between OPCS and Ministers has now been reviewed. It is partly determined by the legal position of the head of OPCS, as Registrar General for England and Wales. The Registrar General has statutory duties relating to the registration of births, marriages and deaths and civil marriage, the carrying out of censuses of population and the collection and publication of statistics between censuses. The registration functions are carried out independently of Ministers, except that the Secretary of State must approve regulations, local schemes for the organisation of the service, and the form of the annual abstract of statistics derived from registration. The duties under the Census and Population Statistics Acts are carried out under the direction of the Secretary of State. OPCS also has important non statutory functions, including carrying out social surveys, maintaining the NHS central register and the processing of statistics about hospital patients.

In 1987-88 OPCS introduced a system under which managers have agreed objectives; work targets and budgets, and performance is monitored against these. Performance is reviewed by Ministers at the end of the financial year, and plans agreed for the next year, having regard to the statutory position of the Registrar General. The budgetary system is now being developed to support this approach better, and to give line managers greater control over expenditure on support services.

The statutory functions of the Registrar General will continue to be funded directly on the OPCS vote, although changes may be made for additional services. In general, non-statutory functions are paid for by customer departments or will be so paid for from 1 April 1988, including social surveys. For these services priorities will therefore be determined by customer departments, who will agree the work to be carried out, its timing and its cost.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be making new appointments to regional health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The term of office of about half the current members of regional health authorities ends on 30 September 1988 and, in accordance with the National Health Service Act 1977, we are seeking nominations for new members. If hon. Members wish to recommend any individuals for membership I invite them to write to me by 4 January 1988. Reappointments and changes will be announced in due course.

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the extra funding outlined in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement for the Health Service is to be made available to the regional health authorities; what will be the amount for the Trent region; what funding was available to the regions in the years 1979 and 1987 and whether the resource allocation working party formula will continue to apply.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to change the current policy of redistributing resources out of the North East Thames and other Thames regions in the light of its effects on London health districts; and if he will make a statement on the resource allocation working party formula as it applies to the North East Thames region.

Mr. Newton: Allocations to regional health authorities for 1988-89 will be announced shortly, including that for Trent regional health authority. The current review of the resource allocation working party formula is exploring the scope for improving the way in which the formula measures relative need for health care across the country. The review's programme of analysis and research is due for completion by around the end of the year, and any recommendations which may emerge will then be carefully considered. Meanwhile, the present arrangements will continue to apply, with the pace of change in allocations year by year remaining a matter for ministerial decision.

Funding to regional health authorities in the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 is in the table.

Revenue cash limits[1]

Region	*1979-80 £000s*	*1980-81 £000s*	*1981-82 £000s*	*1982-83 £000s*	*1983-84 £000s*	*1984-85 £000s*	*1985-86 £000s*	*[2]1986-87 £000s*	*[3]1987-88 £000s*
Northern	331,760	442,422	483,312	524,176	553,972	588,093	618,849	663,513	699,786
Yorkshire	375,478	499,283	547,152	590,397	623,720	657,459	686,193	739,226	786,599
Trent	437,607	584,426	644,611	694,210	739,498	785,483	836,351	911,355	970,216
East Anglian	182,967	244,748	269,314	291,011	311,707	331,700	355,385	385,129	411,602
North West Thames	438,733	583,939	643,693	630,187	654,944	696,599	713,194	756,690	786,508
North East Thames	480,181	635,907	693,840	795,234	828,880	867,137	897,987	955,433	996,092
South East Thames	451,820	601,749	656,510	699,866	729,510	766,367	797,993	841,427	874,233
South West Thames	354,614	466,979	517,658	535,726	554,052	588,383	599,402	639,732	710,025
Wessex	268,318	351,050	390,364	424,173	440,120	479,603	504,701	546,020	580,446
Oxford	216,647	284,449	312,099	332,899	350,569	378,136	398,107	429,858	454,746
South Western	329,628	428,345	472,900	508,954	538,149	568,012	598,751	644,139	688,642
West Midlands	522,633	678,995	752,247	814,275	861,746	908,176	956,120	1,025,325	1,114,355
Mersey	283,802	369,217	406,198	437,494	457,275	481,787	501,459	537,022	564,742
North Western	456,855	601,857	675,155	730,416	763,336	807,578	848,196	912,460	959,886

[1] Inclusive of all in-year adjustments, carry forward from previous financial year, and in-year transfers between revenue and capital.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Initial allocations shown. Final cash limits will reflect in-year adjustments (see note [1]) which have not yet been finalised.

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the administrative cost of the regional health authorities in England in 1987-88.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not collected in-year and the annual accounts of health authorities for 1987-88, from which it would be derived, are not due for submission to the Department until June 1988. Information is available for 1986-87 and is provided in the table.

However, in this context, it would be misleading to interpret regional health authority data in isolation from those for the districts they manage. Regions are managed in an integrated way and, therefore, to provide a more accurate picture, regional health authority and district health authority figures should be combined. In interpreting the figures, a number of factors need to be borne in mind, for example the size of the total budgets managed, the population of the region and the number of health autorities involved, all of which differ between regions. Similarly, the balance of management as between RHA and DHA headquarters that these figures appear to suggest will also vary from place to place according to such factors as geographical size, policy on centralisation of

services (for example supplies, ambulances, computers) to achieve economies of scale, whether the RHA has a policy of re-charging districts for services it provides etc.:

Region	RHA aministration[1] expenditure (£000)	DHA administration[1] expenditure (£000)	Total administration[1] expenditure (£000)	Total revenue (£000)	Total capital (£000)	Resident population (millions)
Northern	4,969	22,098 [2](16)	27,067	664,666	52,686	3·09
Yorkshire	7,996	24,218 (17)	32,214	748,109	69,981	3·59
Trent	10,683	22,847 (12)	33,530	914,488	77,478	4·60
East Anglian	5,322	11,542 (8)	16,864	389,423	32,529	1·90
North West Thames	6,926	25,506 (14)	32,432	777,781	66,543	3·49
North East Thames	10,187	32,629 (16)	42,816	976,100	75,904	3·76
South East Thames	9,128	29,418 (15)	38,546	857,088	76,517	3·60
South West Thames	14,376	17,968 (13)	32,344	650,071	54,172	2·96
Wessex	4,264	17,466 (10)	21,730	549,152	70,999	2·87
Oxford	5,196	12,722 (8)	17,918	433,809	33,539	2·46
South Western	3,466	22,219 (11)	25,685	650,026	68,403	3·14
West Midlands	10,684	35,170 (22)	45,854	1,049,734	115,259	5·17
Mersey	4,159	17,176 (10)	21,335	542,821	48,443	2·41
North Western	12,089	26,594 (19)	38,683	922,352	65,673	3·95
Total	109,445	317,573 [2](191)	427,018	10,125,620	908,126	46·99

[1] Expenditure on headquarters administration includes the pay and pay related costs of staff of all disciplines employed at regional/district headquarters levels and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit levels: such costs are regarded as operational.
[2] The figures in brackets in the second column of figures gives the numbers of Districts—191 in all (see (2))

NHS Staff (Accommodation)

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the provision of residential accommodation for National Health Service staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I am very pleased to say that the Nationwide Anglia Building Society has today announced a special mortgage scheme for nurses and other National Health Service staff working in Greater London. Loans will be offered up to 100 per cent. of the purchase price, at a higher multiple of earnings than is normally available and at very favourable interest rates. Facilities for joint purchase are included. In return, the society will take a share of any capital gain at the time of disposal of the property. This imaginative scheme, prepared in consultation with the NHS management board, will enable more NHS staff to buy their own property and should improve the recruitment and retention of staff in London. It is an excellent example of how collaboration with the private sector can benefit the National Health Service.

The scheme will be assisted by a proposal which has been put today to the General Whitley Council by the management side. This will give health authorities more discretion than at present to make interest-free advances of salary to staff wanting to acquire accommodation. The aim is to help staff to take advantage of the Nationwide Anglia scheme and, throughout the country, make it easier for them to obtain homes of their own to buy or rent.

These measures reflect the Government's view that, in the main, it is better for NHS staff to obtain their housing in the normal way. The proposals in our Housing Bill will help further by increasing the amount of private accommodation available to rent. Nevertheless, there will be a continuing need for appropriate residential accommodation to meet particular local NHS needs, not only for student nurses and others in training and for those required to be resident on site but also in some places for qualified staff who cannot yet find their own accommodation.

We will be asking health authorities, when determining their accommodation needs, to consider a number of options, including not only direct provision and management themselves but also, for example, collaboration with housing associations of similar bodies. The Department has already commissioned two pilot studies with housing associations.

In addition, we will continue to encourage health authorities to improve accommodation standards by reinvesting the proceeds of sales of surplus properties. We are also reviewing the terms on which NHS staff occupy

residential accommodation and shall be issuing guidance to ensure that such staff have proper tenancy agreements setting out clearly their rights and responsibilities.

I believe these measures represent a good deal for nurses and others and will improve health authorities' ability to recruit and retain staff.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff are employed in his Department to work on health matters; and how many staff are responsible to the National Health Service Management Board.

Mr. Newton: The Department employs around 6,900 whole-time equivalent staff on health matters. Of these some 5,000 are professional, technical and audit staff, the majority of whom are employed in running the special hospitals and the Disablement Services Authority (including the staff of the artificial limb and appliance centres).

The remaining staff work in support of Ministers in their parliamentary and departmental duties. These include some 650 who are accountable to the chief executive of the National Health Service Management Board.

NHS (Waste Reduction)

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action the National Health Service Management Board has taken in the last six months to reduce waste in the National Health Service; and what early results have been achieved.

Mr. Newton: Ministers and the National Health Service Management Board are committed to ensuring that health authorities continue to improve the efficiency with which they provide services so as to maximise the resources available for patient care. Health authorities are already undertaking work to improve efficiency and their cost improvement programmes will yield savings worth some £600 million by the end of the 1987-88 financial year.

A number of initiatives have been launched to help authorities in their search for improved efficiency. This year we have.

- established a value for money unit to promote the dissemination of good practice and to carry out studies of potential areas for savings;
- issued a study of paymaster systems in health authorities identifying options for efficiency improvements and asked authorities to report on the scope for savings;
- encouraged authorities to implement schemes to generate additional income.

In addition to these specific initiatives we are continuing:

- to promote improvements in NHS purchasing arrangements;
- to encourage authorities to make further energy savings;
- to introduce new systems of resource management to provide doctors, nurses and other professional staff with the information they need to ensure that the resources they control are used to best effect.

The results of these initiatives are monitored through the existing planning and review systems, themselves introduced or improved under the aegis of the Management Board.

Doctors and Nurses (Burnley)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* doctors and *(b)* nurses were employed in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority area in each of the last eight years.

Mr. Newton: Information is not held centrally in the exact form sought. The table shows numbers of medical and dental staff, and nursing and midwifery staff employed in the district from 1982 onwards. Comparable figures before this are not available because of the National Health Service reorganisation in that year.

National Health Service staff in post in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district health authority at 30 September
Whole time equivalents[1]

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Medical and Dental[2]	110	110	120	120	120
Nursing and Midwifery [3]	2,720	2,690	2,670	2,710	2,660

[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) whole time equivalents.
[2] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Excludes senior registrars and consultants.
[3] Includes agency staff.
Source: DHSS annual censuses of National Health Service medical and non-medical manpower.

Burnley Health Authority

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the level of funding for the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority in each of the last eight years; and what has been the percentage change, in both cash and real terms, in each year.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not held centrally. The allocation of funds to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the North Western regional health authority who may be able to assist with the information he seeks.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were treated in each specialty in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority in each of the last five years; and how many operations were performed during these years.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. Reliable estimates of the numbers of operations performed in individual district health authorities cannot be made from the central data sample. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale health authority for the information he seeks. The available information is given in the tables.

Number of in-patients treated in NHS hospitals in Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale District Health Authority

Specialty	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
General Medicine	4,388	4,478	4,787	4,873	5,189
Paediatrics	1,908	2,020	2,096	2,222	2,635
Dermatology	145	248	209	227	237
Rheumatology	143	148	167	194	240
Geriatrics	2,712	2,918	2,833	3,055	3,281
General Surgery	4,612	4,777	4,600	4,562	4,790
Ear, Nose and Throat	1,003	906	984	982	1,190
Traumatic and Orthopaedic	1,588	1,627	1,780	1,672	1,808
Ophthalmology	620	672	720	721	637
Radiotherapy	60	33	26	13	8
Urology	816	857	980	952	1,329
Oral Surgery	648	661	682	690	751
Gynaecology	2,595	2,985	3,127	2,984	3,174
Obstetrics	3,798	4,099	4,141	4,022	4,361
S.C Baby Unit	342	367	314	287	259
Psychiatry Children	0	7	24	22	12
Mental Handicap	262	258	236	235	151
Mental illness	1,108	1,171	1,065	1,129	1,102
G P Maternity	336	207	118	105	21
G P Other	97	93	112	106	105
Accident and Emergency	114	130	141	149	124
Anaesthetics	45	42	75	37	56
Haematology	—	1	35	107	145
Intensive Care Unit	259	244	280	311	307
Psychogeriatric	0	—	—	—	—
Radiology	2	2	1	1	—
Total	27,601	28,951	29,533	29,658	31,912

Number of day case attendances at NHS hospitals, Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale District Health Authority

Specialty	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
General Medicine	1	4	555	564	498
Paediatrics	0	0	0	52	332
Chest Diseases	0	0	0	0	—
Dermatology	9	35	10	2	8
Neurology	0	0	0	0	0
Cardiology	0	0	0	0	0
Genito-Urinary Medicine	0	0	0	0	0
Rheumatology	0	1	0	1	1
Geriatrics	0	0	0	4	6
General Surgery	1,063	1,417	1,643	1,806	1,786
Ear, Nose and Throat	260	336	301	288	354
Traumatic and Orthopaedic	455	663	557	505	553
Ophthalmology	218	191	244	221	244
Radiotherapy	0	0	0	1	0
Urology	972	954	992	917	950
Plastic Surgery	0	0	0	0	0
Thoracic Surgery	0	0	0	0	0
Oral Surgery	72	71	122	118	107
Orthodontics	0	0	0	0	0
Neurosurgery	0	0	0	0	0
Gynaecology	149	290	811	991	660
Obstetrics (AN and PN)	0	0	0	0	0
Psychiatry Children	0	0	0	0	0
Mental Handicap	0	0	..	0	0
Mental illness	0	0	0	0	0
G P Maternity	0	0	0	—	0
G P Other	—	1	—	—	—
Accident and Emergency	—	220	230	291	330
Anaesthetics	48	26	6	26	25
Haematology	—	4	30	63	102
Radiology	—	—	1	—	—
Total	3,247	4,213	5,502	5,850	5,956

.. Not available.

Laboratory Scientific Officers

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* the average increases in pay over the last five years of laboratory scientific officers in the National Health Service and the equivalent figures for increases in the pay of nurses.

Mr. Newton: The average percentage increases in pay awarded to medical laboratory scientific officers and to nurses and midwives since 1982 are shown in the table.

Date of increase	*Average per cent. increase*
Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers	
11 September 1982	[1]10·77
1 April 1984	4·5
1 April 1985	4·7
1 April 1986	6·0
1 April 1987	5·0
Nurses and Midwives	
23 August 1982	[1]12·3
1 April 1984	7·5
1 April 1985	[2]5·0
1 February 1986	3·6
1 July 1986	7·8
1 April 1987	9·5

[1] Two year agreement covering period 1.4.82—31.3.84.
[2] Award for 1985-86 staged.

Handynet

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what action has been taken to ensure full participation in the Handynet programme of the European Economic Community and the availability in Britain of information from the database;

(2) what action he is taking to ensure that Britain plays a leading role in the development of Handynet and that opportunities will exist for full use to be made of the information that it provides;

(3) if he is planning to carry out an assessment of the value of the Handynet programme of the European Economic Community and British participation in it;

(4) what is the Government's policy towards the second action programme of the European Economic Community to promote the social and economic integration and integration of people with disabilities and the role which Handynet is to play in that programme.

Mr. Scott: The Handynet project is concerned with establishing a computerised information system for disabled people within the European Community. It is being developed by the Commission and information is not yet available to enable an informed assessment to be made of its value to disabled people in the United Kingdom. The future development of Handynet is being considered as part of the proposals for a Community second action programme in favour of disabled people. The Government would like to see work on Handynet proceed, but in our view its practical implications and cost-effectiveness require further study before any part of the system is introduced on an operational basis.

Apart from our concern about Handynet, the Government have some reservations on the proposed arrangements for the management and evaluation of the Programme. Otherwise we are broadly in favour of the Commission's proposals.

Health Authorities (Yorkshire)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown, by each district health authority within the Yorkshire region, of the percentage of the total budget which is spent on administration.

Mrs. Currie: Following is information derived from the 1986-87 annual accounts of the relevant health authorities:

Revenue expenditure on headquarters administration as a proportion of total revenue expenditure

District Health Authority	*Per cent.*
Hull	3·24
East Yorkshire	3·85
Grimsby	4·07
Scunthorpe	3·92
Northallerton	6·25
York	3·37
Scarborough	4·33
Harrogate	3·20
Bradford	3·30
Airedale	3·29
Calderdale	3·77
Huddersfield	3·57
Dewsbury	3·95
Leeds Western	2·25
Leeds Eastern	2·89
Wakefield	3·10
Pontefract	4·13

Note.—Expenditure on headquarters administration includes the pay and pay-related costs of staff of all disciplines employed at district headquarters level and their office costs and overheads. It excludes the cost of clerical and secretarial support staff employed in departments at hospital and unit level: such costs are regarded as operational.

Cold-related Deaths (Teesside)

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in the South and North Tees health authorities as a proportion of all such deaths for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The table shows information on deaths with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, irrespective of whether it was or was not the underlying cause of death for usual residents of North Tees and South Tees district health authorities.

Deaths with any mention of hypothermia to residents of North Tees and South Tees DHAs: numbers, and expressed as a percentage of similar deaths in England and Wales 1979 to1986

Year	*Number*	*Percentage*
1979	6	0·69
1980	5	0·83
1981	3	0·43
1982	4	0·60
1983	1	0·19
1984	2	0·36
1985	4	0·48
1986[1]	1	0·12

[1] Provisional.

Incurable Patients (Teesside)

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his best estimate of the number of patients in South and North Tees health authorities with treatment conditions who have become incurable in the past 12 months.

Mrs. Currie: Such information does not exist. It is a matter of clinical opinion in each individual case as to whether a patient's treatment is likely to prove successful.

Thalassaemia

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he has taken to discharge his undertaking of June to meet the cost of the information booklet produced by the United Kingdom Thalassaemia Society.

Mrs. Currie: The United Kingdom Thalassaemia Society made a formal application to the Department for help with the costs of reprinting its booklet and of translating it into the languages of the communities at risk on 12 October.

I have responded to the society by approving a grant of £5,000 for this purpose.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will direct the Health Education Authority to produce information booklets on thalassaemia and to make them available in the appropriate languages.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The Health Education Authority's booklet "Sickle Cell Disease" which also deals with thalassaemia and other haemoglobinopathies is intended as a guide for general practitioners, nurses and other health professionals.

The Thalassaemia Society publishes an information leaflet on the disease in English and we have approved funding to make it available in the languages of those communities at most risk.

East Berkshire Health Authority

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to overcome the financial difficulties experienced at East Berkshire health authority in meeting the cost of unbudgeted pay awards; if he will consider central funding of these awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 28 October 1987, c. 308]:* The cash allocation for East Berkshire health authority this year should read £53·5 million, not £69·5 million as stated.

Leukaemia

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any information on links between cases of leukaemia among children in the northern area of Southport and contamination of Southport beaches by discharges of nuclear waste from Sellafield nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 9 November 1987, c. 99]:* Data on the incidence of leukaemia amongst children resident in the area served by Southport and Formby district health authority for the years 1984-86 have now been obtained. The data for the full period from 1976 to 1986 are given in the table. A small excess was recognised locally in 1979-80, but it was within the limits of excesses which can easily arise by chance. Since then the incidence has been slightly below the national average. For 1976-78 the data are available up to 16 years, and for the years since up to 14 years.

Southport and Formby Districts—Childhood Leukaemia

Cases	*Number*
1976	2
1977	1
1978	1
1979	3
1980	2
1981	1
1982	0
1983	1
1984	0
1985	1
1986	2

Health Authorities

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the movements in working balances, over the past three financial years, indicating the levels of stocks, for each health authority in the north-west; and if he will give details of creditors and debtors in these authorities.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 29 October 1987]:* The information the hon. Member seeks has now been placed in the Library.

Severely Handicapped Children

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many severely handicapped children are currently placed in long-stay National Health Service hospitals.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* At 31 December 1986 there were 392 children under 16 years resident in mental handicap hospitals* and units in England. A number of these children were receiving short-term respite care or assessment. In addition, 350 mentally handicapped children were resident in small National Health Service units in the community. It is estimated that about 400 of these 742 individuals will have been resident over a year. No information is available centrally on the severity of their handicap.

Information is not available about the numbers of physically disabled children in hospital; there would be difficulties in defining this group for the purpose of collecting data.

ARMS Project

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent on the ARMS research project at Central Middlesex hospital since its inception; what is the number of full-time and part-time personnel engaged; what funding the project receives other than the annual allocation of the North West Thames regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The independent research work undertaken by Action for Research into Multiple Sclerosis (ARMS) at the Central Middlesex hospital is funded by the charity and the hon. Member may wish to contact ARMS direct.

Radiotherapy Services

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pending the outcome of his review of radiotherapy services, he will instruct the South East Thames regional health authority not to remove the radiotherapy service from the Medway towns; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The proposals to rationalise radiotherapy services in Kent have been referred to Ministers for decision. In considering these proposals we shall await the outcome of the Department's current review of its guidance to health authorities on the organisation of radiotherapy services.

Hospital Sales (Brent)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total sum realised by the sale of Neasden hospital by the Brent district health authority; what was the amount allocated by the regional health authority to Brent district health authority in respect of the sale; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the total sum realised by the sale of the Leamington Park hospital by the Brent district health authority; what was the amount actually received for the sale by the Brent district health authority; and what was the date on which it was allocated by the regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* I regret that this information is not available centrally. Regional health authorities are responsible for land disposal and the allocation of funds to their districts. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority.

Retirement Age

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take in regard to national insurance contributions in the light of the decision of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Northern Ireland upholding the complaint of Mrs. Frances Finnegan that she was obliged to retire at 60 years; and what is his assessment, in the case of a woman deciding to work until the age of 65 years, of the effect on her pension of continuing to pay national insurance contributions until that age.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* Action in the particular case of Mrs. Finnegan following the findings of the industrial tribunal which ruled on her complaint is a matter for the Department of Economic Development in Northern Ireland. In relation to Great Britain, the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 provides that it is unlawful for an employer to dismiss a woman on grounds of age where a comparable male employee would not be dismissed. These arrangements in respect of retirement from work have no direct bearing on the provisions of the social security scheme. Employees are liable to pay national insurance contributions up to state pension age, but no liability is incurred thereafter except in respect of employers' secondary contributions. State pension age itself is outside the scope of directive 79/7 on equal treatment in social security. Entitlement to pension cannot be increased after state pension age by either men or women, unless pension is forgone. Increments of about 7½ per cent. a year may then be earned for the first five years after pension age. We have no plans to change these long-standing arrangements.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 16 December 1987

SCOTLAND

National No-Smoking Day

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the cost to public funds of National No-Smoking Day 1988.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Health Education Group has allocated £10,000 towards the cost of National No-Smoking Day 1988.

Civil Defence

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make extra resources available to enable health boards to stockpile medical supplies and equipment, as laid out in paragraph 3.14 of his Department's circular "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service: Health Service Civil Defence Planning", SHHD/DGM(1987)41.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The question of stockpiling medical supplies and equipment, including cost implications, is presently under review. This will be a long-term project, and it is not possible at this stage to quantify the level of resources which may be involved.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of all medical establishments which may be allocated to armed forces casualties after a nuclear attack in each of the health boards' areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No medical establishments have been specifically designated for allocation to armed forces casualties after a nuclear attack. The Health Service will provide treatment for all casualties as far as is possible in the circumstances prevailing.

Sheltered Employment

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail *(a)* the total number of places in Scotland currently in operation under the Scottish Association for Mental Health sheltered placement scheme, *(b)* the number of new places to be made available in Scotland in the year 1988-89, *(c)* the number and proportion of places occupied by disabled people whose principal disability relates to a mental illness and *(d)* if he has any plans further to extend sheltered employment opportunities for people disabled by mental illness.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

a. the Scottish Association for Mental Health has only recently been approved as a scheme sponsor and is not sponsoring any placements in the current year;

b. decisions on the level of central Government spending on the scheme in 1988/89 will be taken shortly, and I am not yet in a position to say how many new places will be made available in Scotland;

c. at present there are eight severely disabled people whose principal handicap is mental illness occupying sheltered placements in Scotland, representing some 2 per cent. of the total number of placements; and

d. the needs of the mentally ill will continue to be considered along with the other demands for sheltered employment opportunities.

Midwives

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many newly-qualified midwives went into practice in the National Health Service in Scotland in the years ended 30 September 1985, 30 September 1986 and 30 September 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Social Work Authorities

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the figures for the last three years showing the level of expenditure incurred by each social work authority in Scotland on section 12 Social Work (Scotland) Act payments in monetary terms and per 1,000 head of population, each region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information requested for the last three years for which figures are available is in the table.

Payments by local authorities under Section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

Regional or Island Authority	*1983-84* £	*£ per '000 Population*	*1984-85* £	*£ per '000 Population*	*1985-86* £	*£ per '000 Population*
Borders	3,852	38·06	2,689	26·55	3,691	36·29
Central	7,332	26·89	6,898	25·29	11,135	40·87
Dumfries and Galloway	4,389	30·03	19,198	131·34	3,496	23·85
Fife	18,936	55·24	1,155,277	3,353·61	37,467	108·91
Grampian	52,234	105·63	23,945	48·15	18,882	37·72
Highland	5,552	28·32	4,420	22·41	5,572	28·05
Lothian	47,401	63·64	47,255	63·47	42,425	56·93
Strathclyde	233,750	98·09	291,532	122·83	386,659	163·93
Tayside	10,087	25·54	12,795	32·44	13,603	34·50
Orkney	718	37·32	1,015	52·55	516	26·67
Shetland	25,154	1,072·48	28,525	1,211·58	7,620	325·09
Western Isles	5,047	160·13	3,933	125·03	3,723	118·02
Scotland Total	414,452	80·47	1,597,482	310·45	534,789	104·12

School Management

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will now announce Her Majesty's Government's conclusions on the school management proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An announcement of the Government's conclusions will be made shortly.

Chief Inspector of Prisons (Report)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has received from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland his annual report for 1986 and individual reports on Dumfries prison, Noranside institution and Polmont institution.

Mr. Malcolm Rifkind: I have received Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland's annual report for 1986 together with individual reports on his inspections of Dumfries prison, Noranside institution and Polmont institution. I have today placed copies of the reports, including my responses, in the Library, and I am sending a copy to the Members in whose constituencies the establishments are located; and to the chairman of the Scottish all-party penal affairs group and to other interested bodies. Copies may also be purchased from my Department.

NHS (Commercial Contractors)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the instructions given to the health boards about the use of commercial contractors in support services of the National Health Service also referred to the need to hold, in advance, discussions and consultations, with the unions representing the workers of each of those health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The practical guidance on competitive tendering issued to health boards and the Common Services Agency on 11 December by the Scottish Home and Health Department indicates that, where the board's employees running an in-house service wish to bid for a contract they should be given the same opportunities to do so and be subject to the same conditions as external contractors.

Social Work (Scotland) Act

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expenditure by each regional social work department under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Local authority returns relating to payments made since the reorganisation of local government were started only in 1978/79. Figures for this and subsequent years up to 1985/86 are in the table.

Payments by Local Authorities under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

	1978-79 £	*1979-80* £	*1980-81* £	*1981-82* £	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £
Regional or Island Authority								
Borders	2,672	2,712	4,509	4,193	1,977	3,852	2,689	3,691
Central	6,022	8,160	4,226	6,218	7,836	7,332	6,898	11,135
Dumfries and Galloway	5,093	6,014	5,463	4,063	3,320	4,389	19,198	3,496
Fife	8,696	7,608	8,500	10,536	14,871	18,936	1,155,277	37,467
Grampian	14,765	15,648	15,274	28,446	31,240	52,234	23,945	18,882
Highland	2,744	6,355	5,710	6,215	4,612	5,552	4,420	5,572
Lothian	56,736	42,222	57,572	52,888	57,038	47,401	47,255	42,425
Strathclyde	175,639	188,292	116,320	216,097	195,505	233,750	291,532	386,659
Tayside	20,373	7,787	8,668	16,859	12,599	10,087	12,795	13,603
Orkney	—	167	609	798	979	718	1,015	516
Shetland	4,921	7,774	37,008	47,009	39,485	25,154	28,525	7,620
Western Isles	1,120	1,127	3,181	2,956	4,208	5,047	3,933	3,723
Scotland Total	298,781	293,866	267,040	396,278	373,670	414,452	1,597,482	534,789

Fishing Industry

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the United Kingdom mackerel catch of the current year, to the most recent date for which figures are available, was *(a)* landed at Lerwick, *(b)* landed at Ullapool, *(c)* landed at Mallaig, *(d)* landed at Peterhead, *(e)* landed at Fraserburgh, *(f)* trans-shipped at Lerwick, *(g)* trans-shipped at Ullapool and *(h)* landed at a foreign EEC port.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested on the proportions of the United Kingdom mackerel catch, to the most recent date (10 December 1987) is as follows:

Percentage of United Kingdom catch

	Total per cent.	*of which trans-shipped* per cent.
Lerwick	0·4	—
Ullapool	63·4	59·5
Mallaig	0	—
Peterhead	0·3	—
Fraserburgh	8·0	—
Abroad	13·6	—

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the United Kingdom herring catch for the current year, to the most recent date for which figures are available, was *(a)* landed at Lerwick, *(b)* landed at Ullapool, *(c)* landed at Mallaig, *(d)* landed at Peterhead, *(e)* landed at Fraserburgh, *(f)* trans-shipped at Lerwick, *(g)* trans-shipped at Ullapool and *(h)* landed at a foreign EEC port.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested on the proportions of the United Kingdom herring catch, to the most recent date (10 December 1987), is as follows:

Percentages of United Kingdom catch

	Total per cent.	*of which trans-shipped* per cent.
Lerwick	40·7	38·4
Ullapool	10·0	8·4
Mallaig	0	—
Peterhead	18·5	12·3
Fraserburgh	8·2	—
Abroad	8·5	—

Parole

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent consideration he has given to reducing the minimum qualifying period for parole to that which applies in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I have no present plans to reduce the minimum qualifying period for parole. This is one of the matters on which I will await advice from the review of the parole system in Scotland, which, as previously announced, I intend to institute. I have now decided that the best means of doing this would be to set up such a review in the wider context of arrangements for modifying the effects of custodial sentences. I am delighted that Lord Kincraig has accepted my invitation to act as chairman of a review with the following terms of reference:-

"To consider the present arrangements in Scotland for modifying the effect of custodial sentences and in particular:-

(a) the objectives of the parole system, and whether it should be retained in its present or in a modified form, including any changes which should be made to:-

(i) the current criteria for eligibility for parole;

(ii) the current criteria for remission;

(b) whether as an alternative or a supplement to the present arrangements, any different scheme might be introduced for the release of prisoners, for stated purposes, before the completion of the sentence ordained by the court;

(c) whether there should be any extension of the role of the judiciary in relation to the present parole or remission systems, or in relation to any alternative arrangements for the modification of the effects of custodial sentences;

(d) the role of the social work services in supervising convicted offenders released on licence;

(e) the current provisions for periods spent in custody on remand to be taken into account in the determination of sentences;

(f) whether or not powers should be conferred upon the courts to suspend sentences, or to ordain part-suspended sentences, in what circumstances and on what conditions;

(g) the conditions which should attach to parole, remission or any equivalent scheme;

(h) whether the conclusions reached in the context of determinate sentences have any relevance to current policy on life sentence prisoners;

(i) the overall resource implications and cost-effectiveness of the existing systems and of any modifications or alternatives which may be suggested;

and to make recommendations."

The membership of the review, and arrangements for conveying evidence to it, will be announced later.

WALES

Education Reform

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the trends of the responses from Wales to the recent consultation over the education reform proposals.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Several hundred responses to seven separate consultation documents were received. They expressed a wide variety of views which cannot be summarised in a few words. Copies of the principal responses from organisations are in the Library and the hon. Gentleman may wish to examine them and make his own assessment.

Gwent Health Authority

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the term of office of the chairman of the Gwent health authority expires.

Mr. Grist: 31 July 1990.

NHS (Funds)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how the additional financial resources, recently announced by him for the Health Service in Wales, will be allocated between each of the health authorities in Wales; and whether there are any restrictions on the use of these additional funds to make up for the non-funding of wage awards suffered by health authorities over the past two years.

Mr. Peter Walker: I announced on 4 December, at column 719, that, subject to parliamentary approval, I propose to provide £843·9 million for hospital and community health services in Wales in 1988-89. Excluding the administration costs of the artificial limb and appliance service, which will from 1 April 1988 be transferred to the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, £792·0 million will be provided for current purposes and £51·4 million for capital expenditure.

For current spending this represents a cash increase of £46·5 million, or 6·2 per cent. over recurrent 1987-88 provision. £39·3 million will be made available to health authorities for their discretionary use, which represents a cash increase of 5·3 per cent. over their recurrent 1987-88 allocations. The balance of £7·2 million, together with a further £2 million previously earmarked for non-recurrent purposes, will be allocated for centrally financed developments. These developments, particularly the consultant expansion scheme and pyschiatric bridging finance will considerably assist authorities in meeting future service pressures.

In addition to this extra current provision, authorities will be able to retain the cash released through their cost improvement programmes. Authorities will also be able to retain the income raised from charges for private treatment, which is expected to be in excess of £2 million next year. Health authorities are also being encouraged to develop other sources of income generation.

Of the capital provision, £29·5 million will be made available to health authorities for their discretionary use. This amounts to an increase of 20·4 per cent. over 1987-88 capital allocations. Authorities will also be able to retain

the receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings and this is expected to generate a further £3·1 million in 1988-89.

The current and capital allocations to individual health authorities for next year will be as shown in the table. These allocations do not take into account further sums which will be made available following decisions to be made on centrally funded developments for 1988-89. These will be announced shortly.

	Allocation (£ million)	
	Current element	*Capital element*
Clwyd	96·103	4·935
East Dyfed	60·275	4·212
Pembrokeshire	22·762	1·049
Gwent	115·326	5·166
Gwynedd	58·128	1·814
Mid Glamorgan	135·455	5·653
Powys	27·172	1·069
South Glamorgan	157·439	2·711
West Glamorgan	100·135	4·927

There are no restrictions on the use of authorities' discretionary allocations, although all authorities are expected to take account of the policies and priorities for health services in Wales published by my Department in "Policies and Priorities for Health Services in Wales."

I am also pleased to announce that a further £3·8 million will be made available for hospital and community health services in Wales in the current financial year. I shall be making a separate announcement about the distribution of these funds shortly. This additional provision brings the total cash increase for current spending on these services in 1987-88 to £750·5 million or 10·7 per cent. over 1986-87 provision. The additional money is being provided in recognition of the financial pressures which health authorities are facing at the present time and should help them to ensure that current levels of patient services are maintained without carrying forward a large burden of expenditure liabilities to 1988-89.

ENERGY

Disconnections

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any proposals to monitor the number of disconnections of supply to gas consumers and electricity consumers following privatisation.

Mr. Parkinson: The numbers of disconnections made by both industries are monitored by their respective consumer councils.

Fuel Prices

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the percentage increase for United Kingdom industrial fuel prices, coal, heavy fuel oil, gas and electricity, from 1970 to the latest available date, compared with the percentage increase in the producer price index of materials for the same period.

Mr. Parkinson: The information requested is given in the table.

Percentage increase in average United Kingdom industrial fuel prices, 1970-1986[1]

	Per cent.
Coal	640
Heavy fuel oil	696
Gas	392
Electricity	452
Producer price index of materials[2]	371

[1] 1986 is the latest full year for which data are available.
[2] The producer price index of materials is not available for years before 1974. The percentage given has therefore been based on the value of the former wholesale price index (excluding crude oil and carbonising coal) in 1970.
Source: Energy Trends.

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what were the latest available comparative domestic energy prices for *(a)* electricity, *(b)* gas, *(c)* heating oils, *(d)* coke and *(e)* petrol for the United Kingdom on a single unit basis, such as pence per therm; and what equivalent information he has for the United States of America, France, Germany and Japan;

(2) if he will provide comparable information relating to current United Kingdom domestic fuel prices, fuel by fuel, on a single unit basis such as pence per therm.

Mr. Parkinson: The latest available comparisons of energy prices, for the countries and fuels specified except coke, relate to the second quarter of 1987 and are as shown in the table. Figures for household coke are not available on a comparable basis. The latest comparable information relating to the United Kingdom is given in footnote [1] to the table.

Average fuel prices for households in the second quarter of 1987

Pence per therm

	(i) Average revenue from sales of electricity	*(ii) Average revenue from sales of gas*	*(iii) Average price of heating oil*	*(iv) Average price of petrol*
United Kingdom[1]	147·7	43·1	32·3	115·4
United States of America	133·8	34·5	33·6	45·5
France	[2](236·8)	[2](78·0)	50·4	147·4
Germany	247·9	[2](64·1)	33·4	111·3
Japan	[2](338·3)	[2](142·6)	54·4	161·3

[1] Data for the United Kingdom are also available for the third quarter of 1987 as follows:

	(i)	*(ii)*	*(iii)*	*(iv)*
United Kingdom, 1987 Q3	[3]158·0	47·3	37·2	115·7

[2] Quarterly data are not available. The figure show is the average for 1986, the latest period for which comparable data are available.
[3] Provisional. (Although there was no change in tariffs in 1987, this is higher than the figure for the second quarter shown in the above table because of the effect on average revenue of the seasonal pattern of demand.)

Notes:

(i) The prices shown above for electricity and gas are based on average revenue per unit consumed. In general these will differ from prices derived for a given level of annual consumption and type of tariff.

(ii) International comparisons of energy prices are difficult to construct because of incompatibilities in the basic data. They require careful interpretation because of movements in exchange rates and variation in the timing of tariff revisions between countries. The above figures are based on exchange rates prevailing in the second quarter of 1987 (1986 for the figures given in parentheses).

Source: "Energy Prices and Taxes", International Energy Agency (OECD).

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the percentage increase in United Kingdom domestic fuel prices, electricity, gas, heating oils, coke and petrol, from 1970 to the latest available date, compared with the increase in *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* the fuel and light component of that index for the same period.

Mr. Parkinson: The information is given in the table:

Percentage increase in average United Kingdom domestic fuel prices; 1970-1986[1]

	percentage
Electricity	568
Gas	381
Heating Oils	843
Coal and coke[2]	620
Petrol and Oil	432
Fuel and light	557
Retail Price Index[3]	422

Source: Energy Trends.
[1] 1986 is the latest full year for which data are available.
[2] The corresponding figure for coke is 628 per cent.
[3] Excluding fuels.

Subsidies

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what subsidies have been paid to energy industries since 1970; and what contributions in terms of taxation and levies have been made by those industries to the Exchequer over the same period.

Mr. Parkinson: The full range of data sought could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The publicly owned energy industries give details in their annual reports and accounts of the principal grants, taxes and levies in the areas for which my Department is responsible; and my Department's annual Brown Book gives taxes attributable to United Kingdom oil production. These documents are available in the Library of the House.

Easington

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to pay an official visit to the Easington constituency; and whether he will meet trades union representatives of the mining industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I hope to visit Easington early in the new year. I will be happy to meet representatives of the mining unions at any time.

Fast Reactors (Exhibition)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to fast reactors to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for an exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 8 to 12 February inclusive.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) *Official Report*, 2 November column *533*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the notes exchanged between the Government of Japan and Her Majesty's Government on the provision of nuclear reprocessing technology, and give an indication of the likely financial benefit to the United Kingdom of this agreement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 23 November 1987]:* The United Kingdom's non-proliferation export obligations were fully met through the exchange of notes. The notes confirm that—

1. any facility constructed using the transferred technology will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes;
2. any such facility will be subject to measures of effective physical protection;
3. nuclear material contained in any such facility will be placed under safeguards by the IAEA; and
4. The transferred technology, and any equipment derived from the transferred technology, will not be transferred out of Japan without obtaining from the recipient Government the same assurances, and without the prior consent of the United Kingdom.

Information on individual contracts is commercially confidential.

Plutonium

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is now in a position to publish further information on plutonium in line with recommendation 13(b) of the Sizewell report.

Mr. Parkinson *[pursuant to the reply 30 October 1987, c. 447-48]:* I have today placed in the Libraries of both Houses copies of a document setting out information concerning the production of plutonium from United Kingdom civil reactors during 1986-87.

Magnox Reactors

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will update to 31 March 1987 the information on thermal energy generated and spent fuel discharged by each of the Central Electricity Generating Board Magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 26 June 1987, *Official Report*, column *269*;

(2) if he will update to 31 March the information on the allocation of plutonium produced in the Central Electricity Generating Board and South of Scotland Electricity Board Magnox reactors given in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 21 July 1986, *Official Report*, columns *10-11*.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[pursuant to his reply 24 July 1987, c. 515-16]:* I am advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that the fuel discharged at Wylfa power station during the financial year 1986-87 was 60 tonnes of uranium and not 47 as previously stated.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

AIDS

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to issue to schools the video resource package on AIDS, which was commissioned in March.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, has today launched the joint DES/Welsh Office resource package for schools on AIDS, "Your Choice for Life". The package will be sent free to all secondary schools with pupils in the 14 to 16 age range, to sixth form colleges, to local education authorities and to institutions providing initial teacher training. Since the package necessarily refers to aspects of sexual behaviour, it will be for the governing bodies of individual maintained schools to decide how, and indeed whether, the package should be used with their pupils. I am arranging for a copy of the package to be placed in the Library of the House.

Primary Schools

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will repond formally to the third report of the Education, Science and Arts Committee for the Session 1985-86, entitled "Achievement in Primary Schools."

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have written to my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison), the Chairman of the Committee, enclosing a memorandum, which I am publishing today, welcoming the importance which the Committee attaches to primary education and setting out my formal response to its report. Copies of the memorandum have been placed in the Library.

Education Reform

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science by which date applications must be received from Inner London councils wishing to opt out of the Inner London education authority under the provisions in the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Dunn: Subject to Parliament's approval of the provisions in the Bill, councils wishing to opt out will have to submit applications by such a date as my right hon. Friend may direct. He has decided that applications from councils wishing to assume education responsibilities from 1 April 1990 should be submitted by not later than 31 December 1988. This deadline has been advanced from that proposed in the consultation paper, "The Organisation of Education in Inner London," in response to representations that it was desirable to provide as much time as possible for councils to prepare to become local education authorities, following Parliament's approval of any orders to that effect.

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total annual revenue which will be collected by Harrogate borough council from the community charge levied on individuals and from the business rate, as proposed in the Local Government Finance Bill; and what is the total revenue raised under the present system in the current financial year.

Mr. Howard: In 1987-88 Harrogate borough council, on its own behalf, and on behalf of the authorities which precept on it, is thought to be raising £38·6 million from local ratepayers: £16·8 million from non-domestic and £21·8 million from domestic rates. Because authorities in the area are drawing from balances these figures are £2·2 million lower than is necessary to fund reported net expenditure.

The illustrative figures for the full implementation of the community charge in Harrogate after withdrawal of the safety net assume a total revenue raised from community charges and business rates in Harrogate of £39·6 million; £16·3 million in non-domestic rates and £23·3 million in community charges. These figures assume that there is no contribution from balances.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will describe the manner in which parish councils will receive grants in respect of non-domestic rateable income under the community charge.

Mr. Howard: Parish councils, like county and district councils, will meet their net expenditure requirements by drawing on a collection fund maintained by the district council. Into this fund will be paid the whole amount of revenue support grant and redistributed non-domestic rates allocated to the area, which will thus be available to set equally against the expenditure of all tiers of authority. I have sent my hon. Friend an information note for parish councils on how they will be financed under the new system: copies have also been placed in the Library.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of community charge preparation costs which local authorities are likely to incur in 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley: It is doubtful whether local authorities will need to incur significant expenditure in preparing for the community charge as early as 1988-89. To the extent that additional costs do arise, we believe that these can be accommodated within the RSG settlement.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will break down his estimated full year total additional cost to local authorities of the community charge system by class of authority.

Mr. Ridley: No such breakdown is available. We expect the cost per person of collecting the community charge to be broadly the same as the cost per hereditament of collecting domestic rates.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will break down his estimate of full year total additional costs to local authorities of the community charge system showing separately staff costs, computing, premises and other costs and capital and revenue.

Mr. Ridley: It is not possible at this stage to disaggregate the broad estimates given in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Local Government Finance Bill of additional costs to local authorities of implementing the community charge. The requirement for additional staff, computer facilities and premises will vary considerably between local authorities.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from organisations representing disabled people as to disabled people's future community charge liability.

Mr. Ridley: We have had representations from the Spastics Society, the Voluntary Organisations Personal Social Services Group, the Disabled Drivers Association (Bournemouth and District), the Disabled Income Group and the British Limbless Ex-Servicemens Association.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has further to publicise his proposals to reform local government finance.

Mr. Ridley: I and my Ministers will continue to make speeches pointing out that although the hon. Member has no desire to defend the status quo, he has not seen fit to propose an alternative to put in its place.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been received from the Police Federation about the future community charge liability of police officers and their dependants, and the future of police officers' rent and rates allowances.

Mr. Ridley: None.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the numbers of extra staff and their professional qualifications and grades that local authorities will need to employ to implement and run the community charge system.

Mr. Ridley: It will be for local authorities to decide the numbers of additional staff they require, their grading and appropriate qualifications.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has yet had any discussions with the local authority associations, to the Local Government Training Board, or The Local Authorities' Conditions of Service Advisory Board about the staffing requirements for community charge registration and collection.

Mr. Ridley: Staffing is one of a number of issues which my officials will be discussing with the local authority associations in the run up to the introduction of the community charge.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of community charge cases he estimates are likely to result in increased workload for magistrates' courts on recovery of community charge debts.

Mr. Ridley: I have no reason to believe that the introduction of the community charge will significantly increase the workload of magistrates' courts.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he still plans to publish before the Christmas recess updated figures on the effects of his proposed changes to local government finance, taking into account the updated tax-benefit model and other data.

Mr. Ridley: I am writing to the hon. Gentleman.

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to hold meetings of the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance after 1 April 1990.

Mr. Ridley: Clause 77(4) of the Local Government Finance Bill will require the Secretary of State to consult representatives of local government before making a revenue support grant report. I shall be considering in due course what consultation arrangements will be appropriate after 1 April 1990.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations from the tourist industry as to the problems which many European tourists face obtaining unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations.

The British Tourist Authority is represented on the unleaded petrol group which I chair and which meets regularly to review progress on the introduction of unleaded petrol.

With some 530 petrol stations selling unleaded petrol throughout the United Kingdom, tourists should not find it difficult to obtain unleaded petrol in most areas. Information on outlets selling unleaded petrol is available from tourist bodies and the motoring organisations.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any further proposals to increase the use of unleaded petrol.

Mr. Moynihan: Following the adoption of the "Luxembourg Package" on 3 December by the EC Council of Environment Ministers, we will now be able to require new cars to be capable of running on unleaded petrol. This we shall do from the earliest possible dates. Unleaded petrol already benefits from a favourable excise duty differential.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, using the latest available year in each case, information available to him on the proportion of petrol sold in each of the European Community countries represented by unleaded petrol.

Mr. Moynihan: Information on the sale of unleaded petrol in Europe has been provided by the United Kingdom Petroleum Industry Association.

The table gives data for the last full year for which information is available, and the association's estimates for the half year to June 1987.

Country	*Unleaded petrol sales as percentage of national total*	
	1986	*January to June 1987*
Belgium	neg.	—
Denmark	12	29
Federal Republic of Germany	11	22
France	neg.	neg.
Greece	neg.	neg.
Ireland	neg.	neg.
Italy	neg.	neg.
Luxembourg	neg.	—
Netherlands	neg.	19
Portugal	neg.	neg.
Spain	neg.	neg.
United Kingdom	neg.	neg.

neg. = less than 0·5 per cent.
— = no data.

Small Business Tenancies

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there has been any follow-up work since he consulted on the current working of part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, with particular reference to its affect on small business tenancies.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend is grateful that my hon. Friend raised this issue. I am pleased to announce that in response to widespread demand the Department has today published new guidance on the workings of the main business lettings legislation for England and Wales.

Since the 1985 review of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954, part II, with particular reference to small business tenancies, the Government have, as promised, been monitoring the legislation. In consequence, my Department has revised the existing booklet, with the aim of providing clear and concise guidance on the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants under the Act, and on those issues most frequently raised by tenants and landlords.

The new leaflet, which is complementary to the booklet, briefly outlines the basic features of the legislation and highlights potential problem areas for landlords and tenants under the Act, particularly for small business men or business women involved in business lettings for the first time. The leaflet also indicates in diagrammatic form the statutory procedures which have to be followed.

I am sure that these publications, which will be available free from citizens advice bureaux, small firms centres, local authorities and the Department's publications store at Ruislip, will be immensely useful both to those already engaged in business lettings, be they landlord or tenant, and to those just starting up in business. These publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average cash figure paid by the highest paid 10 per cent. of households under the present system towards the cost of local services; what this figure is as a percentage of the average incomes; what is the average cash figure paid by the lowest paid 10 per cent. of households under the present figure towards the cost of local services; and what this figure is as a percentage of their average income.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* On average the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest net incomes are estimated to be liable to rates of about £240 (9½ per cent. of net income) before rebates. The 10 per cent. of households with the highest net incomes are similarly estimated to be liable for rates of £480 (2¼ per cent. of net income). On the basis of the rebate system which will be in operation from 1 April 1988 these figures fall to average cash payments of £90 (3½ per cent. of net income) and £475 (2¼ of net income) respectively.

With full implementation of community charges at present spending levels, the equivalent figures net of rebates would be £70 (2¼ per cent. of net income) for the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest net incomes and £435 (2 per cent. of net income) for the 10 per cent. of households with the highest net incomes.

These figures relate only to the locally raised contribution to local services. The 10 per cent. of households with the highest incomes overall will contribute 16 times more to the cost of local services than the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest incomes once the contribution from national taxes is taken into account.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the Metropolitan police have carried out any further costing exercises on firearms and shotgun certificate fees since the last published figures for a similar exercise in 1981;

(2) if he will list the respective costs or estimated costs to the Metropolitan police for the grant and renewal of both firearms and shotgun certificates under the most recent costing exercise on certificate fees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The most recent Metropolitan police assessment of costs incurred in granting or renewing firearm and shotgun certificates is for the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986. These and estimated costs for 1986-87 and 1987-88, as calculated in November 1986, are as follows:

	1985-86 £	*1986-87* £	*1987-88* £
Firearm certificate			
Issue	65·18	69·92	74·71
Renewal with increased number of firearms	47·77	51·23	54·73
Renewal without increased number of firearms	39·10	41·92	44·76
Shotgun certificate			
Issue	30·65	32·97	35·38
Renewal	5·59	5·96	6·33

Boundary Commission (Report)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the publication date for the recommendation of the Boundary Commission in Wales as it affects county council wards in West Glamorgan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales is reviewing the electoral arrangements of a number of counties as part of the initial review of electoral arrangements in Wales. The timing of the publication of its recommendations is a matter for the commission. I understand, however, that the commission is expecting to publish its final recommendations for West Glamorgan early next year.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners convicted of murder are held in custody at the present time.

Mr. John Patten: On 30 September 1987, the latest date for which figures are readily available, it is estimated that 1,850 prisoners were serving life sentences for murder in prison department establishments in England and Wales. Detainees during Her Majesty's pleasure and persons sentenced to custody for life are included.

Pornography and Crime

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the findings of the Home Office and National Association of Chief Police Officers investigation on the links between pornography and violent crime are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Over a period of three months earlier this year the police, at my right hon. Friend's request, noted any evidence of a link between the commission of sexual offences and the consumption of pornography. Forty-eight instances came to light where the perpetrator of a sexual offence was known to have looked at pornographic material at some time before the commission of the offence. No causal connection was identified in any of these cases. The exercise showed how difficult it is to obtain conclusive evidence either way about a link between pornography and sexual offences.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will ensure that arrangements be improved for electoral registration officers to provide hon. Members whose constituency boundaries have been changed with copies of the electoral register for the constituency in which they were elected.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Representations of the People Regulations 1986 require the electoral registration officer for each district to supply to the hon. Member concerned as much of the district's register as relates to his constituency, so as to ensure that the hon. Member has the complete register for that constituency. The draft 1988 register for each constituency should now be available, but if the hon. Member still has not got it perhaps he will let me know.

Passport Office

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of complaints received by the passport office in London for 1987, 1986 and 1985 where the passport office has lost original birth certificates.

Mr. Renton: I regret that the information requested is not available. In the comparatively rare instances when birth certificates submitted in support of passport applications go astray within the passport offices, replacements are provided at no cost to the applicant.

False Passports

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the number of false passports recorded during the last 12 months and the previous 12 months.

Mr. Renton: In 1986, the only complete year for which figures are available, the passport department recorded 173 cases where standard British passports had been fraudulently altered in various ways, and nine cases involving counterfeit documents. In the period to 11 December 1987, 183 such alterations and 15 counterfeits were recorded.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to introduce legislation making it a criminal offence to transmit HIV infection deliberately, knowingly or carelessly.

Mr. John Patten: The criminal law already applies, for example, where the infection is transmitted by biting. The question of wider legislation raises difficult issues, which we are considering.

Prisoners (Compassionate Release)

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has completed his review, in the light of the case of James Godfried, of the practice of considering requests for early release from prison on compassionate grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. I am placing in the Libraries of both Houses a copy of my letter of 15 December to my hon. Friend setting out the main conclusions of the review.

Prison Accommodation

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the certified normal accommodation of the prison system is expected to be by 1 January 1990.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* By 1 January 1990 the certified normal accommodation is expected to be 45,000.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional prison places are expected to be provided *(a)* in new prisons and *(b)* in existing prisons, by 1 January 1990.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* From the start of the building programme in 1983 to 1

January 1990 an additional 7,321 prison places are expected to be provided, 3,512 in new prisons, and 3,809 in existing prisons.

In the period 13 November 1987 to 1 January 1990 the figures are 1,984 places in new prisons and 413 places in existing prisons.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which existing prisons additional prison places are expected to be provided by 1 January 1990, and what is the timetable for their coming into use.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The information requested is as follows:

From 13 November 1987 to 1 January 1990 it is expected that a further 413 places will be provided at the following establishments.

Prison building programme
net accommodation gains at existing prisons

Name/Region	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Midland			
Birmingham	—	—	8
North			
Lindholme	250	—	—
Northallerton	—	15	—
South East			
Kingston	—	—	8
Lewes	—	16	—
Norwich RC	—	—	60
South West			
Channings Wood	—	56	—
TOTALS	250	87	76

In addition, from the beginning of the programme in 1983 to 13 November 1987, 3,396 places have already been provided, making an overall total to 1 January 1990 of 3,809. Work on refurbishment schemes to improve living standards, access to sanitation and facilities is being undertaken at about 100 establishments by 1995, but not all of these will provide extra accommodation.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total capital cost at current prices of the 26 new prisons which have been or are to be built between 1983 and 1995.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The estimated total capital cost at current prices is £870 million.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Women

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much of the aid funds for specific rural and agricultural projects in African countries is used to support projects orientated towards women.

Mr. Chris Patten: Most aid projects benefit both women and men. Aid for African agriculture is likely to benefit women particularly because the majority of African farmers are women.

We are trying to orient a number of existing projects so that they meet the particular needs of women more fully and are seeking to select new projects which meet this criterion. Changes in this direction will take time.

United Nations Children's Fund (Exhibition)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the United Nations Children's Fund to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Chris Patten: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 25 to 29 January 1988.

Ethiopia

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the assistance currently being given by Her Majesty's Government to help alleviate the famine in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on 17 November at columns *480-81* and to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 26 November at column *263*. Since then I have announced a £2 million contribution by the British Government to the Ethiopian appeal launched by the Disasters Emergency Committee. This brings to about £25 million the Government's help this year with famine relief in Ethiopia.

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what ongoing aid in excess of Her Majesty's Government's recent contributions to the Disaster Emergency Committee's appeal is programmed to meet the long-term Ethiopian need.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the absence of reasonable prospects that the aid would be effective, Her Majesty's Government have no present plans to provide long-term financial assistance to Ethiopia from the bilateral aid programme. We will, however, continue to respond for humanitarian reasons to emergency needs, for which commitments in 1987 now total over £25 million. In addition, we maintain a programme of technical co-operation and have provided funds for rehabilitation following the 1984-85 famine; expenditure on these activities taken together came to about £2·5 million in 1986.

Commonwealth Distance Education Initiative

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the Commonwealth distance education initiative.

Mr. Chris Patten: As agreed by Heads of Government at their meeting in Vancouver, the Commonwealth Secretariat will now establish a working group to develop the financial and organisational framework of a distance education network. There is much work to be done and we expect to play a full part in the working group's deliberations.

TRANSPORT

Commuter Services

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will estimate the amount of PSO grant to British Rail that has been spent on commuter services in London and the south-east in each of the last five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The PSO grant requirement for British Rail's Network South-east services since 1983 has been as follows:

£ million
1987-88 prices

Year	*Number*
1983	[1]330
1984-85	317
1985-86	272
1986-87	214
1987-88	[2]232

[1] Only calendar year figure available.
[2] Forecast.

Headphones

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce restrictions on the use of headphones *(a)* in moving vehicles and *(b)* bicycles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to do so. Legislation places on drivers and cyclists the responsibility of driving or cycling with due care and attention at all times. A road user who fails to do so as a result of distraction or lack of concentration because of the use of headphones is liable to prosecution.

London Traffic

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of road accidents on the ability of traffic to travel on the roads of London; whether he routinely monitors the impact of additional accidents in London on traffic flow in London; and if he will make a statement on recent accidents in London and their impact on traffic movements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Many roads in London carry very heavy volumes of traffic. Accidents inevitably cause disruption. The effect of accidents and other incidents is monitored by the police who are responsible for dealing with the immediate consequences. The Department and other highway authorities in London maintain regular contact with the police whose views are an important element in the planning of road improvement schemes and traffic control and surveillance systems.

London Underground

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the occasions and locations when he has *(a)* visited stations and *(b)* travelled by train on the London Underground system in the course of his official duties over the last five years.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. My right hon. Friend and I make such visits as the occasion demands.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his long-term policy with respect of central Government funding of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport requires a high level of capital investment to modernise and increase the capacity of its services. It is our policy fully to fund that investment to the extent that it cannot be funded out of revenues and other internal resources or by attracting private capital.

Drink-related Accidents

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the number of *(a)* deaths and *(b)* serious injuries in drink-related motor accidents at (i) Christmas time and (ii) throughout the year for each year since 1960.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Train Accidents

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for British Rail for each year since 1979 the location of each train accident resulting in a fatality or fatalities.

Mr. David Mitchell: The location of all train accidents involving passenger fatalities in the period 1979-86 is given in table 8 of the Department's "Report on Railway Safety for 1986", a copy of which is in the Library. During the same period a total of 33 railway staff and contractors died in train accidents, together with 45 "other persons", mostly the occupants of road vehicles involved in train accidents at level crossings. The location of these latter accidents is given in the published annual reports on railway safety. The location of all the accidents involving railway staff is not given in the reports. If the hon. Member will confirm that he requires the information, I shall write to him.

Heathrow (Sewage Works)

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a report on the removal of the sewage works at London Heathrow, Perry Oaks site; and whether he will list the steps to be taken before the building of terminal 5 on the cleared site.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A study commissioned jointly by BAA plc and the Thames water authority reported in July last year that the release of the Perry Oaks site was technically feasible but recommended further technical trials to determine the optimum method. Copies of the report are in the Library. I understand that the investigation of a range of options is continuing. Any proposal for the construction of a fifth terminal on the site would require planning permission.

Airports (Expenditure Allocations)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the 1988-89 capital expenditure allocations for municipal airports and public airport companies.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have today approved capital expenditure allocations totalling £22 million. Among the major schemes for which provision has been made are:

Birmingham
Further development of terminal and apron capacity;

Bournemouth
Navigational equipment improvements;

Bristol
Apron and terminal extension and improvements;

East Midlands
Improvements in cargo handling capacity and facilities: further terminal extension;

Humberside
Terminal improvements;

Leeds/Bradford
Terminal completion (1st phase);

Luton
Runway resurfacing and lighting improvements, improvements to present terminal to increase capacity;

Manchester
Further development of existing terminal apron and taxiway capacity; domestic module; land purchase associated with second terminal;

Newcastle
Improved runway lighting; apron extension;

Norwich
New terminal building completion;

Teesside
Improved radar facilities.

Some additional allocations may be made during the course of next year.

In addition to expenditure authorised under our approvals, public airport companies are also free to invest their undistributed internal resources. These are estimated to exceed £40 million.

Stansted Airport (Noise)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is able to announce his proposals for amended noise preferential routes for aircraft taking off from Stansted.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are committed to taking various measures to mitigate noise disturbance at Stansted as air traffic builds up, including the use of noise preferential routes.

My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for aviation and shipping has today sent a consultation paper to my hon. Friend, other hon. Members with constituencies near Stansted, local authorities and the Airport Consultative Committee seeking their views on proposals for additional departure routes which have been developed in consultation with National Air Traffic Services.

Our proposals will concentrate aircraft taking off on a small number of specified routes designed to avoid, so far as is possible, major built-up areas. Once they are fixed, we expect the routes to remain so indefinitely, so that people will know where aircraft noise may be experienced.

My noble Friend is seeking comments by 29 January and expects to announce his decisions about the new route structure during February. The new routes would come into effect next summer.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement about changes proposed in the Crown Prosecution Service for determining whether charges should be brought against public figures and children.

The Attorney-General: The Crown Prosecution Service has no plans for changes in its approach to dealing with charges brought against public figures and children. The service has always sought to ensure that cases which involve legal complexity or public sensitivity are dealt with at an appropriate level.

PRIME MINISTER

National Health Service

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the state of the National Health Service; if she will list those members of the medical profession who have made such representations directly to her; what her response has been; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of such representations, including from members of the medical profession. I have pointed out that the resources for the Health Service have increased substantially since 1979, and the amount of care we have been able to provide through the Health Service has also risen. We shall continue to seek the most cost-effective use of National Health Service resources so that the maximum number of patients can be treated.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider a further reduction in the duty on unleaded petrol in order to encourage its greater use.

Mr. Peter Lilley: The duty differential in favour of unleaded petrol is reviewed each year in the run-up to the Budget, and Customs and Excise have recently concluded a consultation exercise. Decisions on excise duty rates are matters for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget judgment.

Privatisation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many employees have been in enterprises transferred from the public to the private sector in the United Kingdom since May 1979.

Mr. Major: Around 655,000 employees have been in enterprises transferred from the public to the private sector in the United Kingdom since May 1979.

Petroleum Revenue Tax

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to introduce legislation to amend the rules for the claiming and allowance of petroleum revenue tax relief for field expenditure incurred by oil companies before the end of a chargeable period where the special safeguard relief provision reduces or cancels petroleum revenue tax payable.

Mr. Lilley: No. I asked the Inland Revenue to carry out a review of the interaction between the timing of claims for PRT expenditure relief and the special safeguard relief which can reduce or cancel a company's PRT liability during a number of chargeable periods once a field reaches payback (the net profit period as defined in section 111 of the Finance Act 1981). In respect of these periods it can be advantageous for a company not to claim relief for field expenditure in time for it to be allowed in the assessment for the chargeable period in which it was incurred. The expenditure is then available to be claimed against PRT liability for a later chargeable period. The safeguard relief was introduced as a special overriding relief designed to ensure that PRT—calculated after taking account of all other available reliefs and allowances—does not reduce a participator's return on capital in any chargeable period (up to a prescribed time limit) to 15 per cent. or less. It was not originally intended that further benefit should be available by deferring field expenditure claims so that expenditure incurred before the end of a chargeable period where PRT is reduced or cancelled by safeguard is claimed and allowed against profits of a later chargeable period.

Nevertheless, the Government have decided, in the light of representations received during the review and in the current situation in the oil market, not to bring forward legislation in next year's Finance Bill to prevent extra relief from being obtained by means of deferring expenditure claims. The Inland Revenue has a choice over the timing of assessments which could also be exercised to counteract the benefit of deferring expenditure claims, but it will not use this power in these special circumstances to defer assessments for periods from payback where safeguard relief reduces or cancels liability. This decision in relation to safeguard does not have any application to the timing of assessments in other circumstances.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he will announce his allocations of funding for museums and galleries during the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Following my announcement on 5 November, at columns *848-50*, of a three-year settlement of the arts budget, I can now announce my allocations to individual museums and galleries for the period from April 1988 to March 1991.

Overall provision for museums and galleries will be £157 million in 1988-89, £160 million in 1989-90 and £164 million in 1990-91. These figures are substantially higher than the £125·6 million which appears in the relevant estimates for the present year, for two reasons. First, there is a substantial increase, rising from over £11 million in 1988-89 to almost £12 million in 1990-91, in the planned provision for museums and galleries out of the settlement I announced on 5 November; secondly, the total includes transfers of funding to the museums and galleries and the Museums and Galleries Commission in respect of services, including superannuation and the services of the Treasury Solicitor, for which the institutions will in future pay directly from their running costs, and property rates and certain rents which have been included in the provisions for building and maintenance work. The combined effect of these changes is to give a clearer picture of the total resources which the institutions as a group are receiving from central Government through the arts programme.

Subject to parliamentary approval of Supply Estimates at the appropriate time, I propose that the allocations to specific institutions shall be as indicated in the following table. Excluding transfers, these figures amount to an increase of 15·9 per cent. for the three-year period as a whole. They are intended to give museums and galleries a firm base on which to plan their future activities and development. By providing the largest increase in the first year, they are intended to encourage early action to strengthen the institutions' management and financial position. Apart from the figures for building and maintenance in the second and third years, referred to in the table, the figures will not be reviewed in the course of the 1988-89 expenditure surveys unless the situation changes substantially in ways that cannot be foreseen today. The Government will consider in 1988 what provision to make for the last year of that survey, that is for 1991-92; and similarly in 1989 what provision to make for 1992-93, with a view to a rolling three-year programme.

Provision for running costs is being increased to take account of particular needs. Each institution will receive increases over and above the forward planning figures notified first in the spring of this year. I am, in particular, providing increased grants for the Tate gallery to help with the costs of the gallery in Liverpool which is to open next year; for the Imperial war museum for the costs of fitting out the new galleries which will result from its major redevelopment scheme; and for the National gallery for the running costs of the new Sainsbury wing which is due to open in the final year of the period.

Within my allocation for running costs, I have earmarked a total of £0·57 million to help the institutions through training and in other ways to improve their management and marketing. I have also made provision within my grant-in-aid to the Museums and Galleries Commission, which I announced on 5 November, to enable the commission to assist other museums and galleries in the same way.

I have given careful thought to the question of purchase grants and decided that I must give a higher priority to the other, more pressing needs which the institutions have represented to me and which are reflected in my allocations for running costs and building and maintenance. Purchase grants will therefore remain in cash terms at their present levels for the time being.

My allocations to the individual institutions include for the first time provision within their grant-in-aid for building and maintenance. The building and maintenance programme for most of the institutions which is at present managed by the Property Services Agency and carried on its Vote will, as I announced in July 1986, become the responsibility of the individual institutions from 1 April next; provision for it will be made in the Office of Arts and Libraries' Vote. My allocations for this purpose will total

£48·47 million in 1988-89. This includes the increase of £6 million which I announced on 5 November would be devoted to strengthening the building and maintenance programme. I hope that the institutions will be able as a result to tackle their priority maintenance tasks and get the new system off to a good start. For 1989-90 and 1990-91 I have decided to allocate to individual institutions the bulk of the money for building and maintenance, but to keep for future allocation a margin of 25 to 30 per cent. of the total. The allocation of the margin, amounting to over £12 million in 1989-90 and nearly £15 million in 1990-91, will depend partly upon the plans which the institutions bring forward and the extent to which they can raise money for these from other sources.

The national museums and galleries make a splendid contribution to conserving and displaying our national heritage. With the provisions I am making for the next three years and with the incentive which these provide to strengthen their financial position, I am confident that they will continue to do so, and that the institutions will welcome the firm basis which these allocations provide for their future planning and development.

£ million

Museums and Galleries	*1988-89*	*[1]1989-90*	*[1]1990-91*
British Museum			
Running costs	15·665	16·132	16·594
Building programme	7·580	5·700	6·000
Purchase grant	1·400	1·400	1·400
Sub Total	24·645	23·232	23·994
British Museum (Natural History)			
Running costs	15·370	15·772	16·242
Building programme	6·740	5·800	5·600
Purchase grant	0·190	0·190	0·190
Sub Total	22·300	21·762	22·032
Imperial War Museum			
Running costs	6·318	6·515	6·129
Building programme	6·520	2·700	1·700
Purchase grant	0·100	0·100	0·100
Sub Total	12·938	9·315	7·929
National Gallery			
Running costs	5·233	5·406	6·208
Building programme	3·490	3·300	2·900
Purchase grant	2·750	2·750	2·750
Sub Total	11·473	11·456	11·858
National Maritime Museum			
Running costs	5·530	5·678	5·791
Building programme	2·510	2·500	2·000
Purchase grant	0·205	0·205	0·205
Sub Total	8·245	8·383	7·996
National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside			
Running costs	6·780	6·996	7·169
Building programme	2·690	2·500	2·400
Purchase grant	0·750	0·750	0·750
Sub Total	10·220	10·246	10·319
National Portrait Gallery			
Running costs	1·996	2·020	2·072
Building programme	3·020	1·500	1·500
Purchase grant	0·310	0·310	0·310
Sub Total	5·326	3·830	3·882
Science Museum			
Running costs	11·047	11·374	11·652
Building programme	5·210	3·400	3·500
Purchase grant	0·375	0·375	0·375
Sub Total	16·632	15·149	15·527
Tate Gallery			
Running costs	6·300	6·586	6·766
Building programme	2·780	2·800	2·900
Purchase grant	1·815	1·815	1·815
Sub Total	10·895	11·201	11·481
Victoria and Albert Museum			
Running costs	12·900	13·315	13·716
Building programme	7·480	5·400	5·400
Purchase grant	1·145	1·145	1·145
Sub Total	21·525	19·860	20·261
Wallace Collection			
Running costs	1·149	1·186	1·217
Building programme	0·449	0·400	0·400
Purchase grant	—	—	—
Sub Total	1·598	1·586	1·617
To be allocated later for building and maintenance work	—	12·100	14·700
Running costs, including provision for building and maintenance			
Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry	1·473	1·516	1·552
Museum of London	2·776	2·855	2·923
Sir John Soane's Museum	0·275	0·295	0·305
Sub Total	4·524	4·666	4·780
Museums and Galleries Commission	6·481	6·696	6·877
Research and Support Services	0·500	0·500	0·500
Total	157·302	159·982	163·753

[1] Individual provisions for the building programme in these two years will be increased when the full allocation is made.

Reviewing Committee (Report)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he is able to announce the publication date of the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Arts for the year ended 30 June.

Mr. Luce: I have today presented the 33rd report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art for 1986-87. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

DEFENCE

Exercise Firemen's Revenge

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on whose authority the decision to hold the fourth battalion of the Parachute Regiment's exercise Firemen's Revenge on civilian property in an urban area was made; and what plans there are to hold further fighting in built-up area exercises on civilian property in urban areas;

(2) if he will make a statement on the aims of, and lessons learned from, the fourth battalion of the Parachute Regiment's exercise Firemen's Revenge.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Firemen's Revenge, which was designed to train members of the fourth battalion of the Parachute Regiment in fighting in built-up areas, was authorised by Headquarters North West District and took place at a derelict warehouse in Oldham on 19 and 20 June. The exercise was held with the full approval of the owners and of the local civil authorities, representatives of which were present during the exercise. Firemen's Revenge provided good military training value and demonstrated the importance of the full co-operation of the local civil authorities to the success of exercises of this sort. There are no further specific proposals to hold such exercises, but the Army will continue to look for suitable opportunities for training of this kind when it can be done without undue public inconvenience.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contingency plans his Department has made in the event of an AIDS epidemic among members of Her Majesty's forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is no indication that an epidemic among service personnel is likely. However, each service has a hospital which is designated as an AIDS reception centre. Patients will be treated in accordance with normal medical and nursing procedures.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the current imbalance is in chemical weapons between NATO and the Warsaw pact.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Soviet Union commands the world's largest and most sophisticated chemical warfare capability. It has produced and stockpiled a wide variety of chemical agents and munitions and has a massive tonnage of nerve agents alone. No chemical weapons are declared to NATO, but by comparison the United States possesses a limited and aging retaliatory capability, which it plans to modernise. Given the overwhelming Soviet superiority, the Government place the highest priority on the negotiation of a comprehensive and verifiable worldwide ban on chemical weapons.

ALARM

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the approximate estimated increase in the purchase price of the air-launched anti-radiation missile caused by the problems with its motor; if there will be an inquiry into the causes of this increase in costs and if British Aerospace will be meeting this additional cost.

Mr. Sainsbury: The increase in the purchase price of ALARM caused by problems with the rocket motor is substantial. British Aerospace is meeting a significant part of the additional costs and the programme is continuing at no financial risk to the Department. Precise details of this arrangement are a commercial matter between the Department and BAe. I do not propose to hold any further inquiry into the causes of the increase in cost.

International Military Services

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the International Military Services office in Teheran is still open.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rent is paid for the International Military Services office in Teheran; and to whom.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is commercial in confidence to the company.

Overseas Territories (British Troops)

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries in which Britain currently has troops.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The countries and dependencies in which there is a British military presence are as follows:

Ascension Island
Belize
British Indian Ocean Territory (Diego Garcia)
Brunei
Canada
Cyprus
Falkland Islands (including South Georgia)
Federal Republic of Germany (including Berlin)
Gibraltar
Hong Kong
Norway
Sardinia

The list excludes loan service and seconded personnel serving in a number of countries and dependencies throughout the world, and those in NATO appointments.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa

77. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures available to him on the investment of British companies in the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the information published in *British Business* (3 July 1987). A copy of this is available in the House of Commons' Library.

Barnsley

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of the evidence published by Barnsley metropolitan district council of the disproportionate fall in employment in its area, he will now extend to Barnsley development area status.

Mr. Atkins: No.

Electronics

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by how much the percentage of Britain's domestic market met by imports of electronics changed between 1979 and June 1987; and what was the comparable figure in the average, best and worst performing Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development country.

Mr. Alan Clark: Fifty-two per cent. of the United Kingdom's home demand for electronics was met by imports in 1979. This compares with 70 per cent. in the year ended 31 March 1987, the latest period for which figures are available.

Comparable data for other OECD countries are not available.

Estate Agents Act 1979

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will carry out a general review into the working and effectiveness of the Estate Agents Act 1979.

Mr. Maude: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Mergers (Control Procedures)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will publish the report on the review of merger control procedures.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend expects to publish the outcome of the review in the new year.

Textiles (Turkey)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total percentage duty payable on exports to Turkey of a tonne of synthetic filament yarn; if he will give a breakdown of the figure by basic tariff, housing fund, municipal tax, customs charges, stamp duty, import premium and wharf dues; and if he will publish the comparable figures in each case faced by similar exports from Turkey to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: All imports to Turkey are currently subject to the following:

Municipal tax — 15 per cent. of applicable import duty
Customs charges (including stamp tax)—2 per cent. approximately of cif value
Stamp duty—8 per cent. of cif value
Import premium—6 per cent. of cif value
Wharf dues—5 per cent. of the sum of the cif value plus import duty, municipal tax and stamp tax on customs declarations.

There is no single rate of duty applicable to the goods specified in the question. Import duties levied on synthetic filament yarn range from 5 to 40 per cent. Goods covered under 51·01 (yarn made of man-made continuous fibres, suitable for weaving, [except polyamide and polyester-based yarns of over 600 denier size]) are additionally subject to a housing fund surcharge of $50 per tonne.

The equivalent Turkish goods may be imported into the United Kingdom free of all import duties.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total percentage duty payable on exports to Turkey of one kilogram of cotton cloth; if he will give a breakdown of the figure by basic tariff, housing fund, municipal tax, customs charges, stamp duty, import premium and wharf dues; and what are the comparable figures in each case faced by similar exports from Turkey to the United Kingdom.

Municipal tax — 15 per cent. of applicable import duty
Customs charges (including stamp tax)—2 per cent. approximately of cif value
Stamp duty—8 per cent. of cif value
Import premium—6 per cent. of cif value
Wharf dues—5 per cent. of the sum of the cif value plus import duty, municipal tax and stamp tax on customs declarations.

In addition, imports into Turkey of cotton cloth are liable to:

Import duty
(a) Not fashioned—20 per cent. cif or
(b) Fashioned—30 per cent. cif and
Housing fund—US$2 per kg.

The equivalent Turkish goods may be imported to the United Kingdom free of all import duties.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total percentage duty payable on exports to Turkey of one tonne of synthetic staple fibre; if he will give a breakdown of the figure by basic tariff, housing fund, municipal tax, customs charges, stamp duty, import premium and wharf dues; and what is the comparable figure in each case faced by similar exports from Turkey to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: All imports to Turkey are currently subject to the following:

Municipal tax — 15 per cent. of applicable import duty.
Customs charges (including stamp tax)—2 per cent. approximately of cif value.
Stamp duty—8 per cent. of cif value.
Import premium—6 per cent. of cif value.
Wharf dues—5 per cent. of the sum of the cif value plus import duty, municipal tax and stamp tax on customs declarations.

In addition, imports into Turkey of synthetic staple fibre are liable to:

Import duty—8 per cent. cif.
Housing fund—US$50 per tonne.

The equivalent Turkish goods may be imported to the United Kingdom free of all import duties.

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total percentage duty payable on exports to Turkey of wool cloth; if he will give a breakdown of the figure by basic tariff, housing fund, municipal tax, customs charges, stamp duty, import premium and wharf dues; and what are the comparable figures in each case faced by similar exports from Turkey to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: All imports to Turkey are currently subject to the following:

Municipal tax — 15 per cent. of applicable import duty.
Customs charges (including stamp tax)—2 per cent. approximately of cif value.

Stamp duty—8 per cent. of cif value.
Import premium—6 per cent. of cif value.
Wharf dues — 5 per cent. of the sum of the cif value plus import duty, municipal tax and stamp tax on customs declarations.

In addition, imports into Turkey of wool cloth are liable to:

Import duty—20 per cent. cif.
Housing fund—US$10 per kg.

The equivalent Turkish goods may be imported to the United Kingdom free of all import duties.

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total percentage duty payable on exports to Turkey of knitted wool outerware; if he will give a breakdown of the figure by basic tariff, housing fund, municipal tax, customs charges, stamp duty, import premium and wharf dues; and what are the comparable figures in each case faced by similar exports to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: All imports to Turkey are currently subject to the following:

Municipal tax — 15 per cent. of applicable import duty.
Customs charges (including stamp tax)—2 per cent. approximately of cif value.
Stamp duty—8 per cent. of cif value.
Import premium—6 per cent. of cif value.
Wharf dues—5 per cent. of the sum of the cif value plus import duty, municipal tax and stamp tax on customs declarations.

In addition, imports into Turkey of Knitted Wool Outerware are liable to:

Import duty—40 per cent. cif.
Housing fund—Nil.

The equivalent Turkish goods may be imported to the United Kingdom free of all import duties.

Mr. Waller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total percentage duty payable on exports to Turkey of spun synthetic yarn; if he will give a breakdown of the figure by basic tariff, housing fund, municipal tax, customs charges, stamp duty, import premium and wharf dues; and what are the comparable figures in each case faced by similar exports from Turkey to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: All imports to Turkey are currently subject to the following:

Municipal tax — 15 per cent. of applicable import duty.
Customs charges (including Stamp tax)—2 per cent. approximately of cif value.
Stamp duty—8 per cent. of cif value.
Import premium—6 per cent. of cif value.
Wharf dues—5 per cent. of the sum of the cif value plus import duty, municipal tax and stamp tax on customs declarations.

In addition, spun synthetic yarn imported into Turkey is subject to an import duty of either 8 per cent. or 30 per cent. depending on the definition, and a housing fund surcharge of $50 per tonne.

The equivalent Turkish goods may be imported to the United Kingdom free of all import duties.

Credit Cards

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any figures on the number of non-payments of debts incurred through the use of credit cards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: No. The credit statistics published by my Department do not identify numbers of individuals encountering debt problems incurred through the use of credit cards. However, I understand that from figures produced by the major credit card companies that about 1 per cent. of their customers encounter long-term difficulties in repayment.

Doorstep Selling

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will introduce regulations to implement the European Community directive on doorstep selling.

Mr. Maude: The Consumer Protection (Cancellation of Contracts concluded away from Business Premises) Regulations 1987 were laid before Parliament today. They provide for a seven-day cooling-off period during which consumers have the right to cancel a contract for goods or services entered into during an unsolicited visit by a trader to their home or place of work. The regulations apply, with some exceptions, to cash and credit contracts worth more than £35. They will come into force on 1 July 1988.

Unfair Trade Unit

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the budget of the unfair trade unit; how many staff are employed by this unit; and what is its publicity budget.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The unfair trade unit is concerned with complaints about unfairly traded imports and currently employs nine staff. Its total budget for the 1987-88 financial year is £179,000. The cost of its publicity activities, which include briefings by members of the unit and the distribution of an information pack, are met from the unit's budget or the departmental budget as appropriate.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many cases the unfair trade unit dealt with in the last 12 months; how many of these cases have involved the European Community Commission; and how many of these cases have resulted in representations being made to foreign Governments by *(a)* the European Community Commission and *(b)* Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Anti-dumping and countervailing action are the responsibility of the European Commission.

In the last 12 months the unfair trade unit has been involved in 32 anti-dumping cases under investigation by the Commission and has responded to more than 60 inquiries about the possibility of taking anti-dumping action or countering other unfair practices.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many staff were employed to examine and advise on hidden trade barriers prior to the establishment of the unfair trade unit.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Examining and advising on hidden trade barriers affecting British exports remains one of the responsibilities of the overseas trade divisions. Their staffing level was not affected by the establishment of the unfair trade unit, which deals with unfairly traded imports.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the unfair trade unit has published any of its findings.

Mr. Alan Clark *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The results of anti-dumping investigations are published in *British Business* and, where appropriate, Ministers announce the result of cases taken up bilaterally.

Inner City Task Force

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table for each inner city task force area, drawn from 1981 census figures, showing the total population broken down by the usual census categories for age, social class, employment, housing, tenure, socio-economic group, together with a statement of any estimates of change since 1981 made by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clark *[pursuant to his reply, 14 December 1987, c. 333]:* The information requested is as follows, based on 1981 census figures. It is not possible to give an estimate of change since 1981. However, it should be noted that the data reflect local authority wards as at 1981, and some of these boundaries have since changed.

Task force area—North Kensington

Age	*Population*	*SEG*	*Population*	*Social Class*	*Population*
0-4	1,721	1	850	I	670
5-9	1,564	2	1,670	II	3,290
10-14	1,887	3	240	IIIN	2,590
15	393	4	390	IIIM	2,290
16-19	1,761	5.1	1,660	IV	2,240
20-24	2,542	5.2	260	V	920
25-29	2,507	6	2,180	Armed Forces	910
30-34	2,231	7	2,200	Retired 1	1,350
35-39	1,707	8	340	Retired 2	3,100
40-44	1,582	9	2,590	Retired 3	1,860
45-49	1,418	10	2,400		
50-54	1,487	11	1,690		
55-59	1,472	12	900		
60-64	1,083	13	0		
65-69	1,096	14	10		
70-74	892	15	10		
75-79	684	16	40		
80-85	339	17	1,180		
85+	211				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	*Purpose flat*	*Separate entrance*	*Self contained*	*Non self contained*	*Non permanent*
Owner occupied freehold	643	23	477	117	26	0
Owner occupied leasehold	773	157	234	373	9	0
Council etc.	3,931	3,347	399	156	29	0
Housing association	3,131	1,644	433	985	69	0
Rent and business	12	0	11	1	0	0
By employment	120	160	62	16	2	0
Other rented unfurnished	802	116	232	560	126	0
Other rented furnished	1,160	44	187	555	374	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	13,488
Working	11,294
Not working	2,194

Task force area—Coventry

Age	*Population*	*SEG*	*Population*	*Social Class*	*Population*
0-4	3,124	1	210	I	180
5-9	2,809	2	1,330	II	1,420
10-14	3,160	3	80	IIIN	1,650
15	529	4	290	IIIM	3,850
16-19	2,463	5.1	870	IV	4,120
20-24	3,421	5.2	190	V	1,770
25-29	2,647	6	980	Armed Forces	1,390
30-34	1,985	7	730	Retired 1	1,530
35-39	1,607	8	870	Retired 2	5,010
40-44	1,619	9	7,990	Retired 3	3,320
45-49	1,557	10	7,090		
50-54	1,646	11	4,110		
55-59	1,690	12	1,340		
60-64	1,631	13	0		

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
65-69	1,392	14	0		
70-74	1,158	15	20		
75-79	847	16	40		
80-85	439	17	1,650		
85+	263				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	5,492	19	5,416	35	22	10
Owner occupied leasehold	167	56	110	1	0	4
Council etc.	3,476	1,663	1,793	19	1	15
Housing association	672	258	382	29	3	0
Rent and business	13	1	12	0	0	0
By employment	77	3	70	4	0	0
Other rented unfurnished	712	32	595	73	12	0
Other rented furnished	469	2	168	162	137	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	14,302
Working	10,850
Not working	3,452

Task force area—Nottingham

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	1,821	1	400	I	210
5-9	1,720	2	790	II	1,540
10-14	2,014	3	50	IIIN	1,600
15	406	4	250	IIIM	2,730
16-19	1,825	5·1	700	IV	2,740
20-24	2,926	5·2	180	V	1,330
				Armed Forces	910
25-29	1,968	6	1,490	Retired 1	1,860
30-34	1,483	7	460	Retired 2	3,060
35-39	1,093	8	530	Retired 3	2,800
40-44	1,212	9	5,000		
45-49	1,227	10	4,390		
50-54	1,350	11	1,940		
55-59	1,374	12	1,210		
60-64	1,130	13	0		
65-69	1,091	14	0		
70-74	1,011	15	0		
75-79	702	16	40		
80-85	435	17	1,160		
85+	320				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	3,630	21	3,518	62	29	0
Owner occupied leasehold	179	36	134	4	5	0
Council etc.	3,079	1,810	1,221	174	8	1
Housing association	419	25	326	61	7	0
Rent and business	32	0	30	0	1	0
By employment	70	4	63	2	1	0
Other rented unfurnished	1,420	7	1,260	117	36	0
Other rented furnished	1,007	8	317	344	338	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	11,538
Working	8,982
Not working	2,556

Task force area—Moss Side, Manchester

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	2,299	1	280	I	430
5-9	2,134	2	1,030	II	1,870
10-14	2,767	3	110	IIIN	2,100
15	586	4	710	IIIM	3,030
16-19	2,839	5.1	1,400	IV	3,180
20-24	4,891	5.2	30	V	1,740
25-29	2,869	6	2,000	Armed Forces	1,510
30-34	1,891	7	1,080	Retired 1	1,790
35-39	1,575	8	620	Retired 2	4,240
40-44	1,684	9	5,540	Retired 3	4,860
45-49	1,641	10	3,930		
50-54	1,763	11	2,880		
55-59	1,707	12	1,320		
60-64	1,364	13	0		
65-69	1,209	14	0		
70-74	1,060	15	50		
75-79	700	16	40		
80-85	464	17	1,400		
85+	254				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	1,651	40	1,575	20	16	0
Owner occupied leasehold	1,097	122	949	21	5	0
Council etc.	7,598	4,570	2,929	91	8	2
Housing association	271	121	133	13	4	0
Rent and business	28	0	26	2	0	0
By employment	131	19	107	2	3	0
Other rented unfurnished	647	62	496	58	31	0
Other rented furnished	997	151	214	276	356	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	14,966
Working	11,237
Not working	3,729

Task force area—Spitalfields

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	1,599	1	180	I	60
5-9	1,300	2	1,200	II	1,040
10-14	1,181	3	10	IIIN	1,370
15	235	4	80	IIIM	2,000
16-19	1,211	5.1	470	IV	3,060
20-24	2,110	5.2	50	V	1,140
25-29	1,528	6	1,130	Armed Forces	1,040
30-34	997	7	860	Retired 1	1,140
35-39	864	8	370	Retired 2	2,580
40-44	1,289	9	3,170	Retired 3	1,490
45-49	1,408	10	3,690		
50-54	1,478	11	1,770		
55-59	1,293	12	1,790		
60-64	1,139	13	0		
65-69	1,086	14	0		
70-74	937	15	0		
75-79	679	16	0		
80-85	342	17	1,250		
85+	184				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	153	15	104	17	17	0
Owner occupied leasehold	130	42	57	20	11	0
Council etc.	5,216	4,666	455	59	36	35
Housing association	456	555	41	44	16	0
Rent and business	24	3	20	1	0	0

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
By employment	137	81	40	8	8	0
Other rented unfurnished	819	243	293	3	120	1
Other rented furnished	393	99	33	163	162	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	10,372
Working	8,493
Not working	1,879

Task force area—Chapel Town, Leeds

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	4,386	1	1,620	I	660
5-9	4,291	2	2,350	II	4,190
10-14	5,242	3	90	IIIN	4,800
15	1,115	4	1,360	IIIM	7,180
16-19	3,759	5·1	3,380	IV	6,410
20-24	6,610	5·2	240	V	3,220
25-29	4,934	6	4,360	Armed Forces	2,440
30-34	3,971	7	1,850	Retired 1	3,750
35-39	2,978	8	1,430	Retired 2	8,310
40-44	3,224	9	12,800	Retired 3	15,420
45-49	3,278	10	9,360		
50-54	3,461	11	6,380		
55-59	3,464	12	2,330		
60-64	2,944	13	0		
65-69	3,070	14	0		
70-74	2,703	15	50		
75-79	1,963	16	0		
80-84	1,133	17	3,400		
85+	666				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	8,382	55	8,173	109	45	1
Owner occupied leasehold	413	90	290	28	5	1
Council etc.	10,507	3,489	6,469	521	28	0
Housing association	1,089	395	551	129	14	0
Rent and business	34	2	32	0	0	0
By employment	168	36	122	8	2	0
Other rented unfurnished	1,978	34	1,664	231	49	0
Other rented furnished	1,850	44	667	681	458	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	29,583
Working	23,671
Not working	5,912

Task force area—Handsworth, Birmingham

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	5,355	1	260	I	240
5-9	5,110	2	1,740	II	1,910
10-14	6,152	3	140	IIIN	2,680
15	1,105	4	320	IIIM	5,870
16-19	4,722	5.1	1,080	IV	6,620
20-24	5,085	5.2	70	V	2,570
25-29	3,953	6	2,200	Armed Forces	3,630
30-34	2,949	7	960	Retired 1	2,340
35-39	2,396	8	1,150	Retired 2	8,350
40-44	2,915	9	14,920	Retired 3	3,580
45-49	2,901	10	12,390		
50-54	2,942	11	6,140		
55-59	2,598	12	2,040		
60-64	2,170	13	0		
65-69	1,815	14	0		

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
70-74	1,355	15	30		
75-79	1,050	16	30		
80-85	582	17	4,430		
85+	360				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	6,369	25	6,147	139	58	1
Owner occupied leasehold	2,163	82	2,026	41	14	0
Council etc.	4,060	1,125	2,770	147	18	1
Housing association	1,570	169	896	478	27	0
Rent and business	18	0	17	1	0	0
By employment	137	9	119	8	1	0
Other rented unfurnished	1,230	80	935	157	58	0
Other rented furnished	967	20	269	350	328	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	23,656
Working	17,139
Not working	6,517

Task force area—Doncaster

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	3,576	1	1,270	I	530
5-9	3,684	2	2,910	II	3,670
10-14	4,599	3	300	IIIN	4,450
15	1,001	4	970	IIIM	8,570
16-19	4,366	5.1	2,540	IV	6,470
20-24	5,173	5.2	230	V	2,940
25-29	4,295	6	2,730	Armed Forces	1,470
30-34	4,000	7	960	Retired 1	4,280
35-39	3,116	8	2,680	Retired 2	9,710
40-44	3,115	9	18,390	Retired 3	6,200
45-49	3,250	10	10,020		
50-54	3,601	11	3,260		
55-59	4,085	12	2,370		
60-64	3,466	13	100		
65-69	3,199	14	0		
70-74	2,544	15	120		
75-79	1,832	16	290		
80-85	1,066	17	1,160		
85+	588				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	12,293	4	12,192	66	31	89
Owner occupied leasehold	200	13	182	3	2	129
Council etc.	6,568	1,256	5,284	20	8	1
Housing association	170	87	79	4	0	0
Rent and business	39	0	38	1	0	0
By employment	340	6	328	6	0	0
Other rented unfurnished	2,234	40	2,007	145	42	21
Other rented furnished	1,226	3	459	406	358	23

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	28,049
Working	24,081
Not working	3,968

Task force area—Rochdale

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	3,987	1	1,550	I	390
5-9	3,804	2	3,180	II	3,160

Age	Population
10-14	4,482
15	826
16-19	3,462
20-24	4,088
25-29	3,580
30-34	3,298
35-39	2,653
40-44	2,721
45-49	2,647
50-54	2,766
55-59	3,012
60-64	2,358
65-69	2,506
70-74	2,228
75-79	1,597
80-85	907
85+	495

SEG	Population
3	150
4	640
5.1	1,640
5.2	330
6	3,150
7	600
8	2,290
9	10,960
10	10,970
11	4,770
12	1,860
13	40
14	0
15	30
16	0
17	1,180

Social Class	Population
IIIN	3,460
IIIM	6,070
IV	6,280
V	2,620
Armed Forces	1,080
Retired 1	3,860
Retired 2	6,470
Retired 3	4,120

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	2,284	13	2,260	9	2	1
Owner occupied leasehold	7,130	15	7,090	21	2	1
Council etc.	7,579	2,954	4,578	34	33	1
Housing association	397	155	229	7	8	0
Rent and business	54	1	53	0	0	0
By employment	78	2	69	6	1	0
Other rented unfurnished	715	5	877	16	9	12
Other rented furnished	342	1	194	44	103	1

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	23,085
Working	18,789
Not working	4,296

Task force area—Preston

Age	Population
0-4	1,783
5-9	1,591
10-14	1,897
15	379
16-19	1,637
20-24	2,110
25-29	1,710
30-34	1,372
35-39	1,030
40-44	1,168
45-49	1,189
50-54	1,223
55-59	1,276
60-64	1,219
65-69	1,285
70-74	1,204
75-79	954
80-85	507
85+	299

SEG	Population
1	60
2	710
3	0
4	250
5.1	450
5.2	110
6	1,590
7	500
8	590
9	4,750
10	5,570
11	2,490
12	990
13	0
14	30
15	60
16	40
17	1,220

Social Class	Population
I	160
II	990
IIIN	1,640
IIIM	2,350
IV	2,640
V	1,300
Armed Forces	790
Retired 1	1,700
Retired 2	2,970
Retired 3	2,540

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	3,965	8	3,909	44	4	0
Owner occupied leasehold	1,009	61	934	7	7	0
Council etc.	2,508	1,234	1,214	32	28	0
Housing association	29	1	20	6	2	0
Rent and business	35	0	35	0	0	0
By employment	65	3	57	3	2	0
Other rented unfurnished	695	1	582	73	39	0
Other rented furnished	766	10	194	336	226	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	10,396
Working	8,129
Not working	2,267

Task force area—Hartlepool

Age	*Population*	*SEG*	*Population*	*Social Class*	*Population*
0-4	2,980	1	790	I	110
5-9	3,143	2	1,470	II	1,520
10-14	3,721	3	0	IIIN	2,610
15	819	4	270	IIIM	6,260
16-19	3,339	5.1	760	IV	4,850
20-24	3,767	5.2	110	V	2,960
25-29	3,095	6	1,600	Armed Forces	1,860
30-34	2,852	7	730	Retired 1	2,040
35-39	2,118	8	1,460	Retired 2	6,700
40-44	2,260	9	12,700	Retired 3	4,810
45-49	2,423	10	7,710		
50-54	2,714	11	5,280		
55-59	2,840	12	740		
60-64	2,429	13	0		
65-69	2,215	14	50		
70-74	1,764	15	150		
75-79	1,258	16	90		
80-85	661	17	1,940		
85+	403				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	*Purpose flat*	*Separate entrance*	*Self contained*	*Non self contained*	*Non permanent*
Owner occupied freehold	4,966	15	4,939	9	3	0
Owner occupied leasehold	296	8	286	2	0	0
Council etc.	9,101	1,329	7,676	92	4	3
Housing association	757	139	609	4	5	0
Rent and business	24	0	24	0	0	0
By employment	101	11	87	2	1	0
Other rented unfurnished	627	12	589	24	2	0
Other rented furnished	293	12	129	73	79	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	20,287
Working	15,424
Not working	4,863

Task force area—Wolverhampton

Age	*Population*	*SEG*	*Population*	*Social Class*	*Population*
0-4	2,891	1	540	I	250
5-9	2,974	2	1,220	II	1,990
10-14	3,363	3	110	IIIN	2,250
15	586	4	510	IIIM	4,050
16-19	2,422	5.1	1,470	IV	3,610
20-24	2,939	5.2	110	V	1,430
25-29	2,621	6	1,710	Armed Forces	1,510
30-34	2,170	7	230	Retired 1	1,340
35-39	1,681	8	690	Retired 2	5,890
40-44	1,666	9	10,090	Retired 3	2,340
45-49	1,742	10	5,770		
50-54	1,837	11	3,320		
55-59	1,624	12	1,540		
60-64	1,455	13	10		
65-69	1,298	14	0		
70-74	1,185	15	0		
75-79	884	16	20		
80-85	499	17	1,510		
85+	281				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	5,633	7	5,582	29	15	5
Owner occupied leasehold	286	75	203	5	3	0
Council etc.	2,496	1,092	1,394	8	2	1
Housing association	963	72	832	46	13	0
Rent and business	27	0	26	1	0	0
By employment	119	2	112	5	0	0
Other rented unfurnished	1,211	27	1,146	30	8	0
Other rented furnished	704	92	414	96	118	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	14,518
Working	11,273
Not working	3,245

Task force area—Bristol

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	1,466	1	170	I	130
5-9	1,256	2	1,170	II	1,200
10-14	1,490	3	40	IIIN	1,320
15	328	4	190	IIIM	2,740
16-19	1,383	5.1	940	IV	1,890
20-24	1,782	5.2	100	V	1,160
25-29	1,473	6	1,260	Armed Forces	820
30-34	1,207	7	720	Retired 1	1,670
35-39	1,002	8	820	Retired 2	2,870
40-44	1,075	9	4,630	Retired 3	2,840
45-49	1,046	10	3,270		
50-54	1,175	11	1,970		
55-59	1,270	12	860		
60-64	1,278	13	0		
65-69	1,370	14	30		
70-74	1,176	15	0		
75-79	947	16	0		
80-85	525	17	920		
85+	385				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	2,480	7	2,434	24	15	8
Owner occupied leasehold	728	9	706	7	6	0
Council etc.	4,380	2,638	1,648	86	8	0
Housing association	446	156	129	137	24	0
Rent and business	39	1	37	1	0	0
By employment	114	11	88	13	2	1
Other rented unfurnished	372	9	269	60	34	0
Other rented furnished	299	1	122	79	97	1

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	9,604
Working	7,803
Not working	1,801

Task force area—Highfields, Leicester

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	4,176	1	350	I	310
5-9	3,566	2	2,340	II	2,090
10-14	4,101	3	150	IIIN	2,850
15	794	4	390	IIIM	6,250
16-19	3,665	5·1	1,160	IV	6,160
20-24	5,215	5·2	90	V	1,360
25-29	4,197	6	3,040	Armed Forces	2,510
30-34	3,158	7	1,040	Retired 1	2,060

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
35-39	2,256	8	1,340	Retired 2	7,330
40-44	2,369	9	11,320	Retired 3	3,090
45-49	2,196	10	9,130		
50-54	2,116	11	3,520		
55-59	1,923	12	2,250		
60-64	1,796	13	0		
65-69	1,791	14	0		
70-74	1,575	15	0		
75-79	1,222	16	40		
80-85	690	17	3,870		
85+	430				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	8,094	19	7,988	64	23	1
Owner occupied leasehold	324	128	183	8	5	1
Council etc.	3,421	1,320	1,921	175	5	0
Housing association	661	168	389	78	26	0
Rent and business	20	0	20	0	0	0
By employment	57	2	50	4	1	1
Other rented unfurnished	1,251	5	1,052	148	46	0
Other rented furnished	1,237	5	601	317	314	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	21,272
Working	16,552
Not working	4,720

Task force area—North Peckham

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	3,599	1	740	I	5
5-9	3,094	2	1,810	II	124
10-14	3,795	3	110	IIIN	398
15	855	4	520	IIIM	70
16-19	3,467	5·1	2,180	IV	243
20-24	4,905	5·2	480	V	123
25-29	4,055	6	4,100	Armed Forces	61
30-34	3,273	7	2,100	Retired 1	123
35-39	2,403	8	1,580	Retired 2	521
40-44	2,554	9	9,350	Retired 3	343
45-49	2,452	10	6,470		
50-54	2,672	11	4,590		
55-59	2,871	12	2,180		
60-64	2,494	13	20		
65-69	2,342	14	0		
70-74	1,780	15	0		
75-79	1,260	16	0		
80-85	755	17	2,620		
85+	481				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	1,226	39	1,060	68	59	2
Owner occupied leasehold	297	102	217	73	7	0
Council etc.	14,863	12,179	1,908	698	18	29
Housing association	994	594	201	185	14	0
Rent and business	45	1	43	0	1	0
By employment	137	51	75	9	2	1
Other rented unfurnished	1,064	166	486	191	221	0
Other rented furnished	365	13	121	125	106	17

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	24,197
Working	20,593
Not working	3,604

Task force area—Middlesbrough

Age	Population	SEG	Population	Social Class	Population
0-4	2,347	1	160	I	140
5-9	1,870	2	540	II	840
10-14	1,972	3	80	IIIN	1,560
15	396	4	190	IIIM	3,570
16-19	1,765	5·1	590	IV	2,340
20-24	3,066	5·2	80	V	1,550
25-29	2,452	6	1,180	Armed Forces	820
30-34	1,654	7	580	Retired 1	1,410
35-39	1,096	8	410	Retired 2	4,090
40-44	1,275	9	7,560	Retired 3	2,620
45-49	1,298	10	3,990		
50-54	1,327	11	2,950		
55-59	1,337	12	900		
60-64	1,200	13	0		
65-69	1,141	14	0		
70-74	989	15	10		
75-79	705	16	0		
80-85	325	17	730		
85+	183				

Tenure—Housing by household

	Total	Purpose flat	Separate entrance	Self contained	Non self contained	Non permanent
Owner occupied freehold	4,850	10	4,804	31	5	20
Owner occupied leasehold	187	4	180	3	0	0
Council etc.	1,558	564	968	11	15	0
Housing association	284	55	200	27	2	0
Rent and business	11	0	11	0	0	0
By employment	91	10	76	5	0	0
Other rented unfurnished	926	5	898	14	9	4
Other rented furnished	690	7	349	139	195	0

Employment

	Number
Total economic active	11,684
Working	8,806
Not working	2,878

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gulf War

16. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the use of chemical warfare in the Gulf conflict.

Mr. Mellor: A report by a United Nations inspection team confirmed that chemical weapons had been used in April by Iraq against Iranian troops and civilians. It also mentions chemical weapons injuries to Iraqi troops, but it is unable to apportion blame. There were unconfirmed reports of further chemical weapons use by Iraq in October. We unreservedly condemn all use of chemical weapons, and we are in the forefront of moves to obtain a global ban on these hideous weapons.

26. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he is taking to seek to bring to an end the conflict in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to believe that the best hope of achieving a lasting peace in the Gulf is through the immediate implementation of Security Council resolution 598 in full. To this end, we fully support the United Nations secretary general in his efforts to obtain compliance by Iran and Iraq.

We are also playing a leading role in discussions on implementation of Security Council resolution 598 within the Security Council. Along with others, we are pressing for work to begin on enforcement measures, as agreed by the Foreign Ministers of the Five on 25 September. My right hon. and learned Friend raised this most recently with Mr. Shevardnadze on 7 December.

57. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to convene a meeting of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to try to find a way of ending the Gulf war.

Mr. Mellor: The Five Foreign Ministers met in New York on 25 September and agreed a twin-track approach to ending the conflict via the implementation of Security Council resolution 598. The secretary general would continue his efforts to persuade Iran and Iraq to comply with resolution 598 whilst the representatives of the Five worked on enforcement measures. The representatives of the Five in New York continue to meet to monitor progress on the first track, and we seek to begin serious work on the second. We continue to believe that this approach offers the best way forward.

El Salvador

17. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about compliance by the Government of El Salvador with the Central American regional peace accord proposed by President Arias.

Mr. Eggar: The Central American presidents will be considering the question on compliance with the peace agreement at their meeting in San Jose on 15 January, on the basis of information to be supplied by the International Verification and Monitoring Commission. We await their conclusions.

Soviet Union (Foreign Minister)

18. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union; and what subjects were discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I had talks with Mr. Shevardnadze on 7 December during Mr. Gorbachev's visit. In the short time available we discussed a number of questions relating to arms control, human rights, regional conflicts and Anglo-Soviet bilateral relations. I welcomed the United States-Soviet agreement on intermediate nuclear forces and the prospect of further arms control measures, but made clear that a solid improvement in East-West relations would also depend on parallel progress over human rights abuses and issues such as the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Bophuthatswana

19. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to seek to visit Bophuthatswana.

Mrs. Chalker: Bophuthatswana is not an independent state; it is a homeland set up by the South African Government within South Africa. My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans for a visit to South Africa.

Afghanistan

20. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom's relations with Afghanistan of the refugee situation in that area.

Mr. Eggar: We have voted in favour of successive United Nations general assembly resolutions calling for the early withdrawal of Soviet troops and the restoration of Afghanistan's independence, to enable Afghan refugees to return to their homes in safety and honour.

42. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans any new initiative intended to lead to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afganistan.

Mr. Eggar: The European Council has called on the Soviet Union to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan in 1988 according to a fixed timetable. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reinforced the message when she met Mr. Gorbachev on 7 December. We will continue to press for withdrawal.

76. **Mr. Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the recent meeting between the Prime Minister and Mr. Gorbachev, Her Majesty's Government intend to pursue any fresh initiatives to seek the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The European Council has called on the Soviet Union to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan in 1988 according to a fixed timetable. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reinforced the message when she met Mr. Gorbachev on 7 December. We will continue to press for withdrawal.

Kenya

21. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Kenya.

Mrs. Chalker: Our relations with Kenya are very friendly and substantial. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is much looking forward to visiting Kenya in January as the guest of President Moi.

EC (Deregulation)

22. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the effect on the areas of his responsibility of the deregulation arrangements for 1992 within the EEC.

Mrs. Chalker: Our aim is to remove the barriers to free movement of goods and services within the Community by 1992. In some cases that will involve using Community measures to outlaw restrictive practices, for example on insurance and air transport; in others, it will involve adopting a Communitywide standard in place of 12 national standards or mutual recognition of national standards. We are taking steps to ensure that where Community standards replace national ones, the regulatory burden on industry is minimised.

UNESCO

23. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received concerning United Kingdom relations with UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no formal representations.

Arms Control

24. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the next stage in the discussions on arms control in Geneva following the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Mellor: The bilateral Geneva nuclear and space talks between the United States and Soviet Union will continue. We look forward to the completion of a treaty providing for a 50 per cent. reduction in the strategic offensive weapons of the United States and Soviet Union. The 40 members of the conference on disarmament will continue to work towards a comprehensive global and verifiable ban on chemical weapons.

South-East Asia

25. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the American Secretary of State; and if they discussed the situation in south-east Asia.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend met Mr. Shultz this morning. They discussed a range of bilateral and international issues, but not on this occasion the situation in south-east Asia.

Greece

27. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Greece.

Mrs. Chalker: Relations between the United Kingdom and Greece are good, as befits fellow members of the European Community and NATO. Regular contact is maintained at ministerial level. My right hon. and learned Friend and I both visited Greece last year and the Greek Foreign Minister paid a return visit to London last month.

Iran

28. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to obtain a copy of all evidence relating to British subjects that was given to the Congressional inquiry into the Iran-Contra affair; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The report of the congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra affair contains no information to suggest that British subjects have broken United Kingdom law. There is, therefore, no reason to request a copy of all evidence relating to British subjects.

South Africa (Diplomats)

29. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is given by his Department to United Kingdom diplomats in South Africa regarding attendance at political rallies or funerals.

Mrs. Chalker: This is a matter for decision by Her Majesty's ambassador in the light of circumstances at the time and of British policy towards South Africa.

Latin America

30. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he makes of the implications of the Group of Eight summit in Acapulco for Her Majesty's Government's relations with Latin America.

Mr. Eggar: As I informed the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray) on 3 December, we are studying the Acapulco declaration. It contains much that we welcome, and we hope to build on this common ground in developing our relationship with Latin America.

Mr. Gorbachev (Visit)

31. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, during Mr. Gorbachev's visit to London, whether he discussed with him the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: During discussions with Mr. Gorbachev, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, called for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1988.

Iran-Iraq War

32. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress in attempting to bring about a ceasefire between Iraq and Iran.

Mr. Mellor: The secretary general has now received preliminary responses from Iran and Iraq to his detailed plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 598, of which a ceasefire is the first and crucial element. He has had recent discussions on this with emissaries from Tehran and Baghdad. However, there is unfortunately little sign of progress. We are continuing to press for early work on enforcement measures in case the secretary general's untiring efforts are not successful.

Chile

33. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Chilean counterpart regarding the safety of British citizens in Chile.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and noble Friend and I reviewed the whole range of our concerns about human rights in Chile when the Foreign Minister passed through London on 23 October. Her Majesty's ambassador in Santiago regularly raises human rights issues with the Chilean Government.

INF Treaty

34. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the implications for Britain in the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Mellor: We welcome the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty. The implications are as stated in my reply today to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith).

Arms Reductions

35. **Mr. Patrick Thomson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy towards Soviet proposals for conventional arms reductions in Europe.

Mr. Mellor: The Soviet Union has formulated no specific proposals on conventional arms reductions in Europe at the conventional stability mandate discussions in Vienna beyond general assertions of its willingness to talk seriously about conventional arms control and its readiness to contemplate the elimination of disparities "where they exist". At the MBFR talks, also in Vienna, it has shown itself interested only in unverifiable symbolic or declaratory measures which would do nothing to enhance stability and security. In the so-called Budapest Appeal of June 1986 the Warsaw pact proposed equal percentage cuts by both NATO and Warsaw pact which would do nothing to redress existing imbalances.

Bangladesh

36. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implication for the United Kingdom's relations with Bangladesh of the current state of emergency.

Mr. Eggar: Our relations with Bangladesh are good. We regret the loss of life and the injuries suffered during the current political unrest there. We hope that political differences in Bangladesh will be resolved by democratic means.

Mozambique

37. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British officers and men are currently working in Mozambique helping to train the Mozambique army; and whether it is planned to alter that number.

Mrs. Chalker: A 14-man British military team is engaged in training members of the Mozambican Army at Nyanga, Zimbabwe. A defence adviser is attached to Her Majesty's embassy in Maputo for planning and liaison purposes. There are no plans to alter these numbers.

63. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Mozambique.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom's relations with the People's Republic of Mozambique have continued to develop positively since President Chissano succeeded the late President Machel. President Chissano paid a successful official visit to Britain in May. This has been followed by ministerial contacts culminating in my recent visit to Mozambique. We support President Chissano's efforts to bring peace and stability to Mozambique. In recognition of this, as well as of Mozambique's strategic importance in southern Africa, we have this year committed over £34 million in bilateral development aid, food and disaster relief. In addition, we undertake the training in Nyanga, Zimbabwe, of limited numbers of the Mozambican armed forces.

Federal Republic of Germany

38. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he hopes to visit the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to visit the Federal Republic of Germany on 8 February to attend a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the European Community meeting in political co-operation.

Heads of Government Meeting (Copenhagen)

39. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of EEC Heads of Government at Copenhagen, including any agreement on plans for the future development of the Community.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday 8 December.

President of the European Commission

40. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of the European Commission; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend recently met the President of the European Commission at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 14 and 15 December, when they discussed a number of issues concerning the future development of the Community.

Soviet Union (Human Rights)

41. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made about the protection of human rights in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed human rights in the Soviet Union with Mr. Shevardnadze during talks on 7 December at Brize Norton and made clear the importance of a major improvement in Soviet performance for lasting confidence between East and West. He raised two bilateral family reunification cases and handed over updated lists of Soviet prisoners of conscience and Jewish refuseniks about whom we have received representations this year.

48. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about recent developments regarding human rights in the Soviet Union; and if he will make a statement.

53. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made about human rights in the Soviet Union.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are monitoring Soviet human rights performance closely and are aware that substantial abuses continue. I discussed these issues with Mr. Shevardnadze at Brize Norton on 7 December. While welcoming recent steps forward in Soviet performance, I stressed the need for further major progress in this area and handed over lists of individual cases about which we have received representations.

Soviet Union

43. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current relations with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister paid a highly successful visit to the Soviet Union in March and held talks with Mr. Gorbachev in an excellent atmosphere on 7 December at Brize Norton. My right hon. and learned Friend will be visiting the Soviet Union early next year and other high-level visits in both directions are also planned. The current health of the relationship depends on mutual respect and frank speaking, including on issues such as human rights and Afghanistan.

Western European Union

44. **Mr. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about future British policy towards the Western European Union.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy towards the Western European Union is to make it an effective forum for Foreign and Defence Ministers of member countries to discuss security and defence issues of mutual concern. An effective Western European Union will contribute to strengthening the European pillar of the Alliance. The platform on European security interests agreed at the recent Hague ministerial meeting will guide Western European Union's development for the foreseeable future.

South Africa

45. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received calling for additional sanctions by Her Majesty's Government against South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Coventry South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 18 November at column *598*.

Terrorism

46. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received regarding Her Majesty's Government's policy of doing no deals with international hostage-takers.

Mr. Mellor: A wide range of representations and comments has been made about our policy since its inception. We believe that doing deals with hostage-takers only leads to more kidnappings and violence. That is why our policy is, and will remain, one of making no substantive concessions to terrorism.

Southern Africa

47. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any proposals to visit southern Africa in 1988.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

66. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to southern Africa by the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker).

Mrs. Chalker: I visited Mozambique between 28 November and 1 December, and Malawi between 1-3 December. I took advantage of a transit stop in Johannesburg for a short talk with the South African Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Kobus Meiring. In Mozambique I met President Chissano and had useful talks with Mozambican Ministers and senior officials. I visited a number of aid projects and informed the President that we had set aside £500,000 to provide non-lethal defence equipment for units deployed on the Limpopo line. In Malawi I met President Banda and informed him of our decision to make available £750,000 for non-lethal defence equipment for use by Malawian troops deployed on the Nacala line in Mozambique. I visited a Mozambican displaced persons' camp and told the Malawians that we would meet the cost of providing 5,000 tonnes of food aid — £1 million — and donate further relief aid.

Fiji

49. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from Fijian citizens resident in the United Kingdom about the situation in Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a small number of letters from Fijian organisations and citizens resident in the United Kingdom.

60. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's current and future relations with Fiji.

Mr. Eggar: I have nothing to add to the statement by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 22 October following the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver.

Gulf (Navigation Rights)

50. **Sir Giles Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to seek to promote recognition of the right to freedom of navigation in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: We have consistently stressed our determination to uphold the vitally important principle of freedom of navigation in international waters and straits used for international navigation. Support for this principle in the Gulf is demonstrated tangibly by the presence of vessels from the Royal Navy and other navies. We also take every opportunity to promote widespread recognition that freedom of navigation in the Gulf is an important interest of the whole international community.

East-West Relations

51. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on East-West relations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We welcome the results of the Washington summit and hope that the intermediate nuclear forces agreement will lead to further effective and verifiable arms control measures. The more stable and co-operative East-West relationship we want also requires Soviet respect for human rights and cooperation over regional conflicts, including early withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Sharpeville Six

52. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the South African Government for clemency for the Sharpeville six; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: On 4 December, the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, acting on behalf of the Twelve, appealed to the South African Government for

clemency for the Sharpeville six on humanitarian grounds. We have also made a bilateral approach to the South African Government.

EC (Single Market)

54. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the arrangements made in his Department in preparation for the achievement of a single market in the European Community by 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: We are working closely with the Department of Trade and Industry and other Government Departments to achieve the early adoption of the measures necessary to complete the single European market and to promote among businesses, industry and the public, awareness of the opportunities and challenges involved.

European Foreign Policies

55. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his European Community partners concerning the development of common European foreign policies.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. and learned Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) on 18 November. On 23 November my right hon. and learned Friend attended a meeting of European Community Foreign Ministers. East-West matters, the middle east, the Iran-Iraq war and Libya's involvement in the Eksund arms shipment were discussed. The Foreign Ministers issued statements on South Africa's military incursion into Angola, on the peace process in Central America and on the elections in Haiti. Further discussions on foreign policy matters took place at the European Council held in Copenhagen on 4-5 December. Statements were issued on East-West, the middle east and Afghanistan. Copies of all these statements have been placed in the Library of the House.

Anglo-Egyptian Relations

56. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Egyptian relations.

Mr. Mellor: Our relations with Egypt are excellent. Our views on regional issues are very similar and we enjoy very close cultural, trade and aid ties.

Conventional Forces (Europe)

58. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there have been recent developments regarding reductions in conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Mellor: Reasonable progress is being made at the informal discussions in Vienna to agree a mandate for conventional stability talks covering the Atlantic to Urals area. We hope formal negotiations will begin next year. The Western aim in these negotiations will be to achieve security at lower levels by eliminating disparities and the Warsaw pact's capability for surprise attack. On the mutual and balanced force reductions talks, also in Vienna, progress has been disappointing owing to the East's refusal to respond positively to Western proposals on verification and data.

West Bank and Gaza

59. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last raised with the Israeli Government the abuse of civil and human rights of Palestinian Arabs on the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend discussed human rights at his most recent meeting with Mr. Peres in New York on 22 September. Officials remain in close touch with the Israelis on human rights issues.

Anglo-Argentinian Relations

61. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with the current state of Anglo-Argentinian relations.

Mr. Eggar: We continue to seek more normal relations with Argentina whilst upholding our commitments to the Falkland islanders. We regret that the Argentine Government have failed to reciprocate many of our initiatives aimed at restoring more normal relations.

Falkland Islands

62. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on his policy on the Falkland Islands over the last three months.

Mr. Eggar: Our policy is to uphold our commitments to the Falkland islanders while seeking to restore more normal relations with Argentina. I regularly exchange views with interested parties and visited the islands myself from 5-9 December.

United Nations

64. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much is the United Kingdom contribution to the budget of the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom contributes 4·86 per cent. of the regular budget of the United Nations. In the United Kingdom financial year 1986-87 the amount in question was £23,614,564.

Eastern Europe

65. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with countries in Eastern Europe.

Mr. Mellor: Relations are fuller with some countries than with others. This reflects different historical and political factors, the strength of commercial, cultural and individual links, and the internal policies pursued by the respective governments.

Anglo-French Relations

68. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-French relations.

Mrs. Chalker: Anglo-French relations are excellent. We enjoy close co-operation over a wide range of issues.

Nuclear Bases (Inspection)

69. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what provision has been made for Soviet officials to inspect nuclear bases in the United Kingdom as a result of the intermediate range nuclear forces initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Only the United States facilities at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth will be liable to inspection under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty and the associated agreements when they enter into force. The provisions agreed between the United States and the USSR in the intermediate nuclear forces treaty and its inspection protocol, will be applied in the United Kingdom under an agreement signed on 11 December between the United States and the five European basing countries, and an exchange of notes to be concluded with the Soviet Union concerning the activities of Soviet Inspectors in the United Kingdom. Copies of all these texts will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as they are available. The basing country agreement and exchange of notes will be laid before the House in the usual way.

Cyprus

70. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take fresh action through the United Nations to resolve the problem caused by the presence of Turkish troops in Cyprus.

Mrs. Chalker: The United Nations secretary-general has recently repeated his proposal that the United Nations force in Cyprus—UNFICYP—should verify the size of military forces on each side. We believe this would be a valuable confidence-building measure and urge both sides to accept. Meanwhile, we continue to press the Turkish Government to reduce the numbers of their troops in Cyprus.

NATO (Foreign Ministers)

71. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met Foreign Ministers of the other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Foreign Ministers of NATO countries at the North Atlantic Council meeting in Brussels on 11 December. The meeting was given a full and extensive briefing by Mr. Shultz on the discussions that took place at the recent United States-Soviet summit. The allies gave their full support to the INF treaty signed there.

Pakistan

72. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends visiting Pakistan in the near future.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Pakistan. He had the pleasure to do so last year. My noble Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs is visiting Pakistan from 13-19 December.

Anglo-Soviet Relations

73. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of Anglo-Soviet relations.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, paid a highly successful visit to the Soviet Union in March and held talks with Mr. Gorbachev in an excellent atmosphere on 7 December at Brize Norton. My right hon. and learned Friend will be visiting the Soviet Union early next year and other high-level visits in both directions are also planned. The current health of the relationship depends on mutual respect and frank speaking, including on issues such as human rights and Afghanistan.

Arab-Israeli Dispute

74. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what part the Government are playing in efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to work actively, together with our European partners, to help all parties concerned reach agreement on the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices.

Gibraltar

75. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent discussions with the Spanish Government regarding Gibraltar.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met the Spanish Foreign Minister in Madrid on 27 and 28 November, and again in London, on 2 December. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and the Spanish Transport Minister were also present on 2 December. These meetings resulted in agreements on co-operation in the use of Gibraltar airport, on the resumption of the ferry service between Gibraltar and Algeciras and on the improvement of arrangements at the land frontier between Gibraltar and Spain. The texts of the joint declarations containing these agreements have been placed in the Library.

Mr. M. G. Shastri

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from the French Government about Mr. Masond Ghorbanizadeh Shastri, who has refugee status in the United Kingdom, who has been deported to Gabon from France; what contact has been made with him in Gabon; if he has protested to the French Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Mr. Gorbanizadeh Ghasari has returned to the United Kingdom. This follows the intervention of Her Majesty's embassy in Libreville, acting in response to a request from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who has the formal protection responsibility in this case.

Poland (Radio Broadcasts)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he intends to do about the jamming of radio broadcasts to Poland.

Mr. Eggar: Following repeated representations, the Polish authorities have told us that jamming of the BBC Polish service will stop on 31 December.

Soviet Jewry

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether during recent discussions with Mr. Gorbachev the plight of Soviet Jewry was raised.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister welcomed the recent increase in Jewish emigration, but pressed Mr. Gorbachev for further progress in this and other areas of human rights concern. My right hon. and learned Friend also raised these issues with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Mr. Shevardnadze, and handed over lists of cases about which recent representations have been made to the Government.

Mr. Ronald Li

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cause of Mr. Ronald Li's resignation as deputy chairman of the Hong Kong futures exchange.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that Mr. Li, together with all other directors of the futures exchange, tendered his resignation to facilitate the formation of a new board.

Mr. Jeffrey Sun

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cause of Mr. Jeffrey Sun's resignation as chief executive officer of the Hong Kong stock exchange.

Mr. Eggar: This is a private matter between Mr. Sun and the stock exchange.

Hong Kong Securities Review Committee (Report)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Hong Kong Securities Review Committee report into recent events in the territory's stock and futures market will be published; and whether it will be investigating the role of senior officials and Stock Exchange Council members immediately prior to and during the recent closure of the exchanges.

Mr. Eggar: The committee will use its best endeavours to submit its report by 16 May 1988, and the Hong Kong Government intend to publish it thereafter. The main task of the committee is to identify what changes are appropriate to maintain Hong Kong as an international financial centre, rather than to allocate blame for past events.

Anglo-USA Meeting

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the United States of America.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I met Mr. Shultz this morning. A wide range of bilateral and international topics were discussed. We value this regular frank and constructive dialogue.

United Nations

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent increase has been made in the number of officials employed by the United Nations; what proportion of these is from the Soviet bloc; and what economies have been effected recently in the organisation and its agencies.

Mr. Eggar: There has been no increase; on the contrary, posts subject to geographical distribution in the United Nations Organisation have decreased by 16 per cent. since 1985. The East European group's present share of these posts is 10 per cent. We shall continue to work for greater efficiency and value for money throughout the United Nations and its agencies.

Dependent Territories

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of the review of policy towards dependent territories announced by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), on 23 July 1986; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Following the concern expressed within the Commonwealth about the security of small states, and the suspension of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands, we have conducted a review of policy towards our five Caribbean dependent territories and Bermuda. We did so in the light of our commitment to the principle of self-determination and our determination to live up to our obligations under the United Nations charter, and our responsibilities for the good government and development of the dependent territories.

The review concluded that we should not seek in any way to influence opinion in the territories on the question of independence. We would not urge them to consider moving to independence, but we remain ready to respond positively when this is the clearly and constitutionally expressed wish of the people.

As a result of the review, we are, however, implementing a number of administrative measures to improve the effectiveness with which we discharge our obligations to ensure the good administration, and economic and social development of the dependent territories. The reasonable needs of the dependent territories will continue, as before, to be a first charge on United Kingdom aid funds.

We are already undertaking a programme to improve the defences of the Caribbean dependent territories against the threat posed by drug trafficking, as part of a wider determination, in co-operation with the Government of the United States and regional governments to counter the drugs threat in the region as a whole.

We reaffirm our commitment to the dependent territories and our determination to discharge our obligations in full.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Jim Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 14 and 15 December.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend and I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels on 14 December. The Council discussed the programme of work on European Community future financing and spending control before the Brussels European Council on 11-12 February. Ministers agreed to devote the next Foreign Affairs Council on 25-26 January to these issues.

The Council adopted the advance telecommunications research programme, RACE, and approved the additional protocols to the EC-Israel co-operation agreement which take account of Spanish and Portuguese accession to the Community. The Council reached a common position subject to formal Italian approval, on a framework regulation laying down maximum permitted levels of radioactivity in foodstuffs in the event of a nuclear accident. The regulation will be adopted after the necessary procedures in the European Parliament have been completed. In parallel, Ministers agreed to adopt, initially for three months, a new regulation governing food imports following the Chernobyl accident. The duration of this regulation will be extended to 24 months when the framework regulation is formally adopted.

The Council heard reports from the Commission on progress in the Uruguay round of trade negotiations, and on recent high level meetings with the United States and Japan.

The sixth EC-Yugoslavia co-operation council was held at the end of the Council. A resolution on the future development of co-operation between the EC and Yugoslavia was adopted.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what measures he is taking to improve job prospects in the district council area of Easington.

Mr. Lee: All my Department's employment, training and enterprise measures are available in Easington. Unemployment has fallen by 608 in the Easington local authority area in the last year.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are his plans to amalgamate the jobcentre in Peterlee with the unemployment benefit office; and whether there will be redundancies.

Mr. Lee: The employment service has been created to provide a more effective and coherent service to the unemployed. There are no current plans to amalgamate Peterlee jobcentre and unemployment benefit office.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of job vacancies notified to the jobcentres at Seaham and Peterlee, in September, October and November.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. The number of vacancies notified to Peterlee, Seaham and Wingate jobcentres between 5 September and 2 October 1987 was 436. Separate figures for Seaham and Peterlee jobcentres are not yet collected. Figures are not yet available for the periods 3 October to 7 November and 8 November to 4 December.

Availability for Work

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently available for work; what were the comparable figures a year ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The most recent source of information on the availability of persons for work is the labour force survey (LFS) which estimated that in spring 1986 4,283,000 people in Great Britain were out of employment and available for work, and of these only some 2,654,000 had looked for work in the week prior to interview.

YTS Trainees

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees were deaf in each of the last five years; and what percentage this represents of the total number of YTS employees in the given year.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission keeps a record of the number of YTS trainees with disabilities, but these are not divided into different categories of disability. No figures are available therefore on the number or percentage of YTS trainees, past and present, who suffer from hearing impairments or deafness. However, in 1986 financial support was made available so that deaf trainees could benefit from the services of commentators. During 1986-87, 90 applications were approved, and 43 applications have been approved to date in this financial year.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees who are deaf subsequently found work in each of the last five years; and how this compares with the job placement rate of other YTS trainees.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission keeps a record of the number of YTS trainees with disabilities but these are not divided into different categories of disability. Therefore, there are no figures available on the numbers of YTS trainees who suffer from hearing impairments or deafness who found work after leaving YTS.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job training scheme trainees have been deaf to the latest date for which figures are available; and what proportion this represents of the total number of trainees.

Mr. Cope: Information about specific disabilities of new job training scheme trainees is not available.

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the job placement rate for *(a)* all trainees leaving the job training scheme and *(b)* deaf trainees leaving the job training scheme.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available. The Manpower Services Commission has commissioned a follow-up survey to look into the destinations of trainees. The first results will be available in the new year.

Noise Levels

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers are exposed to noise of 85 dB(A) and above at work.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive estimates that about 1·7 million workers may have a daily noise exposure of 85 dB(A) or more. This estimate is given in a consultative document proposing new regulations to control noise at work, published yesterday by the Health and Safety Commission.

Unemployed People (Training)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment under the Goverment's proposals for training for the unemployed, how many *(a)* single persons and *(b)* married men are expected to receive (i) more and (ii) less than the present £67 per week average paid under the existing community programme; what percentages these are of the total; and if he will give a breakdown according to whether persons will gain or lose by multiples of £5 a week.

Mr. Lee: It is not possible to provide this information until the level of the premium over benefit to be paid to participants is known. We are currently awaiting the MSC's recommendations on this and other aspects of the new programme.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the balance between single persons and married persons and, within the latter category, according to the number of children in participants on the job training scheme and on the community programme; and what is the balance expected under the Government's proposals for training for the unemployed.

Mr. Lee: Of the information requested about current programmes, the only item currently available is that about 20 per cent. of community programme participants are married. The Government have made no detailed assumptions about the breakdown of those participating in the new programme. However, we expect many more married people, including those with children, will take part in the new programme.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a detailed breakdown of the expected budget of £1,500 million under the Government's proposed plans for training for the unemployed; if he will specify how the training element and payment to participants are broken down; and what are the comparable figures for the present job training scheme or community programme.

Mr. Lee: The annual budget for the new programme is expected to be just under £1·5 billion, which is the total amount provided for the current programmes the new programme is intended to replace. The actual budget for the new programme will depend on what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State finally decides should be included within it, and the programme. We are awaiting the recommendations of the Manpower Services Commission.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors resigned or left the service, and how many were recruited, in each branch of the Health and Safety Inspectorate each year since 1979; and by how much as a consequence the inspectorate was short of full establishment for each of these years.

Mr. Nicholls: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of *(a)* deaths, *(b)* major injuries and *(c)* minor injuries suffered as a result of accidents at work for each year since 1960.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is as follows:

Year	*Reported occupational injuries in Great Britain, resulting in death to*		*major injury to employees and self-employed*	*over 3 day absence from work*	
	employees only	*employees and self-employed*		*to employees only[1] (thousands)*	*employees and self-employed (thousands)*
1961	1,228	—	..	..	—
1962	1,173	—	..	714	—
1963	1,114	—	..	775	—
1964	1,087	—	..	844	—
1965	1,069	—	..	849	—
1966	1,066	—	..	824	—
1967	897	—	..	824	—
1968	947	—	..	803	—
1969	934	—	..	796	—
1970	821	—	..	685	—
1971	780	—	..	622	—
1972	671	—	..	630	—
1973	765	—	..	623	—
1974	651	—	..	577	—
1975	620	—	..	..	—
1976	584	—	..	553	—
1977	524	—	..	579	—
1978	—	622	..	581	—
1979	—	615	..	509	—
1980[2]	—	579	..	407	—

Year	Reported occupational injuries in Great Britain, resulting in death to employees only [2]	death to employees and self-employed	major injury to employees and self-employed	over 3 day abscence from work to employees only[1] (thousands)	employees and self-employed (thousands)
1981	—	503	12,403	435	—
1982	—	517	12,413	390	—
1983	—	508	12,567	..	—
1984	—	496	12,638	..	—
1985[3]	—	470	13,382	..	—

.. not available.

[1] over 3 day absences leading to claims for industrial injury benefit from DHSS, years starting on 1st Monday in June 1961-80; as notified to HSE for calendar years 1981-82.

[2] 1978-80 fatalities include those to non-employees voluntarily reported.

[3] 1981-85 fatalities and major injuries to employees and self-employed reported to the Health and Safety Executive or other appropiate enforcing authority under, and as defined in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR).

Figures for 1986-87 are provisional and were collected under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR). This introduced a wider definition of "major injuries" so that the reported 18,641 major injuries to employees and the self-employed is not comparable with previous figures. The number of fatalities was 390 and the number of over three-day absences was 144,000, both figures being for employees and the self-employed.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will print in the *Official Report* the text of Her Majesty's Government's advice to undertakers on the handling of bodies of AIDS victims.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive's advisory committee on dangerous pathogens has published "Advice to be given to Undertakers and Relatives" in appendix 3 of its document "LAV/HTLVIII —the causative agent of AIDS and related conditions— Revised Guidelines" (June 1986). In addition, I understand that the Health and Safety Executive has offered advice to the National Association of Funeral Directors which has produced its own code of health and safety for the funeral service. Copies of the 1986 guidelines are in the Library.

Dependent Territories (Work Permits)

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether a decision has yet been made to continue after the current year the special annual quota of work permits for workers from the dependent territories whose level of skill is below that required by the general work permit scheme.

Mr. Lee: Yes. It has been decided that the quota for 1988 will be 200 — the same as this year. Within the figure of 200 no more than 150 permits will be allowed for any one territory.

Benefit Office, Aytoun Street, Manchester

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department has taken to ensure that all the fire doors at the unemployment benefit office in Aytoun street, Manchester are working; how security locks on fire doors are to be operated in conditions of smoke; and when the fire brigade last inspected these offices.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

Routine maintenance is undertaken by the Department of Employment under the property repayment services arrangements but no alterations to fire doors may be carried out without the prior approval of the Property Services Agency. The security locks on fire doors are operated either by quick release handles or by breaking glass bolts to open the doors in the direction of the escape routes, the operations would not be hindered by conditions of smoke. In common with all other Crown premises, the unemployment benefit office in Aytoun street, Manchester, is not subject to inspection by the local authority fire brigade but is inspected on an bi-annual cycle by the Property Services Agency fire officers, the last such inspection having been carried out on 19 February 1987.

NORTHERN IRELAND

National No-Smoking Day

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the cost to public funds of National No-Smoking Day 1988.

Mr. Needham: £2,850.

EC (Surplus Food)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what measurement of entitlement he expects the allocating agencies to use in the distribution of the next issue of surplus EEC food to the elderly and deprived persons in Northern Ireland;

(2) when the next issue of surplus EEC food to the elderly and deprived will take place in Northern Ireland;

(3) what agencies will be involved in the distribution of the next issue of surplus EEC food to the elderly and deprived persons in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The Council of Agriculture Ministers at its meeting on 10-11 December approved a regulation whereby food from intervention stocks could be made available to the most deprived persons in the Community. The regulation does not place any obligation on member states to operate a free food scheme and it is still too early to say whether a scheme will be introduced in the United Kingdom.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Antrim, South on 12 November, *Official Report*, column *312*, regarding planning appeal conditions, he will list all such applications where conditions have not been completed with and where enforcement action has *(a)* been taken and *(b)* not been taken.

Mr. Needham: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, if the hon. Gentleman will let me know if he has a particular case in mind, I will be very happy to have the matter investigated and let him have a full reply.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) whether he will provide funds for the Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, on the same basis as funding provided in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will grant funding from the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Health and Social Services to augment grants from the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) to the Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* The funding of the Northern Ireland Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux follows the pattern of England and Wales in that the association receives 100 per cent. grant for approved expenditure from the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. This Department, acting on behalf of the Government, also provides resources to district councils who fund local citizens advice bureaux. This arrangement allows locally elected representatives to determine and respond to local needs.

Indirect assistance is also provided to individual bureaux in the form of action for community employment (ACE) posts. These are funded by the Department of Economic Development.

Personal Files (Access)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has begun consultations with a view to introducing provisions for access to housing records and social services records, analagous to those made in England, Wales and Scotland under the Access to Personal Files Act 1987.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The hon. Member has been given an undertaking that provisions comparable to those contained in the Access to Personal Files Act 1987 will be made for Northern Ireland by Order in Council. Formal consultation with interested parties and bodies will take place once the proposed draft Order in Council is published.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many patients in Northern Ireland are currently awaiting admission to hospital for orphodaedic surgery; what percentage of these have been waiting *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years or more; what plans he has to enable a reduction in the waiting list; and if he will provide the same information for 1980;

(2) how many patients in Northern Ireland are currently awaiting admission to hospital for general surgery; what percentage of these have been waiting *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years or more; what plans he has to enable a reduction in the waiting list; and if he will provide the same information for 1980;

(3) how many patients in Northern Ireland are currently awaiting admission to hospital for ear, nose and throat treatment; what percentage of these have been waiting *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years or more; what plans he has to enable a reduction in the waiting list; and if he will provide the same information for 1980;

(4) how many patients in Northern Ireland are currently awaiting admission to hospital for plastic surgery; what percentage of these have been waiting *(a)* one year and *(b)* two years or more; what plans he has to enable a reduction in the waiting list; and if he will provide the same information for 1980.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The information requested is as follows:

In-patient waiting lists: Northern Ireland
At 30 June 1987

Specialty	*Total Waiting*	*per cent. waiting up to 1 year*	*per cent. waiting over 2 years*
ENT	4,974	79·2	5·4
Plastic Surgery	2,586	40·0	38·3
Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery	4,471	61·8	22·0
General Surgery	7,076	70·9	16·8

Information on waiting times in 1980 is not available. The figures for 1981 are shown below.

In-patient waiting lists: Northern Ireland
At 30 June 1981

Specialty	*Total Waiting*	*per cent. waiting up to 1 year*	*per cent. waiting over 2 years*
ENT	[1]4,285	75·3	12·1
Plastic Surgery	1,652	53·9	24·5
Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery	4,933	40·7	39·8
General Surgery	[2]4,662	74·4	14·2

[1] This figure includes 100 patients for whom no breakdown of waiting time is available.

[2] This figure includes 365 patients for whom no breakdown of waiting time is available.

In its regional strategy for 1987-92 the Department of Health and Social Services asked health and social services boards to develop programmes of management action to improve waiting lists and waiting times and to concentrate on those specialities with the greatest problems. In the strategy, boards were also asked to reduce waiting times for hip replacement operations from nine to six months.

"Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process in Northern Ireland"

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make available in the Vote Office copies of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

publication "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process in Northern Ireland"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* Copies of the document were placed in the Library on publication. I have now arranged for copies also to be available in the Vote Office.

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the answer of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *693*, whether he will publish a table showing the social fund loans and grants allocations for each area office expressed as a percentage of the payments made for single payments in each area office for 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

SSO	*Single payments*[1]	*Social fund loans and grants*	*(3) expressed as percentage of (2)*
	1986	*1988-89*	
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*
	£	£	
Andersonstown	2,298,521	1,376,972	60
Antrim	1,253,083	663,009	53
Armagh	914,911	493,204	54
Ballymena	635,425	579,106	91
Ballymoney	759,696	414,427	55
Ballynahinch	114,153	64,378	56
Banbridge	424,216	243,790	57
Bangor	413,752	271,912	66
Carrickfergus	475,163	252,492	53
Coleraine	978,351	653,366	67
Cookstown	973,415	396,993	41
Corporation Street	3,247,973	1,644,430	51
Downpatrick	556,248	250,792	45
Dungannon	1,433,018	619,244	43
Enniskillen	863,176	463,600	54
Falls Road	2,382,309	1,146,050	48
Holywood Road	1,553,183	747,552	48
Kilkeel	124,916	89,280	71
Knockbreda	621,101	390,481	63
Larne	502,590	248,976	50
Limavady	594,168	216,849	36
Lisburn	2,129,543	1,115,912	52
Londonderry	3,557,133	1,771,140	50
Lurgan	1,783,486	1,293,382	73
Magherafelt	1,834,339	665,645	36
Newcastle	302,765	117,635	39
Newry	1,849,537	1,063,521	58
Newtownabbey	1,003,436	417,083	42
Newtonwnards	338,745	219,172	65
Omagh	1,277,358	604,443	47
Portadown	861,234	320,341	37
Shaftesbury Square	1,602,659	889,466	55
Shankill	952,237	582,529	61
Strabane	1,633,498	613,060	38

[1] 15 December 1985 to 16 December 1986.

The allocations for 1988-89 reflect the distribution of single payments and caseloads at social security offices during the period 16 December 1986 to 28 July 1987.

Unemployment (Young People)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people aged *(a)* 16 years, and *(b)* 17 years are currently unemployed; and how many are currently in their final year of schooling in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* At 8 October 1987 there were 1,668 unemployed 16-year-olds and 3,327 unemployed 17-year-olds in Northern Ireland. It is not possible to determine how many 16 and 17-year-olds are currently in their final year of schooling. The numbers who leave school in the present school year can be assessed only after the end of the year.

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the maximum net weekly incomes that would qualify for community charge rebates based, as far as possible, on the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986 and the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 for *(a)* a single person aged 18 to 24 years, *(b)* a married couple with two children under 11 years, *(c)* a pensioner couple aged 60 to 79 years and *(d)* any person with capital in excess of £6,000, assuming community charge p[illegible] adult levels of (i) £150, (ii) £175, (iii) £224, (iv) £250, (v) £275, (vi) £300, (vii) £348, (viii) £400, (ix) £500, (x) £551 and (xi) £1,000.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* Decisions have yet to be made as to how community charge rebate entitlement will be calculated in respect of persons whose net incomes are in excess of their income support levels. The hon. Member's question is therefore hypothetical. However, if the procedures set out in the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 for calculating entitlement to rate rebate were to apply, including the 20 per cent. taper and the 50p minimum entitlement, and if the community charge rebate entitlement of partners in a couple were to be calculated by combining their community charge liabilities and assessing their needs and resources jointly, rebates would be available up to the following levels of net income:

	Level of community charge	*(a) Single person aged 18-24*	*(b) Couple with two children under 11*	*(c) Pensioner couple aged 60-79*
	£	£	£	£
(i)	150	40·10	109·67	88·27
(ii)	175	42·06	115·99	92·19
(iii)	224	45·82	121·11	99·71
(iv)	250	47·82	125·11	103·71
(v)	275	49·74	128·95	107·55
(vi)	300	51·66	132·79	111·39
(vii)	348	55·34	140·15	118·75
(viii)	400	59·34	148·15	126·75
(ix)	500	67·06	163·58	142·19
(x)	551	70·98	171·43	150·03
(xi)	1,000	105·50	240·47	219·07

Notes:

1. It has been assumed that a single person aged 18 to 24 is entitled to a £5 earnings disregard and that a couple with two children aged under 11 are entitled to a £10 earnings disregard.
2. Under the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 rebate is not available to persons with capital in excess of £6,000.
3. The applicable amounts that have been used in these calculations are those for 1988-89. The applicable amounts for 1990-91, the year of the introduction of the community charge in England and Wales, will be put to Parliament for approval in the autumn of 1989, and will include compensation towards the minimum community charge payment.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Council of Ministers

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Fisheries Ministers' meeting on 14 and 15 December in Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Together with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 14, 15 and 16 December.

The Council reached agreement by qualified majority on a compromise package of proposals on total allowable catches and quotas for 1988. This represents a very satisfactory outcome for the United Kingdom fishing industry and will provide a strong basis on which our fishermen can plan their fishing in the coming year. The package agreed contained welcome improvements in the opportunities originally proposed for the United Kingdom fishermen in respect of no less than 26 stocks. In almost all cases these were fully in line with the available scientific advice.

One of our main concerns was to make the maximum progress toward securing flexibility for member states to take part of their quotas for western mackerel to the east of 4 deg. west. There were objections from a number of the member states who argued that it raised fundamental issues affecting the basis of the common fisheries policy, a point which we strenuously refuted. Despite this opposition, we were able to secure a Council declaration inviting the Commission to examine possible solutions to problems caused by changes in the migratory pattern of fish stocks, including the western mackerel stock, and to report to the Council on ways of implementing solutions by 31 March 1988. The Council undertook to consider any solution that might be proposed by the Commission by 31 May 1988. This is an encouraging development and I shall continue to press for a sensible solution to this problem.

A number of useful conservation measures were agreed, including the continuation of this year's special measure for the protection of juvenile North sea cod in the German bight, and an extended period for the large mesh size to protect the juvenile North sea herring in the Skagerrak and Kattegat.

The Council also adopted by qualified majority a compromise package of proposals on fish guide prices for 1988. This, together with the green currency changes already agreed, will mean a 4·7 per cent. increase in support of prices for our white fish producers. The guide price for herring will be reduced by 9 per cent. in line with the needs of the market.

I emphasised our grave concern at the shortcomings we had experienced this year in the system of reporting of landings in other member states, leading to unexpected and premature closures of certain of our fisheries. I asked the Commission to convene a working group of experts to consider ways of improving these procedures. The Commission undertook to consider this suggestion, which was warmly supported by a number of other member states.

In total, this Council represented a further step forward in consolidating and developing the common fisheries policy.

Food Labelling

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking about the increasing use of the word natural and other similar terms in food labelling and advertising; and if he will make a statememt.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am certainly aware of the increasing use of the word "natural" and words and phrases which have a similar effect in food labelling and advertising and I have been concerned that some of these may be misleading the consumer. Indeed, that is why last year I commissioned the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards (LACOTS) to carry out a survey for me of the use of "natural" on food labels and in advertising so that a full assessment could be made. I am arranging for this most useful report, which clearly shows the extent of the problem to be published. The report was subsequently considered by the Food Advisory Committee (FAC) which looked into this issue in detail and I have now received the committee's advice.

The FAC has concluded that there is a clear, and increasing, risk of consumers being misled by current practices in labelling and advertising and that, despite the protection in section 6 of the Food Act 1984 against misleading descriptions, there is a need to bring some additional control and rationality into the present situation. They considered, however, that this was not a area of labelling which readily lent itself to the precise definitions required by law, but that it was nevertheless possible to draw up some broad guidelines on the appropriate (and inappropriate) use of "natural" claims. Their view was that the food industry, with the encouragement of the enforcement authorities and consumers, might be willing to follow such guidelines on a voluntary basis and therefore put their own house in order. I am arranging for this also to be published.

I am grateful to LACOTS for its research and to the FAC for the work it has done. The guidelines suggested by the FAC seem to me to be well thought out and therefore suitable as a basis from which the answers to problems in this area might be developed. I am therefore sending the FAC advice to representative organisations of the interests concerned to see if, in the light of it, a voluntary measure of control might be achieved.

My colleagues in the Health and Agriculture Departments share my views on this subject and consultations with the interested organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will also be undertaken.

It should, of course, be remembered that section 1 of the Food Act 1984 ensures that nothing should be done to food which might render it injurious to health.

Copies of the report of the LACOTS survey and of the FAC advice have been placed in the Library of the House.

Farmers (EC Proposals)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide figures on the estimated financial and production implications of the Commission of the European Communities' proposals for farmers in the United Kingdom contained in documents numbers 8250/87, 8761/87 and ADDI to ADD4, 9066/87 and 6116/1/87.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission has not estimated the financial or production implications of implementing its stabiliser proposals (documents 8250/87, 8761/87 and ADD 1 to ADD 4). These would depend on a number of factors, notably the extent to which future production triggered the stabilisers. The Commission has estimated the savings which might result from the proposals in document 9066/87, in relation to mandarins only, at 10 million ecu (£7 million) per annum. There are no implications from this measure for farmers in the United Kingdom. The Commission states that the proposals on income aids in document 6116/1/87 should have no overall effect on levels of production.

The Commission estimates that expenditure under the part EC-funded income aid scheme could be roughly 1,800 million ecu (£1,259 million) over nine years; and that expenditure on the cessation scheme (pre-pensions for farmers over 55 years of age) could be 465 million ecu (£325 million) over five years, though the Commission envisages that this expenditure would be more than offset by savings in budgetary expenditure, consequent on reduction in area farmed, of 760 million ecu (£531 million) over the five-year period. The schemes in document 6116/1/87 are all optional and the financial and production implications for farmers in any member state would depend on the extent of national take-up.

EC (Domestic Animals)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many domestic animals coming from the member states of the European Community in 1986 were placed in quarantine under official supervision; and how many were subsequently found to be suffering from *(a)* rabies, *(b)* distemper or *(c)* other infectious diseases;

(2) how many domestic animals coming from the member states of the European Community were intercepted as a result of systematic checks at United Kingdom ports and airports during 1986, their owners having attempted to evade quarantine regulations; and how many of these were subsequently found to have *(a)* rabies, *(b)* distemper or *(c)* other infectious diseases.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I understand that 32 dogs, 18 cats and 17 other mammals coming from member states of the European Community were detected as a result of systematic checks at United Kingdom ports and airports in 1986, their owners having attempted to evade the quarantine requirements. Animals landed illegally may be re-exported, placed in quarantine or destroyed. None of the animals directed to quarantine were found to be infected with rabies.

During the same period 4,738 dogs, 2,329 cats and 39,193 other mammals were landed under licence and placed in authorised quarantine premises. None of these animals were found to have rabies.

Details of the countries of origin of these animals and the reports on the health of each animal held in quarantine are not held centrally. I regret, therefore, that the other information requested cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Sheep Imports (Ireland)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep or lambs have been imported from the Republic of Ireland to *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* the United Kingdom in each month since April 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* United Kingdom import data do not separately identify imports into Great Britain. However, the Irish Livestock and Meat Board market bulletins give the following data for exports of fat sheep and lambs for immediate slaughter:

	1986	*1987 (to August)*
Great Britain	577	479
United Kingdom	15,476	12,429

Animals (Radioactivity)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what discussions he has had with the Minister of Agriculture in the Republic of Ireland about radioactivity in animals following the Chernobyl accident;

(2) if, in view of the discovery of radioactivity levels in excess of 600 bq/kg in the Republic of Ireland, he intends to review the import of sheep and sheepmeat from the Republic of Ireland into the United Kingdom;

(3) if officials from his Ministry have given any advice and assistance to their opposite numbers in the Irish Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Routine precautionary monitoring by the authorities in the Republic of Ireland has identified a small number of sheep with readings of radiocaesium above the action level. My officials have had both formal and informal discussions with their opposite numbers in the Republic on this issue and have provided advice on technical and scientific matters. They have been informed of the programme of monitoring of live sheep and carcases instituted by the Irish authorities and have been assured that sheep and sheepmeat shown to be over the action level for radiocaesium will not be permitted to be exported. My officials continue to maintain contacts with the Department of Agriculture in the Republic and will respond to any further requests for advice or assistance.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Stockport Infirmary

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the planned establishment levels for medical staff at Stockport infirmary; and what are the current levels of staff in post;

(2) if he will list the consultant posts currently vacant within the Stockport district health authority, together with the dates upon which they were first advertised.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the chairmen of North Western regional health authority and Stockport district health authority for the information he seeks.

Laboratory Officers

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number, full-time

equivalents, of medical scientific laboratory officers employed by each district health authority at the latest convenient date; and what were the figures in 1984 and 1980.

Mr. Newton: Comparable figures for 1980 are not available. The table shows the number of medical laboratory scientific officers (including unqualified grades) employed by each district health authority at 30 September 1982, 1984 and 1986:

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers at 30 September

Health Authorities	*1982*	*1984*	*Whole-time Equivalent 1986*
Northern Region			
Hartlepool	30	30	31
North Tees	50	53	48
South Tees	72	75	75
East Cumbria	33	32	32
South Cumbria	29	31	29
West Cumbria	27	28	31
Darlington	33	34	31
Durham	35	34	35
North West Durham	24	25	24
South West Durham	21	22	25
Northumberland	37	39	41
Gateshead	42	44	48
Newcastle-upon-Tyne (T)	268	282	273
North Tyneside	26	29	30
South Tyneside	33	36	39
Sunderland	69	71	77
Yorkshire Region			
Hull	96	96	93
East Yorkshire	28	29	30
Grimsby	47	52	52
Scunthorpe	32	36	41
Northallerton	19	20	18
York	57	59	59
Scarborough	31	32	31
Harrogate	32	31	32
Bradford	93	92	89
Airedale	39	38	39
Calderdale	56	56	57
Huddersfield	58	56	57
Dewsbury	33	31	41
Leeds Western (T)	194	205	203
Leeds Eastern (T)	107	115	116
Wakefield	44	45	44
Pontefract	41	41	41
Trent Region			
North Derbyshire	49	58	63
South Derbyshire	110	112	111
Leicestershire (T)	161	196	208
North Lincolnshire	41	45	48
South Lincolnshire	59	62	58
Bassetlaw	28	29	29
Central Nottinghamshire	70	71	69
Nottingham (T)	212	205	205
Barnsley	50	52	50
Doncaster	56	59	60
Rotherham	55	55	56
Sheffield (T)	224	232	232
East Anglia			
Cambridge (T)	113	108	102
Peterborough	58	57	57
West Suffolk	38	35	53
East Suffolk	65	67	63
Norwich	74	114	83
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	50	54	54
West Norfolk and Wisbech	50	45	47
Huntingdon	28	47	50
North West Thames			
North Bedfordshire	44	43	53
South Bedfordshire	28	30	33
North Hertfordshire	41	42	45
East Hertfordshire	36	35	36
North West Hertfordshire	54	65	65
South West Hertfordshire	39	47	46
Barnet	89	88	83
Harrow	84	75	74
Hillingdon	91	89	91
Hounslow and Spelthorne	89	88	89
Ealing	43	47	47
Brent	57	62	60
Paddington and North Kensington (T)	88	96	89
Riverside	184	175	180
North East Thames			
Basildon and Thurrock	88	82	82
Mid Essex	60	62	68
North East Essex	73	72	69
West Essex	64	56	55
Southend	72	64	65
Barking/Havering/ Brentwood	154	159	164
Hampstead (T)	138	129	131
Bloomsbury (T)	103	125	128
Islington	71	71	68
City and Hackney (T)	196	192	190
Newham	64	63	60
Tower Hamlets (T)	131	127	123
Enfield	52	52	54
Haringey	96	87	76
Redbridge	50	47	46
Waltham Forest	74	76	71
South West Thames			
North West Surrey	49	48	47
West Surrey and North East Hants	48	49	49
South West Surrey	49	51	53
Mid-Surrey	49	53	44
East Surrey	62	55	48
Chichester	46	44	45
Mid-Downs	35	60	71
Worthing	50	47	53
Croydon	59	55	55
Kingston and Esher	60	51	50
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	39	45	50
Wandsworth (T)	67	58	50
Merton and Sutton	120	115	110
South East Thames			
Brighton	66	67	73
Eastbourne	51	52	52
Hastings	38	37	39
South East Kent	62	61	59
Canterbury and Thanet	76	75	70
Dartford and Gravesham	46	46	47
Maidstone	30	38	42
Medway	46	50	54
Tunbridge Wells	52	58	52
Bexley	29	34	35
Greenwich	106	106	103
Bromley	90	89	83
West Lambeth (T)	177	172	169
Camberwell (T)	108	101	99
Lewisham and North Southwark (T)	198	197	171

Health Authorities	1982	1984	Whole-time Equivalent 1986
Wessex			
East Dorset	104	105	106
West Dorset	40	39	37
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	105	114	115
Southampton and South West Hampshire (T)	204	212	200
Winchester	54	51	54
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	41	41	42
Salisbury	48	47	49
Swindon	57	56	59
Bath	73	69	70
Isle of Wight	31	32	33
Oxford			
East Berkshire	85	71	71
West Berkshire	77	78	78
Aylesbury Vale	67	67	63
Wycombe	58	54	60
Milton Keynes	—	33	38
Kettering	63	66	62
Northampton	95	93	86
Oxfordshire	194	204	203
South Western			
Bristol and Weston (T)	122	110	114
Frenchay	50	42	44
Southmead	95	85	84
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	54	56	58
Exeter	71	73	74
North Devon	33	34	33
Plymouth	73	76	79
Torbay	54	62	66
Cheltenham	49	51	58
Gloucester	66	58	60
Somerset	66	62	62
West Midlands			
Bromsgrove and Redditch	36	36	38
Herefordshire	33	36	31
Kidderminster and District	23	20	24
Worcester and District	54	55	61
Shropshire	82	78	82
Mid-Staffordshire	41	42	42
North Staffordshire	115	105	106
South East Staffordshire	30	40	47
Rugby	21	22	24
North Warwickshire	32	32	40
South Warwickshire	33	34	40
Central Birmingham (T)	219	213	211
East Birmingham	102	104	103
North Birmingham	60	61	62
South Birmingham	66	65	62
West Birmingham	94	89	93
Coventry	117	112	109
Dudley	102	100	92
Sandwell	82	80	78
Solihull	51	47	50
Walsall	43	48	50
Wolverhampton	64	69	70
Mersey			
Chester	42	42	38
Crewe	48	49	48
Halton	—	—	—
Macclesfield	36	38	39
Warrington	42	47	64
Liverpool (T)	263	273	289
St. Helens with Knowsley	65	63	61
Sefton North	23	22	23
Sefton South	98	100	104
Wirral	96	95	98
North Western			
Lancaster	38	41	41
Blackpool Wyre and Fylde	65	66	69
Preston	74	77	83
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	46	52	52
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	35	35	36
West Lancashire	31	29	30
Chorley and South Ribble	3	2	2
Bolton	61	64	63
Bury	38	38	36
North Manchester	116	116	112
Central Manchester (T)	157	164	164
South Manchester (T)	296	213	200
Oldham	58	59	65
Rochdale	43	39	36
Salford (T)	116	123	114
Stockport	56	57	57
Tameside and Glossop	36	37	36
Trafford	56	53	56
Wigan	61	61	67

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

Standard note throughout: — indicates Nil.

Source: DHSS (SR7) Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Nurses (North West Region)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses are employed in intensive care ustnits in the North Western regional health authority area; and how many nurses are receiving training in the same area for work in intensive care units.

Mr. Newton: Nursing staff in post in intensive care units in the North Western regional health authority at 30 September 1986 totalled 600 whole-time equivalents. This included 570 whole-time equivalents in coronary care and 30 whole-time equivalents in paediatric care. Information on nurses in training is not held centrally on a regional basis.

Nursing and Midwifery

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each region the number of nursing and midwifery vacancies and the relevant funded establishment, as found by the latest survey by the regional chairmen;

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of the annual surveys of nursing and midwifery vacancies by regional chairmen for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The results of the three sample surveys of the number of whole-time equivalent funded nursing and midwifery posts vacant for more than three months at 31 March each year, carried out by the regional chairmen's secretariat on behalf of the review body, were reported in the review body's second, third and fourth reports on nursing staff, midwives and health visitors. (Cmnd. 9529, 9782 and Cm. 129).

I am advised that disaggregation by region would not be statistically valid.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the organisations which, during the consultation period on the Government's proposals for primary health care, proposed the introduction of charges for *(a)* dental check-ups and *(b)* sight-testing.

Mr. Newton: In the course of the consultation on primary care, no one suggested either these proposals or any other way of re-ordering priorities in order to help sustain the additional expenditure which many of them proposed.

Foetal and Genetic Abnormality

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received a copy of the King's Fund forum consensus statement on screening for foetal and genetic abnormality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: A copy of the statement from the King's Fund forum has not yet been received in the Department.

High-titred Dried Material

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has to how many days' infectivity in high-titred dried material remains detectable under laboratory conditions.

Mr. Newton: Work conducted in France and in the United States has indicated that high titred HIV in a dried biological medium can retain some detectable infectivity for cell cultures for three to seven days.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services since what date his Department has been using the figure of up to 40,000 as the possible number of AIDS infections in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 26 October at column *191*, the Department no longer makes an estimate of the number of people with HIV infection in the United Kingdom. Numbers of reported cases of AIDS are published monthly and numbers of reported HIV positive tests are reported quarterly.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his projection of those who are HIV positive going on to develop AIDS within five years takes into account recent data from studies into this matter undertaken in Frankfurt, and by Redfield in the United States of America.

Mr. Newton: In considering future numbers of cases of HIV infection and AIDS, we take account of all relevant data produced in other countries.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to for how many days the human immunodeficiency virus is potentially infectious in liquid suspensions held at room temperature.

Mr. Newton: Relevant experimental work on the survival of HIV conducted in the United States was reported in 1986. In liquid suspension held at room temperature with starting concentrations higher than might be expected under natural conditions, viable virus was claimed to have been recovered for up to 15 days.

Mr. Butler: To ask for the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any information as to the inefectivity of AIDS by droplet from children suffering from chronic lymphoid intestitial pneumonitis and pulmonary tuberculosis consequent upon AIDS infections.

Mr. Newton: We have no specific information on the infectivity of HIV in children with AIDS suffering from chronic lymphoid intestitial pneumonitis and pulmonary tuberculosis. The available evidence suggests HIV is not spread by droplets from these or any other cases.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will institute a weekly monitor of the number of HIV infections and AIDS cases within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: The Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre and the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit continually monitor reports of positive HIV antibody test results and cases of AIDS.

Numbers of reported cases of AIDS, are published monthly and numbers of reported HIV positive tests are reported quarterly. We do not propose to publish the statistics more frequently because of the resources that this would involve and the fluctuations to which the figures would be subject.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he has any plans to improve clinical reporting of AIDS data to the communicable disease surveillance centre.

Mr. Newton: The current voluntary confidential system for reporting positive HIV antibody test results and cases of AIDS to the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre has already provided much valuable information. The group of experts, which I mentioned in my replies to my hon. Friend on 4 December, at column *759* and today, has been considering the current surveillance systems and how any improvements could be made.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the estimate made by the Paddington and North Kensington health authority of the number of beds needed for AIDS patients in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We keep in close touch with the regional health authorities with the largest numbers of AIDS patients. However, it is for individual health authorities to plan services for those patients in the light of guidelines issued by the Department.

Child Benefit

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the combined value of child tax allowance after clawback and family allowance or child benefit for families at *(a)* half average earnings, *(b)* average earnings, *(c)* twice average earnings, and *(d)* five times' average earnings in the years 1957, 1965, 1975, 1985 and the latest date available.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Child support[1] for families with two children aged 11 or under, at April 1987[2] values

Families on:	*April 1957* £	*April 1965* £	*April 1975* £	*November 1985* £	*April 1987* £
½ average earnings	3·46	3·85	12·01	14·86	14·50
average earnings	11·09	13·07	12·01	14·86	14·50
2x average earnings	16·46	14·44	12·01	14·86	14·50
5x average earnings	16·46	14·44	12·01	14·86	14·50

[1] The combined value of child tax allowance after clawback, and Family Allowance/Child Benefit.
[2] Based on the movement in the General Index of Retail Prices at April 1987.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost in 1987-88 and 1988-89 of a 50p increase in child benefit assuming *(a)* corresponding increases in supplementary benefit or income support rate and *(b)* no correponding increases in supplementary benefit or income support rates.

Mr. Scott: The cost of the increase in 1987-88 would have been *(a)* £300 million and *(b)* £240 million. In 1988-89 the cost would be *(a)* £270 million and *(b)* £210 million.

NHS (Charges)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what income was received in the last three years for services and treatment provided by the National Health Service to those resident outside the United Kingdom but who came to Britain specifically for treatment, or were here as visitors or were here for work purposes; and if he has any plans to change the level of charges made to those who use the National Health Service who live outside the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry I am not able to give my hon. Friend the figures he seeks. Information is not collected on the reasons why patients, resident outside the United Kingdom and treated in National Health Service hospitals, are present in the United Kingdom but not all those to whom he refers would be liable to charges. NHS charges to overseas visitors are normally reviewed annually, with revised charges applying from 1 April.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of treatment provided under the Naticnal Health Service for those resident in European Community countries outside the United Kingdom, and if he has any plans to change the level of charges made to them.

Mr. Newton: No comprehensive figures of costs of treatment provided under the National Health Service for nationals of other European Community member states are available.

Under EC regulations EC nationals receiving treatment in another member state are subject to the same charges as nationals of that member state. Any alterations in charges that may be proposed for users of the National Health Service would, therefore, equally apply to them.

Audiometry Facilities

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service establishments have audiometry facilities.

Mrs. Currie: In 1986 there were 386 National Health Service hospitals or clinics in England which performed audiometry tests. These dealt with 11,000 new in-patients and 359,600 new out-patients.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if workers exposed to noise above 85 dB(A) can obtain at present a National Health Service audiometry test within two months of a request.

Mrs. Currie: Any member of the public can be referred by their general practitioner for audiometry if this is appropriate. The length of time they may have to wait for an audiometry test will depend upon local circumstances.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when the European directive on noise is fully implemented, by 1 January 1990, how long a worker will have to wait between requesting an audiometry test and having a test through the National Health Service;

(2) since the acceptance of the European noise directive, what resources Her Majesty's Government have currently made available for audiometry tests through the National Health Service and how much the Government are planning to provide in the years 1988 to 1990, inclusive;

(3) how many staff in the National Health Service are currently undertaking audiometry tests; and how many new staff Her Majesty's Government intend to take on to meet the requirements of the European legislation.

Mrs. Currie: Draft proposals for implementing the directive were published by the Health and Safety Commission on 15 December. Decisions on the details of the implementation will be made when comments on the draft proposals have been received and considered.

The funding currently allocated by health authorities for audiometry testing is not recorded centrally, nor is the precise number of medical and/or technical staff involved at any one time in audiometry testing.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government are planning to charge workers to have audiometry tests through the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans to charge these staff.

Opren

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether in the light of the out-of-court settlements reached in the Opren case and the fact that the court has now adjourned sine die, he will now answer parliamentary questions on the subject of Opren; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The out-of-court settlement in the Opren case referred to by the right hon. Member is the result of

private negotiations between representatives of Eli Lilly and Company Limited, the manufacturers of the drug, and the plaintiffs concerned to which the Government defendants were not a party. The action against the Government defendants is still before the courts and, as Mr. Justice Hirst stressed in his statement on 9 December about the terms of the proposed settlement, the case is still sub judice.

Midwives

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many newly qualified midwives went into practice in the National Health Service in the years ended 30 September 1985, 30 September 1986 and 30 September 1987.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not centrally available.

Kimberley Carlile

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take in the light of the report of the inquiry chaired by Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper QC into the Kimberley Carlile case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: This is a full and detailed report which deserves careful consideration by all those with responsibilities in this field; indeed, many of the recommendations to individual agencies have already been put into effect and others are under consideration.

The Government have a major programme of work in hand which addresses a number of the recommendations. The report quite rightly emphasises the need for clarity in this complex area of law and the Government have recognised this need and their proposals are set out in White Paper "Law and Child Care and Family Services". In addition, the Chief Inspector of the SSI issued a "Dear Director" letter on 24 June which set out the powers available when access to a child is refused and further guidance is under consideration on the effect of a place of safety order.

The Government have already established a central training initiative for child abuse. Stages one and two are well under way and address awareness and recognition, referral and handling of case conferences, in-depth training in treatment as well as a video on medical diagnosis in child sexual abuse. The report's recommendations on exchange of information will be tackled in the practice guidelines currently being drawn up.

It would not be right for the Government to pre-empt the outcome an recommendations of other current inquiries which may have points of similarity in relation to child care procedures. These will be considered in the redrafting of "Working Together."

Social Fund

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services upon what basis he decided the social fund allocations to individual offices.

Mr. Scott: As I promised in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) on 23 November, at column *84*, an explanation of the basis of the social fund allocations to individual offices was placed in the Library on 30 November.

Nurses (Overtime)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates to be *(a)* the percentage of nurses working overtime and *(b)* the cost of this work to the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The information which the hon. Member is seeking is not readily available. I will let him have a reply as soon as possible.

RPI (Computer Error)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which pensions and benefits payable by his Department were affected by the computer error in calculating incorrect retail prices index figures; and what action he intends to take to recompense those who suffered a loss as a consequence.

Mr. Scott: The error in the calculation of the retail prices index has affected to varying degrees the levels of a number of social security benefits. Some benefits are not affected at all.

I will be making an announcement to the House on the action we intend to take.

Nurses (Outside Income)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take about the report from the Royal College of Nursing relating to nurses supplementing their income by taking other employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the Royal College of Nursing, as part of its evidence to the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine, has commissioned a survey from the Institute of Manpower Studies on, among other things, the number of nurses having a second job. We shall be studying the Royal College of Nursing's survey with the interest as soon as the evidence to the review body is exchanged.

Heating Bills

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the basis within the new income support scheme for determining assistance with heating bills.

Mr. Scott: The weekly applicable amounts under the new income support scheme are intended to cover all day-to-day living expenses, including heating costs. Pensioners, sick and disabled people and families will receive premiums which take account of the extra help they may need for such things as heating costs.

Cold Weather (Advice to Elderly)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, what action he is taking to make information available to elderly people on keeping warm during very cold weather; and what is the estimated cost of such publicity.

Mrs. Currie: The Government have initiated a major information campaign this winter, entitled "Keep Warm, Keep Well", to advise both elderly people and other vulnerable groups about keeping warm in cold weather.

This is a joint campaign between the Government and three leading voluntary organisations: Age Concern, Help the Aged and Neighbourhood Energy Action. It was launched on 17 November. The campaign includes a free telephone advisory help-line, a Government booklet, television public information films and newspaper advertising in both national and local press. The cost to the Department will be around £500,000 and I will arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy of the press pack to use in his own area.

This campaign is being run in addition to the normal publicity given by the Department to social security benefits, and by other Government Departments to issues such as energy conservation. The voluntary organisations are also issuing advisory leaflets of their own.

I am placing copies of the booklet in the Library.

Doctors' Records

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how he intends to speed up the method of record exchange so as to make it easier for the patient to change doctors.

Mr. Newton: The computerisation of patient registration data held by family practitioner committees (to be completed by March 1988) and of data held on the National Health Service central register at Southport (planned for 1990) should reduce delays in the transfer of patients' records. This will not of itself make it easier for patients to change doctors. It is, however, our aim to do this, as stated in paragraph 3.33 of the recent White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249).

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he proposes that collective community charge payments will be collected from occupants of designated dwellings net or gross of any rebates due to the occupants;

(2) what representations have been made by the local authority associations about the possible difficulties of operating rebates in connection with a collective community charge scheme.

Mr. Scott: In preliminary discussions about the arrangements for rebating the community charge, the local authority associations have drawn attention to a number of possible difficulties in operating rebates on collective community charge contributions, including the difficulty of payments being made net of rebate entitlement. We shall be discussing these arrangements fully with the associations before making firm proposals.

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how people with low incomes will be helped in meeting their liability for the community charge.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the proposed operations of community charge rebates and rate rebates in inner London and Waltham Forest in the period 1990 to 1994;

(2) what arrangements he has made with the local authority associations to discuss community charge rebates.

Mr. Scott: Help for those with low incomes will take two forms. Community charge rebates of up to 80 per cent. of the charge, depending on income and family circumstances: and compensation, built into income-related benefit levels (income support, housing benefit and family credit) towards the 20 per cent. minimum community charge payment.

These arrangements will carry forward similar help for low-income ratepayers from next April when all ratepayers will be expected to pay at least 20 per cent. of their domestic rates bill themselves. The rate rebate scheme will provide rebates up to 80 per cent., and the income-related benefit rates will include the average amount that income support claimants will be expected to pay towards their domestic rates.

Community Charge Rebates

Community charge rebates will be administered by local authorities in accordance with regulations that will be laid before Parliament in due course. Rebates will be available on personal community charges and collective community charge contributions, but not towards the standard community charge. Everyone who is liable for such a community charge will be eligible to apply for a rebate, except that rebates will not be available for those students who are required to pay only 20 per cent. of the charge.

Entitlement to community charge rebates will be based on an assessment of individuals' needs and resources. It is envisaged that the method used for that assessment will be aligned as closely as is practicable within that set out in the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 for assessing entitlement to housing benefit, although the precise amounts used to determine entitlements will not be settled until nearer the time, and will be subject to approval by Parliament. The maximum 80 per cent. rebate will, however, be available to everyone receiving income support or with an income of an equivalent level. As with rate rebates, there will be smaller rebates according to a sliding scale for those with incomes above income support levels. It is intended that wherever possible people entitled to a rebate should receive a net community charge bill.

Where both partners in a married couple or a couple living as husband and wife are liable for a full charge, there will be arrangements for rebating both their liabilities and the details of these are being discussed. Since non-dependent members of a household will be responsible for their own community charge liabilities, there will be no non-dependant deductions within the community charge rebate scheme.

Discussions with the local authority associations on the details of the rebate scheme have already started, and we hope to publish draft Community Charge Rebate Regulations during the spring or early summer of 1988, following consultation. It is our intention that the regulations, in so far as they will apply in Scotland from April 1989, should be laid in the autumn. It is expected that the same regulations will apply in Wales and in most of England from April 1990, and in due course will be bringing forward separate proposals for special rebate arrangements for those local authorities in England where there will be a transition period during which certain people will be liable both for the community charge and for residential rates. The details of these arrangements will be considered separately, but during the transition period rebates will be available to help people with low income to meet both liabilities.

Income-Related Benefit Levels

The Government have decided that there will be a once-for-all adjustment to income-related benefit levels from 1989 to help meet the 20 per cent. minimum contribution to the community charge. This adjustment will take place in April 1989, to coincide with the introduction of the community charge in Scotland. The precise amounts to be included in benefit levels will be decided nearer the time, but they will reflect the average minimum community charge payments for Great Britain as a whole.

Claimants in Scotland will, therefore, receive compensation to cover the minimum contribution to the community charge from April 1989. And the amounts included in the income-related benefit levels will provide assistance towards the minimum contribution to domestic rates in England and Wales where the charge is not due to come in until 1990.

Spectacles

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to ensure that the value of the voucher issued by his Department for persons to obtain spectacles from registered suppliers is of sufficient value to provide the budget-priced glasses referred to in his Department's leaflet FB19, published in February;

(2) if he will ensure that persons being issued with vouchers by local offices of his Department for spectacles can exchange these for moderately priced spectacles at registered suppliers without being required to make any additional payment; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list such information as is available to him on those registered suppliers of optical lenses who can supply such lenses at a price below £16.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The Department consults interested organisations on voucher values. Any increases in those values are expected to come into effect on 1 April next year, and will take into account such developments as changes in the price of spectacles. Under changes proposed in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) vouchers will also be exchangeable for contact lenses. Spectacles, both frames and lenses, are now supplied only through the private market. Information is not therefore available about the availability of lenses at particular prices. We believe, however, that in many areas spectacles are available at or about current voucher values.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will supply details of the rates of fees payable to BUPA nursing and other private agencies for the supply of state enrolled nurses, state registered nurses and sisters to National Health Service hospitals in the period 1979 to date.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* The maximum payment to a nurses' agency for work undertaken by an agency nurse consists of three elements: the nurse's salary, which is calculated on the mean of the appropriate National Health Service nursing and midwifery staffs pay scale; the agency's commission which can vary; and the employer's national insurance contribution. It is for health authorities to negotiate the best possible rate of commission with nurses' agencies for the supply of staff to meet short term needs. Some authorities are negotiating more favourable rates by putting these services out to tender.

Joint Civil/Military Medical Planning

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the arrangement for joint civil/military medical planning in England and Wales; if he will describe liaison arrangements for such planning as it is related to agreements with *(a)* NATO and *(b)* the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Joint civil/military medical planning has been a feature of Department of Health and Social Security and National Health Service civil defence policy and planning for a number of years. Government Departments regularly consider the problems which would arise if casualties of war—British, United States or of other NATO nations—were evacuated to the United Kingdom in wartime. NHS health emergency planning officers (HEPOs) liaise with the Department, the Welsh Office and with the military on civil defence matters of joint interest. Seminars were arranged in 1986 and 1987 at the Civil Defence college to enable HEPOs and military medical planners to be briefed by central Government Departments on joint medical planning matters.

Mortality

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express the number of deaths in England and in Wales of those aged 65 years and over which occurred in the months October to March as a percentage of those which occurred in the previous six months, for each year since 1974-75; and if he will publish what information he has on seasonal variations in the death rate among those aged 65 years and over in *(a)* EEC member states, *(b)* Norway, *(c)* Sweden, *(d)* Iceland and *(e)* Finland.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The information for England and Wales is given in table 1. Figures on the same basis for the remaining countries can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, table 2 shows data readily available for persons of all ages.

Table 1—Number of deaths for October to March expressed as a percentage of those for the previous April to September for persons aged 65 years and over for (a) occurrences and (b) registrations England and Wales 1974-75 to 1986-87

	Percentage of occurrences	*Percentage of registrations*
1974-75	118·4	—
1975-76	125·9	—
1976-77	119·8	—
1977-78	118·1	—
1978-79	121·2	—
1979-80	115·2	—
1980-81	117·4	—
1981-82	121·9	—
1982-83	120·1	—
1983-84	115·0	114·02
1984-85	122·5	122·26
1985-86	124·2	120·21
1986-87[1]	..	109·91

[1] Figures for 1986-87 are not strictly comparable with those of earlier years as the January to March deaths for 1987 are provisional.
.. Not available.

Table 2

Number of deaths occurring in months October to March expressed as a percentage of those occurring in the previous April to September, by country, 1974-75 to 1983-84

Persons, all ages

Country	*1974-75*	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Belgium	115·12	110·82	103·50	113·39	110·07	108·76	109·04	108·20	110·67	107·76
Irish Republic[1]	113·03	117·40	114·00	115·50	115·17	113·04	117·04	122·62	121·02	52·40
France	115·87	109·34	103·79	..	..	..	114·18	108·47	52·51	..
German Federal Republic	113·81	106·37	101·53	111·09	107·19	106·41	106·83	107·17	107·04	105·19
Italy	124·54	118·76	115·16	114·55	112·55	116·14	..	..	..	..
Luxembourg	115·96	116·11	97·07	112·41	107·73	106·90	113·58	111·79	103·39	109·53
Netherlands	110·34	107·18	101·27	111·95	106·83	107·25	107·02	108·86	106·32	107·15
Portugal	132·51	133·85	119·71	121·05	116·06	118·56	128·24	108·70	127·99	55·30
Spain	130·27	119·15	114·07	112·14	112·71	..	..	..	..	..
Greece	126·05	124·60	126·68	120·60	111·36	123·20	117·97	114·53	118·46	109·53
Denmark	104·13	114·91	104·78	109·93	108·84	109·46	108·94	107·34	106·93	106·73
Norway	110·44	108·29	101·13	104·97	109·69	105·42	112·88	109·08	104·41	107·04
Sweden	106·97	111·45	103·71	108·71	107·59	106·56	109·25	108·41	106·50	124·88
Iceland	98·04	103·11	104·35	99·59	98·00	97·24	101·14	97·00	94·63	107·92
Finland	106·57	111·03	104·48	99·96	105·18	110·04	107·76	104·71	106·00	103·63
United Kingdom[1]	115·62	115·64	116·72	115·63	117·90	112·70	114·33	..	..	..

[1] Percentages based on registrations rather than occurrences.
.. Not available.
Source: United Nations Demographic Yearbook, 1980 and 1985.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff Statistics

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many employees in the House are registered disabled.

Mr. Beith: Among the staff of the House for whom the Commission is responsible, there are six persons employed who are registered as disabled. Other registered disabled people work in the House, but their employment is the responsibility of agencies, such as the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many staff are employed in the House broken down by Department.

Mr. Beith: The numbers of staff employed in the respective Departments of the House are as follows:

	Numbers
Speaker's Office	[1]12
Department of the Clerk of the House	145
Department of the Serjeant at Arms	215
Department of the Library	174
Department of the Official Report	82
Administration Department	83
Refreshment Department	235

[1] Including Chaplain.
These figures include full-time and part-time staff.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what has been the cost of *(a)* training and *(b)* retraining House staff by category per head in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Beith: No record was kept for training costs prior to financial year 1983-84; nor is it practicable to distinguish between training and retraining. The costs by category per head could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The statistics for staff training for the years for which records are available are as follows:

Staff training costs

Year	*Cost (£)*	*Staff Nos*[1]
1987-88	36,602·83	[2]964
1986-87	36,767·54	914½
1985-86	33,092·36	911
1984-85	22,465·16	897
1983-84	14,814·73	885

[1] Actual staff numbers at the end of each Financial Year.
[2] To date.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many employees working in the House are from the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Beith: A programme of ethnic monitoring of staff of the House is shortly to be conducted. Until the survey has been completed and the results evaluated it is not possible to provide the figures asked for.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 17 December 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Licensed Conveyancers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General whether Her Majesty's Government will accept and implement the recommendation in the first report of the ad hoc conveyancing committee chaired by Professor Julian Farrand which was submitted to the Lord Chancellor in September 1984 to the effect that the Council for Licensed Conveyancers should " make periodical reports to the Lord Chancellor and to licensed conveyancers, notwithstanding that no such requirement was imposed by the Administration of Justice Act 1985.

The Attorney-General: No. This matter was carefully considered at the time and was discussed during the passage of the Administration of Justice Bill. There is no reason to depart from the conclusions which were reached then.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many new licences were issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers with effect from 1 December to *(a)* persons then already in practice as non-solicitor conveyancers providing services directly to the public, *(b)* solicitors in professional practice as such, either as principals or as employees, *(c)* persons, not themselves solicitors, employed by solicitors in professional practice, *(d)* persons employed by local authorities or *(e)* others not in any of these categories.

The Attorney-General: As at 10 December 1987, the figures are *(a)* 34; *(b)* 1; *(c)* 81; *(d)* 10; *(e)* 13.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many licensed conveyancers who are *(a)* in independent practice offering services directly to the public, *(b)* in professional practice as solicitors, either as principals or as employees, *(c)* not being solicitors, employed by solicitors in professional practice, *(d)* employed by local authorities or *(e)* not in any of those categories, have not renewed their licences for the period beginning 1 December.

The Attorney-General: As at 10 December 1987, the figures are *(a)* 2; *(b)* 8; *(c)* 8; *(d)* 0; *(e)* 1.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many conveyancers now holding licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers are *(a)* in independent practice offering services directly to the public, *(b)* solicitors in professional practice as such, either as principals or as employees, *(c)* not being solicitors, employed by solicitors in professional practice, *(d)* employed by local authorities or *(e)* not in any of these categories.

The Attorney-General: As at 10 December 1987, the figures are *(a)* 107; *(b)* 21; *(c)* 175; *(d)* 26; *(e)* 28.

Conveyancing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what recommendations for action have been received by Her Majesty's Government from the Law Commission in consequence of the appointment by the Law Commission at the request of the then Lord Chancellor of a conveyancing standing committee two years ago.

The Attorney-General: The Law Commission's report No. 161 on leasehold conveyancing was published in May last year following a recommendation by the conveyancing standing committee. The committee endorsed the commission's recommendation in Law Commission report No. 148 that the register of title at the Land Registry should be made open to public inspection. The committee has also considered and responded to the working papers which led to the Law Commission reports Nos. 163, 164 and 166 (which all concern the transfer of land).

Sale of Land

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General what progress has been made by the Law Commission's conveyancing standing committee, appointed in early 1985 at the request of the then Lord Chancellor and chaired by Professor Julian Ferrand, towards implementing the recommendation in the second report of the ad hoc conveyancing committee chaired by Professor Julian Ferrand, which was submitted to the Lord Chancellor in January 1985 that within two or three years of being established the conveyancing standing committee should produce a sale of land Act, with a prescribed form of contract and including the codification and embodiment of all the terms implied by common law and the relevant relieving rules of equity.

The Attorney-General: The main objective of the conveyancing standing committee was to achieve real improvements in conveyancing practice and procedure within two years. For this purpose the committee has concentrated on matters of practice not requiring legislation.

Official Secrets Act

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide a consolidated list updated to the most convenient date of proceedings commenced under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act since 1 August 1978 in the manner set out in appendix 2 to the Franks report and the reply to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 1 August 1978, *Official Report*, columns *230-31*.

The Attorney-General: The details of proceedings that have been commenced under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911 since 1 August 1978 are as follows:

1978

A former corporal in the intelligence corps knowingly passed on information relating to military and defence establishments to two journalists who were deliberately seeking to obtain secret information. Charges were also brought under section 1 but were withdrawn during the trial. They were all convicted under section 2. The former corporal was given a six month sentence suspended for two years. The two journalists were conditionally discharged for three years but ordered to contribute £2,500 towards the costs.

1979

A superintendent in the criminal intelligence branch of the Metropolitan police communicated confidential papers of substantial intelligence value about two men suspected of

involvement in international crime to a business man interested in this material. The business man concerned had died by the time the police officer was tried. The police officer was also charged with offences of corruption arising out of the same facts. He was convicted of wrongful communication of information at the Central Criminal Court and fined £500. He was acquitted of the corruption offence.

1979

A senior examiner in bankruptcy engaged in examining the affairs of a professional criminal allowed the criminal to see a confidential report and copy from it. The civil servant was prosecuted in the magistrates' court and was given a three-month prison sentence suspended for one year and fined £500.

1980

A civil servant in the Ministry of Defence was charged in connection with his retention of a number of cassette tapes which had confidential information encoded on them. The proceedings were withdrawn at the Crown court.

1981

An employee of the Department of Health and Social Security and a private detective were convicted summarily of communicating and retaining personal information about members of the public stored on the DHSS computer. Both defendants were ordered to undertake 180 hours of community service and pay £25 each towards the prosecution's costs.

1981

An ex-detective who had been involved in the Yorkshire Ripper inquiry disclosed to a journalist confidential information that had come into his possession during the inquiry. He pleaded guilty before the magistrates and was fined £750 and ordered to pay £200 towards the prosecution's costs.

1982

An able seaman retained in his possession after his discharge a notebook containing confidential information, which he subsequently threatened to sell to an Eastern bloc embassy. He was convicted at the Central Criminal Court and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

1982

A retired Army captain was prosecuted for failing to take reasonable care of secret orders for use in time of war or civil emergency. He was convicted in the Crown court and given a 12-month sentence suspended for two years. He was also convicted of offences of theft, for which he was fined.

1982

A second secretary at the British embassy in Tel Aviv communicated confidential information to an official in the Egyptian embassy in Tel Aviv. She pleaded guilty at the Central Criminal Court and was given a nine-month prison sentence suspended for two years.

1982

A CID officer passed details of criminal convictions to an inquiry agent, having obtained the details from the police national computer and criminal record office. The inquiry agent compiled reports for his clients containing this information. The inquiry agent pleaded guilty before the magistrates to five offences under section 2 and was fined a total of £500. The CID officer elected to be tried at the Crown court. The examining magistrate dismissed all but one of the summonses. The prosecution decided there was no merit in proceedings on the remaining summons and it was withdrawn.

1983

An information officer employed by the Central Office of Information failed to take reasonable care of a number of confidential briefs prepared for the United Kingdom delegate attending a ministerial meeting in Brussels. The contents of these briefs subsequently appeared in the press. He pleaded guilty in the magistrates' court and was fined £500.

1983

A former employee at the British high commission in Bangladesh took home confidential material because of pressure at work. He pleaded guilty at the magistrates' court and was fined £1,200.

1984

A serving police officer misused the police national computer to provide unauthorised details of car ownership. He was fined £100 at the Crown court.

1984

A civilian terminal operator on the police national computer disclosed locations of burglaries to a burglar alarm company. He pleaded not guilty but was convicted and fined £200 at the magistrates' court. A number of appeals have been refused. In 1987 he was refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

1984

A clerk working in the private office of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office leaked two minutes relating to cruise missiles to a national newspaper. She pleaded guilty at the Crown court and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

1985

A member of a financial group at the Home Office directorate of industries and farms (DIF) investigating the relationship of the Home Office with a private company gave confidential documents to a suspect in the police inquiry—a fellow civil servant in DIF. He was committed for trial at Crown court. From the committal proceedings it appeared that his defence would be that he had a discretion to pass these documents to a fellow civil servant. After taking counsel's advice it was decided that the prosecution should not continue.

1985

A civil servant in the Ministry of Defence leaked a copy of an MOD paper re the Belgrano to an MP. He was charged with communicating information to an unauthorised person. Issues raised at the subsequent trial by the defence were whether the MP was a person to whom the defendant was authorised to communicate the information and whether such a disclosure was in the interests of the state. The jury returned a verdict of not guilty.

1985

A solicitor was tried twice at the Crown court on two counts of endeavouring to persuade a police officer to communicate confidential police files to him. At the conclusion of each trial the jury failed to agree. The prosecution decided to proceed no further and offered no evidence.

1986

Four people were prosecuted for being concerned with obtaining and copying classified technical manuals to facilitate identification of marine components. Their alleged purpose was to trade in such components with the Argentinian navy. Three defendants were convicted at the Crown court, fined £400 and given various terms of imprisonment. One defendant subsequently had his conviction quashed on appeal.

1986

A clerk in the Department of Health and Social Security gave personal information about claims made by the husband of a local councillor to a rival councillor. The clerk pleaded guilty at the Crown court and was sentenced to three months' imprisonment suspended for two years. The councillor pleaded not guilty but was convicted at the Crown court. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment suspended for two years.

1987

A civilian employee at New Scotland Yard gave a person details of police vehicles for £50. He pleaded guilty at the magistrates' court and was sentenced to two months' imprisonment suspended for two years.

1987

A former soldier who had served in Northern Ireland was charged with offences of retaining and communicating documents. The material was very sensitive and would have been of considerable assistance to terrorists. He pleaded guilty at the Crown court and was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment.

1987

A journalist obtained police documents about a suspect from an unidentified source. He was charged with unlawfully receiving a document knowing or having reasonable ground to believe at the time of receipt that the document was communicated to him in contravention of the Act. At the trial at the Crown court the defence submitted that he would give evidence that he knew that the documents should not have been passed to him and the passing of them might have been a disciplinary offence by the communicator, but that he did

not know that it was an offence under the Act. In the absence of proof of knowledge of contravention of the Act, the trial judge upheld the defence submission of no case to answer.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations offices of the Law Officers' Departments; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

The Attorney-General: At present there are five staff employed in the press and public relations office of the Lord Chancellor's Department. It is planned that there will be six staff employed at this point in 1988.

My own Department, the Law Officers' Department, has no such office or staff.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Law Officers' Departments on press and pulic relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

The Attorney-General: The estimated expenditure by the Lord Chancellor's Department on press and public relations for 1987-88 is £29,700.

Detailed decisions on expenditure for 1988-89 have not yet been taken but £31,000 is anticipated.

My own Department, the Law Officers' Department, makes no expenditure on press or public relations.

Advertising

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by the Law Officers' Departments on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

The Attorney-General: The figures for the Lord Chancellor's Department for 1987-88, excluding associated staff costs, are as follows:

Estimated Expenditure

	1987-88 £
Television Advertising	Nil
Radio Advertising	Nil
Newspaper Advertising	15,000
Other Promotional Material	45,000

Detailed decisions on expenditure for 1988-89 have not yet been taken but no increase in expenditure over that for 1987-88 is anticipated. My own Department, the Law Officers' Department, makes no expenditure on advertising or other promotional material.

CIVIL SERVICE

Registered Homes Tribunal

Ms. Harman: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the names and occupations of the members of the panel of experts of the Registered Homes Tribunal.

Mr. Luce: The names and occupations of the persons on the panel of experts appointed by the Lord President of the Council under the Registered Homes Act 1984 are as follows:

Registered Homes Act 1984
Members of Panel of Experts
Name and occupation

Mrs. Carole Alford—Matron/Owner of 2 Nursing Homes in Eastbourne.
Geoffrey Arthur Banner—Retired Director Social Services.
Robert Bessell—Managing Director, Retirement Security Ltd.
Mrs. Susan Blanchard — Managing Director, Belvedere Hospital, Scarborough.
Miss Mary Blincoe—Director of Nursing Services.
Dr. G. R. Brackenridge — DMO, Northallerton Health Authority.
Mrs. Mary Edna Astill Brown—Part-time Administration work.
Dr. S. W. Brown — Consultant in Charge of Medical Services, David Lewis Centre.
Michael Peter John Burrell — Retired Rest Home Proprietor.
John Rupert Allen Chawner—Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Gwynedd DHA.
K. Coleman — Divisional Director, Westminster Social Services.
Miss Betty Cowell—Retired Principal, Midwife Teachers Training College, Kingston upon Thames.
Miss Rosalind Davies — Director, British Nursing Association.
Miss R. Dawson-Shepard—Volunteer Counsellor.
Geoffrey Stephen Dunn—Part-time Consultant, Cheshire Foundation Housing Association.
Dr. A. McL Gordon—Medical Director, The Retreat.
Mrs. Barbara Joyce Gray — Retd. Senior Lecturer, University of Birmingham.
Robert Guest — District Nursing Officer, Gt. Yarmouth and Waveney Health Authority.
Jack Hanson—Retd. Director Social Services.
Miss Dorothy Harris—Director of Nursing Services.
Mrs. Mary Grace Joynson—Senior Director and Director of Childcare, Dr. Barnadoes.
Dr. D. L. Kerr—Chief Executive, Manor House Hospital.
Mr. B. A. Maurice—Consultant Surgeon.
Dr. Stanley McDougall — Specialist in Community Medicine.
Michael McGeorge—National Nursing Officer, British Red Cross Society.
G. H. Neal—Director for Mencap.
Miss Margaret Nurse—Retd. Rest Home Proprietor.
Dr. J. R. Oxley—Physician-in-Charge, Chalfont Centre for Epilepsy, Hon. Physician, National Hospital for Nervous Diseases.
Mrs. Mary Parker — Matron-Partner at three Nursing Homes.
Miss Marjorie Mary Hatton Phillips — Retd. Local Government Officer.
Mervyn Hugh Phillips—Chief Executive, Clwyd County Council.
Miss Margaret Pilbeam — Chief Nursing Officer, Eastbourne Health Authority.
David R. Prettyman—Senior Staff Officer, Mental Health/Physically Handicapped Section, Haringey Social Services.
Dr. R. K. Rao — Secretary, Crosby Nursing Home Chairman, Laughton Rest Home.
Mr. John J. Regan—Head of Home, Le Court, Leonard Cheshire Foundation Home.
Mrs. Irene Shepherd—Assistant Director Nursing Services.
David Smith—Director of Nursing, St. Andrews Hospital, Northampton.
John Ingram Stephens—Retd. Assistant Director of Social Services.
Professor Olive Stevenson — Professor of Social Work Studies.
Ms. Emma Tait—Group Homes Manager.
Mr. A. L. Tooley — Consultant Surgeon, South Tees District, Cleveland.
Miss Kay Wells — Centre Organiser, British Red Cross Society.
Mrs. Maureen White—RCN Senior Officer, Trent Region.
Dr. J. H. B. Williams — Medical Director, Mount Edgecumbe Hospital.
Miss Margaret Olive Woodier—Freelance Consultant.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress the business sponsorship incentive scheme has made in the north-west; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Twenty three arts organisations in the north-west have received awards under the BSIS since it began in 1984; £340,000 raised in sponsorship has been matched by £170,000 BSIS, giving a total of £510,000 new money for the arts in the region.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to improve the effectiveness of the business sponsorship incentive scheme in Wales.

Mr. Luce: Thirty two arts organisations in Wales have already benefited under the BSIS, which has channeled £556,000 new money to the arts in Wales. I have agreed to support the opening of a Welsh office for the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts to promote the scheme and I hope this will open in the new year.

Financing

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the proposed level of financing for the arts in Yorkshire in 1988-89; and what are the comparative figures for each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce: The level of financial support for the arts in Yorkshire is not determined centrally. Grants are made to Yorkshire arts organisations by the Arts Council, the British Film Institute, the Museums and Galleries Commission and the Crafts Council. In 1983-84 Yorkshire received £4,251,943 from these four bodies; in 1984-85, £4,542,710; in 1985-86, £5,477,704; in 1986-87, £6,848,620; and in 1987-88, £7,057,380. Figures for 1988-89 are not yet available. In addition, the arts in Yorkshire receive considerable support from local authorities, in association with Yorkshire Arts.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Aid

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to carry out a review of regional aid policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We are in the process of reviewing a wide range of the Department's work, including regional policy. We expect to make an announcement about the outcome in the new year.

Steel Industry

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish statistics for the total tonnages achieved in the British steel industry since 1977 and any comparable information available to him about the Japanese steel industry.

Mr. Atkins: The information available is as follows:

Crude steel production United Kingdom and Japan

Year	(million Tonnes) United Kingdom	Japan
1977	20·5	102·4
1978	20·3	102·1
1979	21·5	111·7
1980	[1]11·3	111·4
1981	15·3	101·7
1982	13·7	99·5
1983	15·0	97·2
1984	15·1	105·6
1985	15·8	105·3
1986	14·8	98·3

[1] United Kingdom steel strike.
Source: International Iron and Steel Institute.

Matthew Brown (Insider Dealing)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has received a report from the stock exchange surveillance department as to the investigation into alleged insider dealing in the shares of Matthew Brown immediately prior to the recent announcement of the bid for that company by Newcastle Breweries.

Mr. Maude: No.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much he has paid out in the current year in *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* regional selective assistance; and how much he expects to pay in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 for each regional area of England and Wales.

Mr. Atkins: Payments of regional development grant (RDG) and regional selective assistance (RSA) by my Department in each region of England and Wales in the current financial year to date are as follows:

[1]*£ million*

Area	RDG	[2]RSA
North East	38·7	11·8
North West	34·3	7·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	12·8	10·8
East Midlands	4·0	1·3
West Midlands	—	8·8
South West	4·7	2·8
Total England	94·5	43·2
Wales[3]		0·5

[1] Provisional figures to end November 1987.
[2] RSA industrial and training grants only. Figures for business improvement services scheme and exchange risk guarantee scheme are not available on a regional basis. Provisional figures for expenditure by my Department on these schemes in 1987-88 to end November are £9·8 million and £11·3 million respectively.
[3] Nearly all expenditure on regional assistance in Wales is the responsibility of the Welsh Office.

Information about planned expenditure on regional assistance in 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 will be published in the public expenditure White Paper in January.

MANWEB Report

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for what reason the annual report for the year ended 31 March of the MANWEB area of the Electricity Consultative Council was not distributed until December.

Mr. Maude: The area electricity consultative councils are under no statutory obligation to publish an annual report, although my Department encourages them to do so. I understand that a number of factors contributed to the delay in this case, including pressure of other work, printing delays, and the need for translation into Welsh.

Origin Marking

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will publish proposals for successor arrangements on origin marking to replace the Trade Descriptions Act 1972.

Mr. Maude: My Department is writing to interested parties seeking views on a draft order for this purpose under section 8 of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Libraries.

Post Office (Procurement Policy)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made by the Post Office in the implementation of the recommendations made in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the Post Office's procurement activities; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Butcher: In January the Post Office produced its initial response to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report published in October last year (Cmnd. 9912) and a statement was made to the House in April on progress to date and arrangements for follow-up to the report. This recorded that a detailed timetable for implementation of the recommendations had been agreed with the Post Office and that the Post Office would prepare progress reports in October 1987 and October 1988. The statement also noted that the Post Office had partially rejected one of the recommendations which related to arrangements for paying advertising agencies. My Department, in consultation with the MMC, subsequently agreed to accept the Post Office's response on this.

I have now received the Post Office's report on progress to October 1987 and I am placing copies in the Library of the House. Good progress has been made to date. Nearly half the MMC's 49 recommendations have already been implemented and most of the remainder are on course for implementation according to timetable. The Post Office has reduced stock levels as recommended by the MMC and has introduced improvements in various areas of procurement, although there has been some delay with a few of the recommendations because the planned computerised purchasing system is being reviewed, following the reorganisation of the Post Office into separate businesses.

My Department will continue to monitor the Post Office's progress in implementing the MMC's recommendations.

ENVIRONMENT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to assess the environmental effects on Kent of the proposed high-speed rail link between London and the planned United Kingdom Channel tunnel terminus at Cheriton.

Mr. Waldegrave: I must apologise to my hon. Friend for the delay in replying to his question. I have written today to my hon. Friend to account for the delay.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply he received from my hon. Friend, the Minister for Public Transport, on 2 November. This indicated that British Rail had not brought forward any proposals for a high-speed rail link between London and the planned United Kingdom Channel tunnel terminus at Cheriton and that the results of its study into options for augmenting route, seating and terminal capacity in Kent were not expected until June 1988.

Should British Rail subsequently produce proposals for such a rail link, its plans—including any environmental effects—would be the subject, in the first instance, of consultation with the relevant local authorities and other bodies and, ultimately, if they were to proceed, would require British Rail to promote a private Act of Parliament, as is normal for development by the board.

Planning Appeal (Lichfield)

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the reason for the delay between 22 September, when the appellant's agent was notified, and 21 October, when the Lichfield district council was notified, of his inspector's decision to allow a development for retail purposes of the former Chamberlain and Hill site, Beacon street, Lichfield, under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971;

(2) if he will indicate the reasons for the delay between 16 June when the appellant's agent was notified, and 10 July, when the Lichfield district council was notified, of his inspector's decision in respect of a planning appeal under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is standard practice for copies of inspectors' decision letters on planning appeals to be dispatched to all interested parties simultaneously. There is no evidence on the papers to suggest that the copy letters to the council in these cases were not dispatched along with those to other parties. However, the staff concerned have been reminded of the importance of ensuring that the correct procedure is followed.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why his Department's Tollgate house, Bristol, office has not replied to the letter of 21 October, from the chief executive and secretary of the Lichfield district council regarding receipt of planning appeal decisions under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, specifically relating to appeals T/APP/K3415/A/87/62807/P4 and AAP/N3400/A/87/59088/59051.

Mr. Waldegrave: There is no record of Lichfield district council's letter of 21 October having been received in the Department's Bristol office. The chief executive and secretary wrote again on 25 November and the Department replied on 1 December.

Water Rates

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the percentage rise in average water rates for Great Britain has been between 1979 and the latest date available in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms.

Mr. Moynihan: Average household bills of the English water authorities have increased by 134 per cent. in cash terms and 35 per cent. in real terms, between the charging periods 1979-80 and 1987-88, reflecting the rising trend of capital expenditure and the improvement in self-financing ratios. Charges for water services in Scotland and Wales are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales respectively.

Land Disposal

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for consent to dispose of land under section 32 of the Housing Act 1985 he has received from each housing authority in England; and which of the applications received his consent.

Mrs. Roe: In view of the large number of such applications this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Ridley: A total of 47 staff were employed in the press and public relations office of my Department (including PSA) at 1 December 1987. The distribution of manpower for 1988-89 has not yet been settled.

Rates

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has in respect of *(a)* the number of people in England and Wales paying domestic rates in full or in part, *(b)* the number of spouses of *(a)*, *(c)* the number of local electors in England and Wales and *(d)* the number of people in England and Wales aged over 18 years not paying domestic rates who are not spouses of those paying rates.

Mr. Howard: The information is as follows:

a. The latest estimate is 16·5 million.

b. Based on data contained in the family expenditure survey I estimate there are about 10 million households with two adults where a rate is presently paid in whole or in part.

c. The latest available information, from 1987 registers, is 37·9 million.

d. Precise information is not available, although an approximation could be calculated from *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* above. However, this information comes from a number of sources, which are not necessarily calculated on a mutually consistent basis.

Richmond Terrace

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total cost of providing ministerial accommodation in Richmond Terrace; and what accommodation facilities are now available for each minister.

Mr. Chope: It is not practicable to identify the cost of providing ministerial accommodation within the total cost of the Richmond house project which I announced on 8 December. The allocation of ministerial accommodation within the building is for the occupying department, but the terrace restoration provides rooms suitable for Ministers and their support staff and for a number of senior officials.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Ministers will have offices in the Richmond Terrace building, what is the estimated cost of fitting-out each ministerial office; what facilities additional to normal office facilities each such office contains; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Six Ministers at the Department of Health and Social Security will have offices in Richmond house. It is not practical to identify separately the cost of providing their accommodation. In addition to the normal office accommodation and in accordance with normal practice, the Secretary of State's office, has been provided with adjoining toilet facilities.

House Building

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* private houses and *(b)* local authority dwellings of (i) one bedroom, (ii) two bedrooms, (iii) three bedrooms and (iv) four or more bedrooms have been (1) started, (2) completed or (3) started and completed in each month in 1987, and in each year since 1979.

Mr. Roe: Information about the numbers of bedrooms in new dwellings is reported only at the completion stage. The annual figures for 1979 to 1986 appear in table 6.8 (c) of "Housing and Construction Statistics" 1976-1986, which is available in the Library. Quarterly figures are available for 1987 and are as follows:

Dwellings completed: England

Number of bedrooms	*1st quarter*	*2nd quarter*	*3rd quarter (provisional)*
Local authorities and new towns			
1	2,045	1,596	1,746
2	1,108	1,115	1,443
3	686	632	896
4 or more	92	69	85
All	3,931	3,412	4,170
Private owners			
1	4,421	4,138	3,501
2	9,212	9,538	9,035
3	13,968	14,006	13,408
4 or more	7,893	7,777	8,353
All	35,494	35,459	34,297

Council House Sales

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table in the *Official Report*, showing *(a)* the number of local authority-owned properties sold to tenants under the right-to-buy

legislation and *(b)* that figure as a percentage of the total number of properties owned by each authority, for (i) Greater London, (ii) metropolitan areas outside London, (iii) English non-metropolitan areas and (iv) English local authority areas, broken down by (1) one-bedroom dwellings, (2) two-bedroom dwellings, (3) three-bedroom dwellings and (4) four or more bedroom dwellings.

Mrs. Roe: Information on the number of bedrooms in the dwellings sold by local authorities is not available centrally. The total right-to-buy sales up to June 1987 reported by each authority appear in the table placed in the Library on 11 December in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies).

Lambeth (Direct Labour Organisation)

Mr. William Shelton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the further recent allegations of malpractice in Lambeth council's direct labour organisation and the resignation of five senior council officers, he will now disband entirely the council's direct labour organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has powers, under part III of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, to take action against direct labour organisations that fail to meet their financial targets, but not against other sorts of inefficiency or malpractice. Under those powers my right hon. Friend has directed that Lambeth borough council may not award any new major construction work to its DLO, and is considering the council's special report on financial failures on minor new construction work. The matters referred to by my hon. Friend do not relate directly to financial failures, and are, therefore, for the council's auditors and the police to deal with.

Severe Weather

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans any special arrangements to assist financially those local authorities which may face severe weather conditions in their areas during the winter months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Local authorities are expected to make provision in their budgets for dealing with severe winter weather conditions, on the basis of previous experience. In the event of an emergency, arrangements already exist—the Bellwin scheme — to provide special financial assistance if the Government consider that authorities would otherwise incur an undue financial burden in providing relief and carrying out immediate works to safeguard life or property or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience to affected communities. These arrangements have been brought into effect in relation to damage caused by the storm which hit the south and east of England on 16 October.

Local Authorities (Building Control)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in the light of evidence that some local authorities are bringing improper pressure to bear on builders to make use of their own building control services rather than those provided by the National House Building Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Building Act 1984 includes specific provisions to enable approved inspectors other than local authorities to certify compliance with the requirements of the building regulations. The approval of the NHBC for certain classes of work has introduced a welcome element of competition into the building control system that is improving efficiency. I have, therefore, been concerned to learn of complaints that a number of local authorities are seeking to put pressure on builders to make use of their own building control services rather than those of the NHBC. In particular, I regard it as wholly improper for a local authority to disregard the clear will of Parliament by seeking to impose such a requirement when disposing of land for housing development. My advice is that this practice is open to challenge in the courts, and I hope that the NHBC or a purchaser who does not want to accept such a requirement will challenge it. If such a challenge were to fail, the Government would consider bringing forward amending legislation.

It is also wrong for a local authority to threaten to require the opening up of site drainage work before permitting a connection to be made to the main sewer simply because the work has been inspected and certified by the NHBC rather than by the authority's own officers. Finally, I am advised that a planning condition requiring the use of local authority building control services in connection with the permitted development would be invalid. In the event of an appeal to the Secretary of State, it is to be expected that such a condition would not be upheld and it is likely that costs would be awarded against the local planning authority if an inquiry were held and an application for costs were made. It would be equally improper for a local authority to delay consideration of a planning application unless its own building control services are to be used.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have for further enterprise zones; and if he will make a statement about the progress of the experiment.

Mr. Ridley: The first enterprise zones have been in existence for six years and are over halfway through their 10-year life. A number of proposals for new zones and zone extensions have been submitted and I have, therefore, been considering, in conjunction with colleagues in other Departments, the future of the enterprise zone experiment. In this, we have been assisted by the report of consultants who have evaluated the experiment in Great Britain on our behalf and whose report is shortly to be published. (A similar study is nearing completion in respect of the Northern Ireland enterprise zones). The latest annual monitoring report will be pubished at the same time.

These two publications will show that the zones have been successful in varying degrees in regenerating economic activity in areas which had hitherto seen steady decline for several years. On the zones in Great Britain the number of firms has gone up by 125 per cent.; about 60 per cent. of the land in the zones has been developed with over 4·6 million sq m of floor space, mostly industrial and commercial; in consequence, overall employment in the

zones has more than doubled. The zones have also boosted the economies of the areas in which they are located by the additional activity they have generated. These substantial achievements must, of course, be set against the costs of the experiment, which by the end of 1986 amounted to just under £300 million for the British zones.

Enterprise zones were among the first of the steps the Government took on being elected in 1979 towards lifting the burdens on business and enterprise. They have been the flagship of deregulation and they have helped to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit that is now a welcome feature in many parts of the United Kingdom economy. We have subsequently developed a wide range of other measures to stimulate development in areas adversely affected by changes in the local economy: urban development corporations, urban development grants, and urban regeneration grants are among the more important. We are also applying the enterprise zone planning regime more widely in the form of simplified planning zones.

We are now able to select from this range of measures the ones most suited to the needs of a particular area. In the light of this, and in the light of our assessment of the enterprise zone experiment, we have concluded that a general extension of the experiment is not desirable. In many circumstances, other measures will be more cost effective. I should make it clear that existing enterprise zones will be unaffected by this decision.

Nevertheless, we recognise that there may be exceptional circumstances where the creation of a new enterprise zone or the extension of an existing zone might still be the best way of tackling a particular and localised problem. Whether or not this is so would depend upon the nature and severity of the problem, the likely cost-effectiveness of an enterprise zone in contributing to its solution (in particular compared with the other measures now available), and the extent to which the authorities and agencies concerned can ensure that the zone is a success.

I do not intend to designate further enterprise zones in response to the proposals I have received for new zones, or extensions to existing zones, in England. My right hon. Friends will consider proposals for new zones or extensions in other parts of the United Kingdom.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is in a position to announce his conclusions on the policy and consultation paper on the National Rivers Authority which was published in July.

Mr. Ridley: There were nearly 350 responses to the Government's consultation paper from a wide range of organisations and environmental interests. The proposal to create a National Rivers Authority to take over water authorities' regulatory and river basin management functions after privatisation of their main functions was widely welcomed.

I have today placed in the Library of both Houses copies of the responses of those who agreed that their responses could be published, together with a memorandum which sets out the Government's decisions on the issues raised in the consultation paper.

The memorandum reaffirms our commitment to the creation of a National Rivers Authority. We consider it essential that the regulatory functions of the water authorities remain in the public sector, together with the broader range of river functions. These functions — water resource planning and control, land drainage and flood protection, the protection of the water environment, and the improvement and development of fisheries, and navigation, where it applies—must be the responsibility of a public body, answerable to Ministers and to Parliament.

The National Rivers Authority will have full statutory responsibility for these functions, including responsibility for operational work. The Government do not consider that it is appropriate for the NRA's role to be limited to a purely regulatory or auditing role. However, it is not necessary for all the operational work associated with the NRA's functions to be carried out by the NRA's own employees. The Government anticipate that a significant amount of work will be contracted out by the NRA on the basis of fully competitive contracts. The NRA will be required to ensure that as much of its work as possible is done on the basis of competitive tendering. The basis of the contracts for such work will have to take full account of the market conditions and the nature of the work. It will be open to the privatised utility companies to compete for such work, but it would not be acceptable for the NRA to be dependent on the privatised utility companies for the carrying out of such work as part of their conditions of appointment or licence, though, in the short term, special transitional arrangements between the NRA and the privatised utility companies may be required in some areas in respect of some functions.

The NRA will be separate from the director-general of water services, and will be a non-departmental public body, with a board of up to 12 members. The chairman and eight members will be appointed by me; two by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and one by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Details of the organisation, and the arrangements for the representation of regional interests are outlined in the memorandum.

The NRA will be constituted immediately after the main legislation to allow for the privatisation of the water authorities has received Royal Assent. Before then, substantial preparations are needed within each water authority. The Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill, currently before Parliament, will give water authorities express powers to prepare themselves for privatisation and restructuring. I am asking each water authority to prepare proposals for a scheme of organisation on the basis of guidelines which will be issued by my Department, and to submit it to me within a month of Royal Assent to the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill.

In order to advise on each authority's proposals for reorganisation, my right hon. Friends and I propose to appoint an advisory committee, to be called the National Rivers Authority Advisory Committee. The terms of reference are to advise us on the implications for the water authorities of the reorganisation needed to provide a separate organisational structure for their water and sewerage functions, and the functions that will be performed by the new National Rivers Authority, to advise on the acceptability of the scheme proposed by each water authority, and to ensure that it will enable the NRA adequately to fulfil the tasks proposed to be allocated to

it. I shall make a further announcement about the chairman and other members of this committee as soon as possible.

I am confident that these arrangements will enable water authorities to start soon on the necessary preparations for privatisation and restructuring so as to provide for the successful transfer to the private sector of the vast majority of the jobs in the water industry, together with the transfer of the regulatory and river basin management functions of water authorities in an important new national authority in the public sector.

Landlord and Tenant Act 1987

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is now in a position to say when he expects the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 to come into operation.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have made the first commencement order for the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 which brings into effect on 1 February 1988 the whole of parts I and VI (dealing respectively with the right of first refusal and information to be supplied to tenants), section 45 (the powers of housing associations as regards the management of leasehold property) and some incidental provisions. They hope to make a further commencement order in March 1988.

PRIME MINISTER

North of England

Q34. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Prime Minister, when she next intends to visit the north of England.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Q66. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to amend the Crown Estate Act 1961 in relation to the powers of the Crown Estate Commissioners; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Brownsover, Rugby

Q80. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Brownsover, Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

World Peace

Sir David Price: To ask the Prime Minister in the light of the recent discussions between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, and the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty, what is her estimate of the prospects for securing progress towards world peace in 1988; and what part she expects to be able to play in the process.

The Prime Minister: At the Washington summit, apart from signature of the INF treaty, progress was made in talks on 50 per cent. reductions in United States and Soviet strategic arms. The Government fully support this aim, and the other Alliance arms control priorities of a global ban on chemical weapons and the elimination of the imbalance of Warsaw pact and NATO conventional forces in Europe. Lasting confidence between East and West will also require progress on human rights and regional problems including Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Her Majesty's Government will continue to play an active role in seeking a safer world.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Cabinet Office; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

The Prime Minister: Eighteen staff are presently employed by the Cabinet Office, including the Central Statistical Office and the office of the Minister for the Civil Service, and 10 Downing street on press and public relations activities. We expect to employ the same number of staff on these activities at this point in 1988.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by the Cabinet Office on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

The Prime Minister: The Cabinet Office does not expect to incur any expenditure on promotional advertising on television, radio or in newspapers in either 1987-88 or 1988-89. The latest estimate of expenditure on other promotional material in 1987-88 by the Cabinet Office, including the Central Statistical Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, as well as on such services provided to the Office of Arts and Libraries, is £40,000. An estimated £36,000 is expected to be spent on promotional material in 1988-89.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Cabinet Office on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

The Prime Minister: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The latest estimate of expenditure on press and public relations in 1987-88 by the Cabinet Office, including 10 Downing Street, the Central Statistical Office and the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, as well as on such services provided to the Office of Arts and Libraries, is £515,000. An estimated £521,000 is expected to be spent on these activities in 1988-89.

London Transport

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister how many times in an official capacity, she has *(a)* travelled on and *(b)* visited the buildings of (i) London Underground and (ii) London Buses.

The Prime Minister: I am not able usually to undertake such journeys. I visited the scene of the disaster at King's Cross underground station on 19 November.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will take initiatives in support of the paragraph in the intermediate nuclear forces treaty acknowledging the obligations of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics under article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, in the light of the fact that the United Kingdom is the third depository state under the non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: No. A United Kingdom initiative in the context of a bilateral US/Soviet agreement would not be appropriate.

Engagements

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Patrick John Elwood

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he has taken arising from the petition presented to Parliament by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North regarding Patrick John Elwood, currently imprisoned.

Mr. John Patten: The matter raised in the petition was investigated and it was decided that no action should be taken.

Prisoners (Complaints)

80. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to expedite consideration of complaints in respect of inmates of Her Majesty's prisons submitted by hon. Members.

Mr. John Patten: During the last year the systems for managing and monitoring the consideration of matters raised by hon. Members, including complaints submitted by them on behalf of inmates, have been reviewed and improved, resulting in a substantial reduction in the average time taken to reply to hon. Members' letters.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many new applications for the issue of part 5 firearms certificates were granted during the period from 1 January 1979 until 31 December 1979, and in each subsequent year for the same period;

(2) how many new applications to renew the issue of part 5 firearms certificates were granted during the period from 1 January 1979 until 31 December 1979, and for each subsequent year for the same period;

(3) how many new applications for the grant of part 5 firearms certificates were refused from 1 January 1979 until 31 December 1979, and for the same period in each subsequent year;

(4) how many part 5 firearms certificates remained current and in force on 31 December 1979, and on that date in each subsequent year;

(5) how many new applications for the issue of part 5 firearms certificates during the period from 1 January 1979 until 31 December 1979, and for each subsequent year for the same period, were subsequently withdrawn by the applicants prior to either the grant of or the refusal to issue the certificate being given.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not kept on an annual basis and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. There are currently 641 section 5 authorities in existence in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Sex Discrimination

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the amendment of section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act;

(2) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act.

Mr. John Patten: In 1986 the Equal Opportunities Commission published a consultative document "Legislating for Change?" which identified the possible need for amendment to section 51. The commission has recently completed consideration of the responses and we expect to receive its proposals for amending the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 in the early part of 1988.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Hurd: The present complement, of all grades, for the Home Office press office is 18 and is currently under review.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Hurd: During 1987-88 it is estimated that a total of £8·6 million will be spent on paid publicity of all kinds. Approximately £5·1 million of this will be for television, press, and other advertising. A more detailed breakdown cannot be given at this stage.

For 1988-89 there is provision for £8·7 million to be spent on paid publicity of all kinds. No further details are available at present.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Metropolitan police; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the number of staff of all grades employed on press functions is 43. No major changes in the level of staffing are expected in the next 12 months.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by the Metropolitan police on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the latest figures for 1987-88 are as follows:

	£
Television Advertising	Nil
Radio Advertising	6,000
Newspaper Advertising	1,573,000
Other promotional material	1,034,000

The estimate of expenditure for 1988-89 has not yet been decided.

Coal Industry Dispute

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what payments due to the Metropolitan police are still outstanding from provincial forces in respect of the National Union of Mineworkers strike; what action he proposes to take to obtain immediate payment; and what interest will become payable to the Metropolitan police to compensate for the delays.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the only outstanding payment for mutual aid supplied during the miners' dispute is the difference between the amount of £6,106,266·79 paid by Nottinghamshire and the sum of £6,734,248·79 claimed by the Metropolitan police.

The Metropolitan police have asked my right hon. Friend to make a determination in respect of the claim under section 14(4) of the Police Act 1964. We are considering this. No interest payments can be included in a determination.

Greater Manchester (Chief Constable)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the chief constable of Greater Manchester to discuss his recent remarks on corporal punishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no plans for my right hon. Friend to do so.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether the Greater Manchester police authority have sought his approval for calling upon the chief constable of Greater Manchester to retire in the interests of efficiency under section 5 of the Police Act 1964;

(2) if he will consider requesting the Greater Manchester police authority to call upon the chief constable of Greater Manchester to retire in the interests of efficiency under section 29 of the Police Act 1964.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Police Authorities (Surplus Arms)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why arms surplus to the requirements of police authorities are not placed at the disposal of the services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that police firearms are not usually compatible with military requirements. Nevertheless, we are considering whether steps should be taken to offer surplus police firearms to the armed forces.

Childrens Television Programmes (Imports)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ban the importation of the children's television programme "Captain Power" and the "Soldiers of the Future."

Mr. Renton: It is entirely a matter for the broadcasting authorities to decide whether individual programmes contravene their programme standard obligations. I understand that this programme has been considered by the Cable Authority, which sees no objection to the programme itself but would want to reconsider the matter in the context of any related advertising or marketing of products in the United Kingdom.

Independent Television Production Quotas

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in view of the breakdown of negotiations relating to independent television production quotas, between the independent television companies and independent producers, he will review the position in the light of American experience; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We welcome the steps taken by the IBA to explore with the parties to the negotiations the scope for their resumption. We are, however, keeping the position under close review.

Haverigg prison, Cumbria

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the security arrangements at Haverigg prison, Millom, Cumbria, following the recent escapes of prisoners.

Mr. John Patten: As is the standard practice, inquiries will be made into the circumstances of the escapes and we shall consider, in the light of the findings, whether arrangements need to be changed.

Shops Act 1950

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

the lowest in London. My constituents obviously rely on the ambulance service for dealing with not only emergency but non-emergency cases to a greater extent than areas where there is a high level of car ownership. However, in those areas people are increasingly being forced to use their own transport to get to and from hospital.

A couple of weeks ago the Prime Minister, the Minister and almost every other hon. Member quite properly praised the emergency services — the police, the fire service, the ambulance service and station staff — on their heroic efforts at King's Cross. A circular has just been distributed giving national salary rates for ambulance staff. I shall quote them because it is relevant that people understand the level of pay that ambulance staff receive, commensurate with their responsibilities and duties. A leading ambulance man, as fom 1 April 1987, is on an annual rate of £10,330, which is less than half that of a Member of Parliament. A qualified ambulance man, employed on a range of ambulance duties, receives £4·59 per hour; an ambulance man receives £3·33 per hour and an ambulance cadet receives £1·95 per hour. They are not high rates of pay by any stretch of the imagination yet the responsibilities of the job are awesome.

The King's Cross disaster was horrific by any stretch of the imagination. It was a complicated issue with which to deal because of the fire in the tunnel, the necessity of getting people out of the tunnel, the problems of smoke inhalation, and so on. Thirty people died, a further 20 were seriously injured, and obviously many people suffered from shock and had to be removed to hospital. That disaster caused chaos throughout most of north London and it certainly had a significant effect on the emergency services throughout London.

It is important to understand that, despite the horror and magnitude of the King's Cross disaster, the emergency services just about managed to cope. I dread to think how they would cope with a disaster of the magnitude of a Boeing 747 or equivalent airliner coming down over London. That would mean dealing with at least 500 casualties immediately — one would expect all the passengers to be casualties—and if the plane came down in a densely populated area it would cause serious injury to people in the area.

I hope that the Minister will listen to my point and answer it seriously. If the ambulance service was so totally stretched at King's Cross, how would it cope with an enormous disaster in London? The answer is that it could not. On the night of the King's Cross fire there should have been 85 ambulances available to go to the scene. Only 40 were able, because there was shortage of vehicles, drivers and the controllers to get them there. The consequence was that in other parts of London there were long response times for ambulances to go to emergencies such as heart attacks and so on when people need to be rushed to hospital.

On 26 November, the night on which we were discussing the problems of funding in the NHS, which was only a week after the disaster, there was such a shortage of controllers at the London ambulance headquarters in Waterloo road that the north-west and north-east sectors of London had to be linked to deal with control work that night. That obviously meant a less efficient service by any stretch of the imagination.

There was a threatened emergency at Heathrow airport on 24 November. I understand that only one LAS ambulance was able to go immediately to the airport to deal with that potential disaster. Fortunately, there was no disaster, but there was a shortage of ambulances to go to Heathrow on that occasion. The hospital alongside Heathrow airport, the Central Middlesex hospital, has a casualty unit so under-staffed that it has been on absolute emergency only for the past 18 months. I raise these matters because it is not good enough that London's emergency services should operate on the knife edge of survival at present. The London ambulance service is an example of that.

In days gone by the London ambulance service was a local authority responsibility, in common with other parts of the country. It was run efficiently by the Greater London council for several years. Staffing levels were higher, the availability of vehicles was higher and the ability to deal with London's health problems was certainly better than it is now. It was then taken away from the GLC and, as we know, the GLC was abolished in an act of vindictiveness unparalled in modern politics.

London Health Emergency, which is a health watchdog body that has done excellent work, produced "Ambulance Alert" in 1986. That showed the growing crisis facing the London ambulance service. The report was made available to the DHSS, and I should be interested to hear the Minister's response. The report showed that at that time the LAS achieved the standard required — that 50 per cent. of emergency calls should be responded to within seven minutes — only 25 per cent. of the time. That meant that in relation to total emergency demand of 469,000 calls, 117,000, were not reached within the appropriate time. If one assumes — it is a reasonable assumption — that 1 per cent. of the calls are critical, that means that 1,173 people in London were put at serious risk due to the inability of the service to meet demands at that time. Those figures are for the final quarter of 1985, and the picture has got considerably worse since then. I stress the fact that the figures refer to 1985 because that is the time covered by the report.

In June 1985, the four trade unions that represent the London ambulance service — the National Union of Public Employees, the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union and the Transport and General Workers Union — carried out a monitoring exercise of the emergency service in relation to the ORCON standards. They concluded that only 45 per cent. of 999 calls met the standards, that 50 per cent. were delayed by up to three minutes and that 5 per cent. were delayed by six minutes or more. "Ambulance Alert" says:

> "As the Strategic Plan 1984 concedes, only one survey of the non-emergency service had been done over the last 12 months. Indeed the Strategic Plan makes it clear that the standards are now generally disregarded. In referring to standards, it says: 'There is little doubt however that compared to the target standards established in the ORCON Report of 1974, the poor performances identified in former years still prevail in many areas'."

It is important for the House to understand that people who work in the ambulance service have an esprit de corps. They are determined that their service will be run efficiently. They regard themselves as being in the front line and take a pride in the service that they provide. It is difficult for them to be proud, however, when they see nothing but cuts all around them and difficulty in meeting

the response times that they want to achieve because of restrictions. Their suggestions are advanced in a spirit of wanting an efficient service.

London has special problems. It has a fluctuating population, as most tourists to Britain visit London. It also has enormous traffic congestion problems which seriously affect the ambulance service. The average speed of an ambulance in the morning peak period has fallen during the past 15 years from 13·9 mph to 12·6 mph in inner London. That is a 9·3 per cent. reduction. The average speed in the evening peak period has fallen from 13·7 mph to 12·2 mph—an 11 per cent. decrease.

The recent accident near Blackfriars bridge caused chaos which took five hours to clear, and a burst water main at Swiss Cottage created problems which took four hours to clear. Those examples demonstrate that the service always operates on a knife edge. I hope that the Minister realises that the service needs more ambulances and funding to cope with those problems.

The closure of hospitals and the trend to centralise services in one district general hospital create longer journey times for ambulances. My borough lost the casualty unit at the Liverpool road hospital some years ago. More recently, it lost the Royal Northern hospital, so we have only one casualty unit at the Whittington hospital. Casualty units in Haringey were closed and transferred to the North Middlesex hospital. The same has happened in Hackney.

I hope that the Minister will make a considered and reasoned response to the London Health Emergency report. She ought to realise that the shortage of staff in the ambulance service means that non-emergency patients are often kept waiting unacceptably long. Indeed, in some cases, even emergencies are kept waiting. That demoralises staff, which leads to absenteeism and pressure on crews. There has been a serious increase in the number of assaults on staff by those to whom they go. The number of days lost due to sickness has risen from 3,864 in August 1983 to 4,406 in August 1985—a 14 per cent. increase. In August 1983 there were 124 assaults on staff; and in an equivalent period in 1984 there were 120 assaults, 96 on men and 24 on women. Those are serious matters and I trust that the Minister will look seriously at those problems experienced by the ambulance service.

In the provision of emergency services the ambulance service must be demand-led, but in the non-emergency services cuts of misery are being made. The ambulance service is continually reduced, hospital appointments are missed because an ambulance is not available, and there is the increasing pressure of privatisation which leads to greater inefficiency in hospitals. A patient fails to come in because an ambulance is not available and the time of the consultants, nurses and the hospital is wasted. That is an inefficient way in which to run the Health Service.

It is also inefficient for ambulances to make long journeys when taking people to hospital. It is also unfair on the patients concerned. An elderly lady in my constituency told me that it took two and a half hours to get to hospital in an ambulance. She did a tour of half of north London, something that she could have done without on a winter's morning. It would have been better for her and for the hospital if she had gone there directly.

When this report was produced, several conclusions were reached, and I want to highlight two of them. First, incredible secrecy surrounds the London ambulance service and the regional health authority. In the days of the GLC it was easy to get information on the number of controllers, vehicles, and so on, available at any one time, but that is now difficult to obtain and it should be freely available to the public. *[Interruption.]* I do not know what is exciting the Minister, but no doubt she will contain her excitement until I have finished. The cut in resources and the rise in demand call for greater public expenditure on the ambulance service. That has not happened. Indeed, the reverse is the case.

The Government's policies towards community care, which are controversial, to put it mildly—many of us see those policies as a hidden cost-cutting exercise rather than an improvement in the quality of care—can also mean greater demand on the ambulance service which has not been sufficiently funded to meet such demand.

In a statement in late 1986, about a year ago, it was clear that non-emergency patient journeys — those carried by London ambulance service personnel—had fallen from 39,560 a week in 1984 to 27,507 in 1986. The biggest weekly reduction was in the number of walking patients was a fall of 44 per cent. Unfortunately, the term walking should be in inverted commas. The people to whom that phrase refers are often elderly or disabled, but, because they are so categorised, people assume that they can walk to hospital. I have met some of those patients struggling along the Holloway road trying to get to the Whittington hospital because there is no ambulance to pick them up. It is an insult to call such people walking patients. They clearly deserve and need help and sympathy, but they are getting the very opposite.

There are ominous trends towards privatisation in the ambulance service. When the Minister replies, I should be grateful if she would tell us her Department's policy on that. We know that, for example, the Hampshire ambulance service tried a privatisation scheme with contracts with various taxi firms in that area. It tried to take the work away from the qualified ambulance personnel and pass it over to non-qualified people running minicab services and the like. I have a horror of that process.

Instead of qualified ambulance personnel being available to deal with non-emergency cases, increasingly the trend is either the use of a minicab service or of volunteer drivers. Indeed, before my father died he was ferried to the hospital for physiotherapy by a volunteer car driver. He was a very nice man, but he was a volunteer car driver who was trying to do his best and thought that he was helping out. There was nothing wrong with that man except that he was totally untrained for the work and did not have any qualifications for it. Therefore, when somebody such as my father, who was suffering from cancer and could not walk properly, fell over, that man did not know what to do. He had to call on neighbours or passers-by to help him. It is true that on that occasion I was able to get to the scene quickly and assist, but on other occasions there might not be anybody who could get to the scene.

It does not do much for the confidence of relatives—or, indeed the patient—to know that the person who is driving the car is not prepared or qualified to deal with emergencies. It is not good enough to expect volunteers, minicab drivers or anybody else — whatever their motives—to be able to cope with such problems, but that is exactly what is happening in the ambulance service at present.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

I turn now to the question of staffing numbers in the ambulance service itself. In May 1985, there were 2,099 whole-time equivalent employees in the London ambulance service, of whom 60 were qualified leading ambulance men. In May 1987, the figure for whole-time equivalents had grown to 2,227·5 except that only 57 were qualified leading ambulance men. In other words, there were three fewer. The number of grade 4 qualified ambulance persons had also reduced from 1,560 to 1,509. Part-time ambulance persons, who had by then been introduced, had increased to 97·5 whole-time equivalents but, in terms of actual staff in post, had increased to 195. The trend appears to be to reduce the number of leading and qualified ambulance staff and to increase the number of part-time staff, with the unfortunate consequences of that. As a result, there has been a fall in the number of leading qualified ambulance staff.

Patient journeys undertaken by the London ambulance service have changed a great deal between 1985 and 1986. I accept that that is only a short period, but if the trend is extrapolated forwards—or even taken backwards—one can see that the figures that I am quoting show a trend and it is, therefore, perfectly valid to quote a year-on-year figure for this.

In 1985, of total patient journeys in thousands, there were 2,680·7 of which 90·6 per cent. were directly provided by the London ambulance service; 4·1 per cent. by agency services; 4·5 per cent. by hospital cars; 0·6 per cent. by other means and 0·1 per cent. by rail and air. In 1986, the number of directly provided journeys had decreased from 2,429·3 to 1,988·2, which is a drop to 85·2 per cent.; agency services had increased to 5·2 per cent., hospital cars to 7·7 per cent. and others to 1·8 per cent. In other words, the trend was a reduction in the number of journeys undertaken by the ambulance service itself and an increase in the number of journeys undertaken by hospital cars and other kinds of service. Therefore, the number of directly provided patient journeys fell in both absolute and proportionate terms while the number of journeys made in hospital cars increased, again in both absolute and proportionate terms.

A year ago, in December 1986, I asked a whole series of questions of the Minister's predecessors about these matters. The answers showed that emergency patient journeys in the London ambulance service had increased from 333,000 in 1979 to 476,000 in 1985. The number of non-emergency patient journeys totalled 1,680 in 1979. They increased to 2,302—a high point—in 1983, and went down to 2,205 in 1985. I suspect that the trend is continuing in that direction.

I then asked the Minister some questions on training. We are well aware and understand what training is given to qualified leading ambulance men, but there appears to be a trend, which is confirmed by the figures, of increasing the proportion of unqualified staff at the expense of qualified staff, and of the use of hospital car services increasing that number by an enormous amount, which suggests that they will be made by unqualified people. Indeed, on 16 December 1986, I asked the Secretary of State for Social Services

"how much money has been paid to hospital car drivers in each of the London Ambulance Service areas for each year since 1983." — [*Official Report*, 16 December 1986; Vol. 107, c. *468*.]

We find that in 1984 the figure for north-west London was £75,829. By 1986-87—the current year—it had gone up to £120,000. In north-east London, it was £76,000 in 1984-85, and up to £155,000 in 1986-87. In south-west London it was £97,000 in 1984-85, and up to £158,000 in 1986-87. In south-east London, it was £100,000 in 1984-85, and up to £171,000 in 1986-87. The total figure for 1986-87 was £604,180 paid to the hospital car service, at the expense, I contend, of the ambulance service. These are serious matters. It is not good enough to allow such a trend to continue, with the damage that it is doing to the quality of service in London as a whole.

It is also interesting that, on 12 November this year, a circular was sent out from the DHSS about EC drivers' hours regulations. It states:

"The Department of Transport in consultation with the DHSS has been considering the application of the revised Drivers' hours regulations to the Ambulance Service. In the opinion of the DOT the regulations apply".

It then gives the circumstances in which the regulations apply, and goes on to state:

"Emergency ambulances are exempt from the EC Drivers' Hours and Tachograph rules. They are only subject to domestic regulations.

The limits on rest time, breaks, maximum duty without a break and daily 'spread over' have been abolished for domestic driving. The daily driving limit of 10 hours and the daily duty limit of 11 hours are retained."

I quote that circular because it is not satisfactory that the restriction on hours that applies to other drivers should be lifted in the case of ambulance staff. It seems to be a trend of putting unacceptable pressure on ambulance staff to work unacceptably long hours. That is obviously detrimental to them and to the service as a whole.

Those who work in the London ambulance service are people of enormous dedication and skill. They do not like the staff cuts. They do not like their inability to meet the ORCON response times. They do not like the shortage of controllers. Enormous pressure is put controllers at the London ambulance service headquarters. The psychological pressure of not being able to cope in an emergency is quite appalling. It is a day in, day out grinding fear. Air traffic controllers, fire controllers and so on in London are put under the same enormous pressure. It is not acceptable, sane or sensible for the capital city of this country to have its emergency services working on a knife edge of survival, day in, day out. The ambulance service needs to be looked at. I hope that the Minister will be able to give some hope to the people in the ambulance service who want to see the service restored to its former level of glory and efficiency, rather than see people forced to use mini cabs, private cars, volunteer drivers and so on, and the unsatisfactory nature of that service.

Many people in London have enormous regard and respect for the ambulance service and the work that it does. That is right and proper. But they also feel that while they are waiting around for hours and hours for ambulances to arrive in non-emergency matters, or, in some cases, having to wait an unacceptably long time for an emergency ambulance to arrive, their confidence in the service is diminished. We in London are getting a second-rate emergency service that is increasingly relying on volunteers.

When the ambulance service in London is cut back, as it has been cut back, the poorest people suffer. Those people who have access to a car or can afford a car or

minicab can get to the hospital for a casualty admission, which may not be an emergency, but poor people have to wait and wait, and that is the worry.

I hope that when the Minister replies, she will tell us that the continual curtailment of expenditure by the London ambulance service and this process of diminishing service and expenditure will come to an end. I hope, too, that she will recognise the value of the ambulance service and increase expenditure on it accordingly.

5.56 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on winning a place in the ballot and on raising yet again the question of the London ambulance service. I have taken note of the concerns that he has expressed and I hope that I shall deal with them as I make my speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Betty Boothroyd): Order. Does the hon. Lady seek the permission of the House to speak a second time? I believe that she has already spoken.

Mrs. Currie: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. If I may speak, with the leave of the House.

Mr. Corbyn: What if we say no?

Mrs. Currie: I will go away!

I have noted the points raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), and I share his concern about violence against staff. He will know of the efforts made during the past year by a committee in the other place. Considerable effort is being made to assist and advise staff, and to ensure they are not put at risk. Unfortunately, for ambulance men, I am afraid there will be occasions when that is almost unavoidable, but we will do whatever we can to minimise that risk.

Mr. Corbyn: I welcome the fact that studies are continuing on this matter. Will the hon. Lady give us an idea of when this committee will report and make its recommendations?

Mrs. Currie: It has, as I recall, already produced some guidelines on social services, which was the original reason for the committee being set up. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman went on to complain about how difficult it was to get information and how much easier it was when the GLC ran the ambulance service. He then produced strings of information, much of which I had provided through parliamentary questions and the various debates initiated by the hon. Member for Newham, South. I am very glad that the hon. Member for Islington, North has noticed the amount of information. In 1986, when all this business was going on, he spent a lot of time away from London, in El Salvador, Florence, Cuba and Nicaragua. He also went to Pisa and Copenhagen, he was at the Fenestras conference in El Salvador, and he visited India and Bangladesh. At least this time he is talking about his own constituents. That is where he was in 1986, according to what he has declared in the Register of Members Interests. I am not surprised that he missed some of the information that the hon. Member for Newham, South and I were sharing.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I hope the Minister will accept that she is making a very cheap point. If she knows London and knows of the activities of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in London, or if she ever listens to London radio or reads a London newspaper, she will know that my hon. Friend is extremely active in his constituents' interests. She does not have to think that he is like some Conservative Back Benchers who cannot walk and chew gum at the same time. My hon. Friend manages to be a good internationalist and an especially assiduous local Member of Parliament at the same time.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that the hon. Member for Islington, North is very grateful for that little reference, and I am sure also that his constituents have heard it.

Let me put in context one or two statistics which I think the hon. Gentleman probably missed. The London ambulance service runs to 1,000 vehicles. I said that in a reply to one of his hon. Friends earlier this year, and the reply is in *Hansard*. The service answers emergencies at the rate of 1,300 every day of the year. The average ambulance journey in London costs £18. We have no end of statistics. I am more than happy to go on providing hon. Gentlemen with all the statistics they want; what they do with them is another matter. I hope at least that they understand them. I suspect from what they have been saying tonight that they do not entirely understand them.

It is appropriate for me to say something at the outset about the ambulance service and the work that its staff do. The service has been the subject of much scrutiny and change recently, partly as a result of the Rayner scrutiny of the non-emergency services, and partly as a result of the new pay structures that were introduced last year. Both had far reaching consequences for the service.

Without the intrusion of any partisan element, I want to pay tribute to the ambulance men and women who provide us with an excellent service and carry out demanding jobs. The most recent examples of that were during the storm on 16 October and, as hon. Members have mentioned, during the fire at King's Cross station. One of the reasons why I went immediately to the scene of the fire was that I am responsible for aspects of disaster planning. I am completely satisfied that the ambulance service, and all the services involved, coped brilliantly with what was a terrible tragedy. I am sure that one of the reasons why there were fewer ambulances than Opposition Members have claimed were needed was that, sadly, there were comparatively few live casualties. I was reliably informed by everyone I met that the ambulance service coped and that, people were satisfied.

Mr. Corbyn: I, too, pay tribute to the ambulance staff, who coped magnificently that night. However, has the Minister studied the effect on other parts of London of the movement of ambulances towards the King's Cross fire and the response times achieved in other parts of London for individual emergencies that night?

Mrs. Currie: It is all a matter of judgment, particularly for the staff in charge, of what is the major priority on any occasion. If there is a major disaster, we expect services elsewhere to be affected. I had some difficulty in getting to the House on the night in question because of the amount of emergency traffic in the neighbourhood. The service responded brilliantly that night, and I have no doubt that it not only saved lives but relieved a great deal of the worry and pain of those who were not badly injured, but needed assistance.

[Mrs. Currie]

The ambulance service is often the public's first contact with the Health Service, which gives it a special responsibility. Like many other aspects of the Health Service, some of which we rehearsed earlier, it tends to be taken for granted until it is needed. Like many other free services, it is occasionally abused by thoughtless people. I am sure that Opposition Members would not deny that. It happens, and it has happened. The people with whom we are dealing are not perfect.

About 20 million journeys are undertaken each year by the ambulance service in England. In 1985-86 the London ambulance service carried 5 million 999 patients, which is an astonishing figure.

In March last year the new salary structure for ambulance men came into effect and radically changed the pay arrangements for ambulance personnel. It provided an opportunity for all ambulance services to rid themselves of what were readily admitted to be inefficient working practices, most of which, sad to tell, Opposition Members seemed to support. It was intended that the changes should lead to an ambulance service that was more sensitively geared to patients needs, in terms of staff deployment, rather than to custom and practice.

Concurrently with the introduction of this new structure, the London ambulance service took steps to improve the front line — the emergency service. It had little choice but to make improvements to the part of the service that was involved in many cases with the life or death of a patient. In doing so, staff resources had to be transferred from the non-emergency service to front-line work. That left the London ambulance service short of non-emergency staff — or shorter than it would have wished — and it introduced urgent measures to try to curtail demand on the non-emergency work so that it could continue to provide for the patients who most needed its services.

The South West Thames regional health authority, which manages the London ambulance service on behalf of the four Thames regions, took immediate and successful steps to increase recruitment to the non-emergency service to make up for the shortfall. I have answered questions raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South and by other hon. Members who have requested details of progress with recruitment during the past year and a half. The hon. Member for Islington, North accurately quoted the figures. I am more than happy to repeat them.

The number of leading ambulance men in May 1985 was 60. By May 1987 that figure was 57. That represents whole-time equivalents. The number of grade 4 ambulance persons was 1,560 in May 1985, and by May 1987 it was 1,509. The numbers of grades 1, 2 and 3 ambulance persons were respectively 53, 237, and 189 in May 1985, making a total of 479. That had risen to 564 by May 1987, and the number of part-time ambulance people was nil in May 1985. It was 97·5 whole-time equivalents in May 1987, which is 195 staff. That is how we run a better service on a tighter budget. We have slightly fewer chiefs and rather more Indians. It is also worth putting on record that the ambulance service accepted a 5 per cent. pay rise on 27 November.

Part-time employees were introduced into the London ambulance service only 18 months ago to try to make the work force as flexible as possible in order to cover the different and increasing demands that Opposition Members have described. In addition to the nearly 200 people now employed on a part-time basis, there has been a significant increase in the number of full-time ambulance staff. Almost every month in 1986 about 30 people were going through training in the ambulance service in London and with low resignation rates we are now seeing the benefit of this sustained recruitment campaign. The first crew on duty at King's Cross had only recently finished training and was new to the service.

The total numbers of staff now employed is higher than it was two years ago before the upheavals of reorganisation began. Nobody can complain that the staffing of the London ambulance service has not responded dramatically to the early criticisms. There are now about 2,325 people employed by the service, compared with 2,099 two and a half years ago.

I shall now deal with the reduction in the number of non-emergency patient journeys. I can confirm that there has been a reduction in the number of journeys undertaken. As I have done before, I should like to make some comments about the reason for that reduction. First, as I have already said, the London ambulance service was short of staff at the beginning of the year starting on 1 March 1986, about 18 months ago, because of the move of some non-emergency staff to front-line work. Inevitably, that resulted in a reduction in the number of journeys that it was able to undertake. Secondly, for many years there has been much concern about the use of ambulances for patients who have no medical need for them. The hon. Member for Islington, North may well have a view about the medical need of patients, but the only person who can decide is a doctor. Neither the hon. Gentleman nor I can decide.

Particularly since the Rayner scrutiny report in 1984 on non-emergency ambulance services, health authorities have been encouraged to identify and eliminate potential abuses of ambulance transport. Ambulance transport is provided for patients using the Health Service who, in the opinion of the clinician in charge of their case, are unable to travel by any other means. The advice to health authorities is clear and is in circular HC(78)45, paragraph 2, which I think was issued by the last Labour Government. That advice also makes provision for ambulance transport in some cases where patients do not have access to private transport and public transport is not available. This criterion is unlikely to be applicable within the London ambulance service area, although it may well apply in my constituency in Derbyshire.

Some out-patients who formerly enjoyed transport by ambulance were not strictly eligible for other reasons, either because they were able to travel by other means or because they were being transported to locations outside the National Health Service, such as, to social services day departments or day centres. The NHS does not carry the responsibility for transporting passengers who are not patients. Doctors are asked to take care in authorising ambulance transport and to ensure that they consider the medical need criterion, especially for patients who undertake a course of treatment involving a number of routine attendances at out-patient departments. At first, ambulance transport is appropriate and reasonable for such attendances, but, with progress in the patient's condition, that becomes unnecessary. That means refusing people a service that they had before and, naturally, they may feel aggrieved. However, it is right to refuse that service.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister has not reconciled her answer with her letter to me about abuse. There may have been marginal problems, such as the ones with the social services, which could have been ironed out, but a massive cut of 40 per cent. surely needs more explanation than the rather administrative jargon that the Minister is pumping out.

Mrs. Currie: I am doing my best to answer the hon. Gentleman, but as I told him at Question Time recently when he raised this matter, he never likes my answers, and I suspect that he never will——

Mr. Spearing: Because they are such bad answers.

Mrs. Currie: —but I shall go on giving them in the way that I wish and in the way that I think is right. So long as I stand at this Dispatch Box I shall give the answers, and he will no doubt go on disagreeing with them.

There have been calls for the criteria for ambulance transport to be extended to include social and economic grounds, for example in a report published last year by Age Concern. I have every sympathy with pressure groups which we fund, which fight hard for the interests of their clients, but the NHS resources must be used efficiently and for health purposes and health care and not for other purposes. The ambulance service must be included in this. It is not a taxi service. Nor is it a bus service provided free of charge. It is a highly specialised service with skilled personnel. To use it as a free bus is the equivalent of using an operating theatre for a tea party.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister comment on what the Medway health authority thought was the economical use of the ambulance service? I cite the case of Hayley Girt. The ambulance was called at Sheppey hospital at 1.1 pm. Hayley Girt had been bitten by a dog and needed stitches and had to be transferred to East Grinstead. Because of the excessively economical use of the ambulance it went to various parts of the area to pick up people, and Hayley did not arrive at East Grinstead and begin to have stitches in her face until 4 pm. Would the hon. Lady regard as economical use of a non-emergency ambulance a child having to wait three hours to have stitches in her face, having had to go all over the country before getting the treatment that she needed?

Mrs. Currie: Has the hon. Lady sent me details of that case?

Ms. Harman *indicated dissent.*

Mrs. Currie: When she sends it to me, I will respond with pleasure. With the scale of activity of the London ambulance service, it would be absolutely amazing if there were not occasional problems. It would be nice—and the ambulance staff would welcome it — if Labour Members, including the hon. Lady, praised the service sometimes for the exceptionally high standards that it achieves most of the time.

There are provisions for patients who do not qualify for ambulance transport to have their travel expenses to hospital paid under the hospital fares scheme. Help with the cost of travelling to and from hospital for treatment is given automatically to people in families whose heads are receiving regular weekly payments of supplementary benefit or family income supplement. I suspect that that is not nearly widely enough known or widely enough claimed. In addition, help is provided for people in families whose income after payment of the travelling expenses in question would be barely sufficient to cover their requirements, assessed broadly by supplementary benefit standards. This assessment takes account of the expenditure incurred in attending hospital, and expensive journeys—again, such as those my constituents have to make — could bring patients on a modest or average income within the scope of the scheme.

These arrangements may not cover all cases of difficulty, but they help to remove some of the apparent anomalies to which attention has been drawn tonight. The intention is that help should be given to those most in need. Any extension of the present scheme could have considerable financial implications and we must be aware that that would inevitably divert money from direct patient care.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Minister accept that it is not well known in some circles that such payments are available? In any event they have to be claimed in arrears and are often difficult to claim because of staffing cuts in the section of the DHSS that deals with social security benefits. I have often come across cases of people who have been unable to get to hospital with that kind of assistance because they simply could not claim the money to get there.

Mrs. Currie: I can equally well think of a number of cases, particularly of constituents of mine who have had to travel to London for specialist treatment, who have found it tolerably easy to claim and who have become aware of how to do so through my advice and assistance. It is available and it is part of our job to see that people are made aware of it.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Lady speaks of her constituents. What about others?

Mrs. Currie: I see what the hon. Gentleman means. I remind him that my majority went up at the last election.

The Rayner scrutiny, to which reference has been made, on non-emergency ambulance services, which we published in March 1984, indicated some inefficiencies, and particularly the lack of any link between controlling the demand for transport and its cost. The scrutiny proposed no change in the basic criteria for ordering ambulance transport, and that remains the position. The responsibility lies with the clinician in charge of each case to request transport for those patients who need it. The ambulance service must then provide the most appropriate form of transport.

It has always been open to ambulance services to use taxis, hire cars or private contractors where it is cost effective to do so and where it is in the patient's interest. That did not just start in 1984. The scrutiny report underlined that and reminded us of it. It encouraged a more flexible approach to solving transport problems. That means that health authorities are indeed considering the benefits of using private sector vehicles and the voluntary sector where that would best serve patients' interests. Although that trend is increasing, as the hon. Member for Islington, North rightly said, it is not new and has always been an option that has been used by health authorities around the country.

Private contract or volunteer car driver arrangements can be better for patients in rural areas, and when used appropriately can reduce Health Service costs. I honestly cannot see what is wrong with that. I know that the hon.

[Mrs. Currie]

Member for Islington, North used the word "horror". His approach to this matter is quite ludicrous, and I suspect that the reason he does not like it is that it is a privatised service and therefore not accessible to his comrades in the National Union of Public Employees.

Mr. Corbyn: If I may say so, that is an extremely unfair way of dealing with a very serious concern. Many people are worried that well-meaning, but totally unqualified and inexperienced people are taking patients around and that they are unable to cope with an emergency, which might occur while the patients are in the car. It is not the sane, sensible or safe way to take hospital patients around. It is a cut, because it is the ambulance service, not various oddbod volunteers, that should take those people around.

Mrs. Currie: I merely point out that in the west country, where there is a proposal to remove the service, people are up in arms about it. They have no worries about whether the driver can respond in an emergency.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Currie: No, I do not have much time and I listened to the hon. Lady for 27 minutes in the previous debate and I have not finished what I want to say.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister has yet to reply to me.

Mrs. Currie: Quite right.

The hon. Member for Islington, North also raised the question of the GLC. I know that Opposition Members would love to see the return of a body like the GLC. Heaven help us. I cannot imagine anything worse. The GLC is dead. Like Mr. Cleese's parrot, it is an ex-GLC. It no longer exists.

At the moment the London ambulance service is managed by the South West Thames regional health authority on behalf of all the Thames regions within the Greater London area. The area is very extensive, the service is the largest in the world, and the health services are concentrated more there than in any other part of the country. Under the management of South West Thames, the London ambulance service has a headquarters and a number of districts from which the day-to-day operation of the service is organised.

With such extensive cross-boundary flows of patients, several of which have been accurately described tonight, between the various district health authorities I cannot see how the present organisation can be further streamlined. Given the hassle which the whole system has undergone in the past year or so, it would prefer a period of quiescence to ensure that the service can be delivered.

I am given to understand, and I believe, that the London ambulance service is now meeting all the demands for non-emergency ambulances that are legitimately being made upon it. There have been steady improvements in the level of service since the hon. Member for Newham, South rightly began to raise the issue. The management of the London ambulance service is not yet satisfied that a compeletely satisfactory quality of service is being provided everywhere. We are always concerned if patients are experiencing delays in reaching appointments or have to wait before being returned home. The problem varies in size from division to division in London. I understand that the north-east division, which covers the constituency of Newham, South, is receiving a very good service.

Steps are now being taken to improve the quality of service everywhere by continuing to recruit part-time staff who will start work at 8 am to ensure that patients are delivered in time for their hospital appointments, and work late into the evening so that patients can be certain of being returned home. Part-timers are being used to provide much greater flexibility in the use of manpower.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned ORCON. I am afraid that he will get the same answer as he has had before—that his constituents get an average 10-minute service. The responses are better this year than they were last year, and we hope to see further improvement. My constituents have to wait much longer for their service and travel much further than anybody in London.

Where the London ambulance service knows that delays are occurring, it is discussing means of overcoming those problems with the hospitals concerned. Extension of the use of the hospital car service is one way in which this is being done. Another is an experiment at the Charing Cross hospital, where a taxi has been provided to act as a sweeper to take four or five patients home if an ambulance would not be available immediately to transport them. I take the point that their journey may be slightly delayed, but they may prefer to be in the taxi and on their way home to having to wait for an ambulance which may have been diverted to deal with an emergency.

The London ambulance service is the biggest in the world. Each of the four divisions that make it up is bigger than most ambulance services in the country, even those covering other metropolitan areas. It is a huge management task, and I have no doubt that if one hunted long enough and ferreted around one could provide problems and difficulties in individual cases.

Ms. Harman: They come into our surgeries.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure they do, but with 5 million emergency 999 patients and 21 million non-emergency journeys per year I am not in the least surprised that some are not satisfactory.

The LAS is taking some measures to improve quality and cut down the inconvenience caused by late arrivals and waiting times. When Opposition Members have genuine specific complaints they wish to raise, I should be more than happy to have them investigated. The hon. Member for Newham, South knows that we investigate all complaints, although it is disappointing that when we investigated some points raised by the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) in August of this year we found that they were two years old and had long been investigated and dealt with.

The hon. Gentleman raised a point about defibrillators. I had the privilege of watching the London ambulance service staff being trained to use them. They are used to treat patients whose heart may have stopped. My only criticism of the London ambulance service is that when we were standing around discussing health care afterwards, it turned out that every ambulance man who was being trained to look after heart patients was a smoker, and so was quite likely to need the services of his colleagues if he carried on smoking and suffered heart disease.

Mr. Corbyn: It is the tension of the job.

Mrs. Currie: All the more reason for not smoking.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I agree with the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

The high-profile ambulance service is always the object of complaint, rather than the praise that it rightly deserves. The service depends so much on the men and women who staff the ambulances, and I am glad to take the opportunity to recognise the outstanding contribution that they make to the provision of health services.

Mr. Spearing: Does the hon. Lady realise that the complaints have been, not against the ambulance service and the dedicated personnel, but against the Government who do not give the ambulance services enough resources? Will she now say why she disagrees, if she does, with the formula that I suggested at the end of my speech, that the service must be demand-led, be based on the orcon standards, that there must be an arithmetical calculation of what is required, and the Government must provide the money, vehicles and equipment to meet those standards?

Mrs. Currie: I would have thought that providing more staff and a pay rise was a fair start in that general direction. I note the point that the hon. Gentleman has made, and he has had his reply to it on many occasions. I have nothing to add tonight.

Glasgow-Dumfries-Carlisle Railway Line

6.23 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, who is responsible for railways, for being here to listen to and answer the debate. He was kind enough to receive a delegation from Dumfries and Galloway regional council, and an all-party delegation arranged by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), who has been prominent in seeking changes to the proposals from British Rail. The proposals are the most serious changes in British Rail policy for south-west Scotland since the Beeching changes in the 1960s when the Dumfries-Stranraer direct route was closed. Throughout south-west Scotland there is widespread fear that the proposals presently before the public herald a further rundown in services, leading eventually to the closure of lines.

South-west Scotland covers part of Strathclyde and represents the whole of Dumfries and Galloway, and it is a significant area of Scotland. We cannot believe that the Government will allow BR to denude such a large area of a good train service. It will certainly have a damaging effect upon the economy and it is contrary to the Government's laudable efforts to build up that economy. The line runs directly through those areas of Scotland with the highest unemployment rates—Cumnock, Kirkconnel and Sanquhar.

The proposals will have serious repercussions on the travelling public, on tourists—we should remember the enormous investment in Butlins at Ayr—and on freight. In May 1988 BR proposes that there will be no sleeper service on the line. It will withdraw the Glasgow-Kilmarnock-Dumfries-Carlisle sleeper entirely and divert the Stranraer-London sleeper via Glasgow and the west coast main line service to Carlisle. It will withdraw the through train service from Stranraer to London via the Nith valley line and withdraw the sleeper service from Lockerbie on the Glasgow-London service.

I am a great commuter, and there is no greater supporter in this House than me for travelling by rail—I have little alternative. I am aware that restrictions will be placed on my travelling and on people travelling in the south-west of Scotland if the proposed changes are made.

If there are no through trains on the Nith valley line, everyone who wants to go south will have to change at Carlisle. That will involve all the problems of luggage, of the disabled getting in and out of trains and, of course, of getting on trains that are overcrowded on the main Glasgow-London service. I know that BR says that people can catch a local train and then get a sleeper at Carlisle, but that sleeper is frequently full on Sunday nights when, more often than not, I travel to London. I do not see how the additional passengers can be carried on Sunday nights. Indeed, during the day the London trains are grossly overcrowded.

Inevitably all the problems will drive train passengers to travel either by bus to London or certainly by car to Carlisle. That will result in a further depression in the number of passengers who will use what will then become a provincial route from Kilmarnock to Carlisle. That will add to the statistics that will enable BR to close the line entirely.

All this is inexplicable. Dumfries has just won the award for the best station in the United Kingdom. We

[Sir Hector Monro]

welcome the investment that has been made in improving that station. Indeed, Stranraer and Locherbie have also been improved. There are splendid staff at all the stations in south-west Scotland. I am sure that the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun will discuss the line further north if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The National Union of Railwaymen has put in an immense amount of work through that great character, John Flanigan, who works so effectively in the Dumfries area. Its reward has been to see a definite reduction in services. That reduction has been taking place steadily and now it has reached the point where it can go no further. British Rail promised us that if the NUR and the region accepted the single tracking of the line it would be profitable and economic to run the line in future. We agreed to that; now we are to be let down. British Rail promised that there would be a new signals system, which would mean the loss of many jobs but, again, would help profitability. We accepted that, and again we are being let down. We were promised that Annan station would be upgraded, and that it would be manned. We have been able to prove that there is a rising income at the station. The promise was made as recently as May, but the station is now unmanned.

An unmanned station in the middle of the night is a pretty daunting affair, especially for a lady passenger waiting for a train. The station is a long way away from other residences, and has no telephone. It is impossible to know whether a train is 10 minutes or two hours late, and I would not recommend standing there alone in the middle of the night to any passenger.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the hon. Gentleman know offhand what the unemployment rate is in Annan? Is it not ludicrous that Annan station, like many others, should be unmanned when many people in such areas would be only too grateful for a job there?

Sir Hector Monro: Indeed. It was very sad when those two men lost their jobs, or were moved elsewhere, when the station was unmanned in October. The hon. Gentleman is right: unemployment is relatively high in Annan, particularly male unemployment. That economic argument is another reason why it is so sad to see such things happening.

We were also promised when Lockerbie station was improved that there would be no rundown in the service. That was as recently as February of this year. Now it has lost its sleepers. What can we believe? We are told that Sprinters will be the answer—local trains and, of course, constant changing at Carlisle. The Sprinters have not yet been built; I have shown my hon. Friend the Minister a press cutting which says that they may not be available until 1989. In any case, they are no substitute for the through inter-city trains that we are about to lose.

Members of Parliament from all parties—including two Ministers and Members from Northern Ireland—regional, district and community councils, the Enterprise Trust and the business community all believe that the loss of the present services will have a serious impact on south-west Scotland. My hon. Friend the Minister really must believe that the weight of evidence is of great significance, and should be accepted.

A big public meeting in Kilmarnock was arranged by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, who took the chair. It was very successful, and a number of speakers from all walks of life highlighted the importance of the line. They spoke from experience, which they seemed to possess in far greater depth than those who spoke on behalf of British Rail.

We have also had meetings with British Rail in Dumfries and Galloway, organised by the Regional council and supported by the District councils. There was unanimity of a strength that I have never encountered before in the whole of south-west Scotland on the view that British Rail's changes were going too far, and must not be implemented next summer.

Of course, we realise the Government's objectives. We wish British Rail to be profitable, and we accept the implications of the public service obligation grant. We also accept that the Government do not wish to be involved in the day-to-day running of the railway: indeed, that would be impossible. However, what we are discussing is not day-to-day running of the railway, but a major change in policy. An inter-city route with sleeper services has become a provincial service, with changing at Carlisle. There are grave possibilities concerning the future impact on the economy of south-west Scotland.

The Government must involve themselves; they must be interested in how the taxpayers' money is to be spent and what British Rail's priorities are for south-west Scotland, because the repercussions are contrary to the Government's industrial development policy. We will certainly face a reduction in investment from outwith the region. We will see a reduction in the ability of local firms to compete with other firms elsewhere, because we will not have an effective rail service. We will certainly see a reduction in tourist income — I have spoken about Butlins at Ayr—and there will be a further undermining of the economic situation at Cumnock and Sanquhar.

Strathclyde region and Dumfries and Galloway region have played an important part in trying to sustain the railway system in south-west Scotland. They have helped in many ways, through rail cards and publicity campaigns. But this local effort should be matched by a real marketing drive by British Rail; it should concentrate on this for two years and only then contemplate changing the service if its promotion efforts have not added greatly to revenue. I have grave doubts—perhaps the Minister will comment on this—about the statistics that are thrown at us by British Rail on the number of passengers. Certainly they seem far fewer in number than I note with my own eyes as I travel by day and by night.

Investment in British Rail elsewhere is at a very high level. I noticed only recently that there was to be £383 million for London commuters. Just a morsel of that would be of tremendous value to south-west Scotland in making the system more efficient, effective and profitable. We are concerned that all the efforts of British Rail will in the end drive the trains on to the east coast route and make the whole of the west coast route provincial.

British Rail should not live in an ivory tower. It has its part to play in running the nation. It has a duty to serve us and to improve the quality of its trains. If it fails, it must be the Government's duty to take steps to rectify the decisions of British Rail. To whom else can the public turn, except to the Government, to correct those decisions by British Rail that are contrary to the interests of the people who live in south-west Scotland?

Mr. Dalyell: East coasters, of whom I am one, view this matter with considerable concern because, as I hope to argue briefly, either the Edinburgh-Linlithgow-Glasgow line or the Edinburgh-Falkirk-Shotts-Glasgow line will have to be electrified to take the through trains from King's Cross. That means that our local services, if the London trains are late, are thrown into chaos. Speaking for the Linlithgow commuters and for the people in Fauldhouse and Shotts, I view this with the greatest concern. We want the west coast route.

Sir Hector Monro: I certainly take the hon. Gentleman's point: if the electric trains stopped at Waverley life would be very difficult for his constituents in central Scotland. I wonder whether British Rail has thought it through and realised in what direction it is going.

We have no air service. We have to rely on rail for long-distance travel. Although the local road service is improving all the time, that does not help us with day-in and day-out travel to and from the south. We feel that we are being badly let down by British Rail. I ask the Minister to explain to British Rail that major areas of Britain such as south-west Scotland cannot be thrown on the scrap heap when it comes to inter-city services. I hope that when he replies to the debate the Minister will be able to give us an encouraging response and tell us that he will at least highlight our concern to British Rail itself.

6.40 am

Mr. Willian McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I am indebted to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) for being lucky enough in the ballot to give us the opportunity to debate a very important issue for all of us in Scotland, not just for those who use the west coast line, and for many of the kind things that he has said about me in the debate, inasmuch as we have managed to work together for a common cause. I do not want this to be a mutual back-slapping debate, but the respect of the people of Ayrshire for the hon. Member for Dumfries in his fight to retain this train service is considerable, and is probably equalled only by the admiration of his constituents for the manner in which he has carried out his duties in this regard.

I shall not bore the House with all the details, but it is necessary to give a brief history of the matter. It came about in a most appalling fashion. I received a quite cryptic letter on 24 August, advising me that intercity would be axing overnight services from Glasgow via Kilmarnock, Dumfries and Carlisle to London.

It is necessary to chronicle the loss that was envisaged. The 22.15 nightrider, which was an all-week train, was to be rerouted; the 22.25 Paddy, which is commonly used on this line and is routed from Stranraer through Kilmarnock and Dumfries to the south and which ran for six days a week in the winter and seven days a week in the summer, was to be rerouted; the 10.55 Paddy, which was a six days a week train, was to be withdrawn completely; the 21.05 Paddy from London to Stranraer, which ran for six days in the winter and seven days in the summer, was to be rerouted; and the 23.00 nightrider from London Euston through Kilmarnock to Glasgow, which again ran for six days a week in the winter and seven days in the summer, was to be rerouted.

The letter arrived out of the blue; there had been no consultation whatsoever with any of the areas concerned, the trade unions or any of the regional or district councils. In an area spanning several hundreds of miles, not one single thought had been given to the effects of these cuts on the socio-economic aspects of the area. That led us to believe that these decisions, affecting large areas of Scotland were being made in London.

The travelling public, and the people who represent them at any level, were not to be consulted. I passed the information directly on to the Kilmarnock and Loudoun district council because I was appalled at what has been intimated in the letter. To its credit, the council called an emergency meeting of district and regional councils and interested bodies in the area. Incredibly—the meeting was called at short notice—we had a maximum turnout of the people involved. We unanimously condemned the manner in which this information had been given, and everyone was appalled by the prospect of losing these services.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I assure Scottish hon. Members that we in Northern Ireland would have been represented at that meeting, but, because of the short notice, it was not possible to attend. Nevertheless, we view with concern the threat to our economy in the diminution of services. Great efforts have been made recently by the Northern Ireland tourist board to attract visitors. Now that there is some improvement in the overall security and a better image of the Province is being projected, it is regrettable that there is a diminution in real services in Scotland and that inconvenience will be caused to those wishing to travel through to Stranraer. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there could be a threat to our rail services from Larne to Belfast if we lose further travellers who would have used the through train?

Mr. McKelvey: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. I shall be mentioning the positive part that other hon. Members have played in making representations to British Rail.

One thing is certain: all district councils were in agreement—a feat in itself—as were different political parties in condemning the way in which we were being treated. Parliamentarians united in their opposition to the proposed cuts and a meeting was held in the House, to which we invited Mr. J. R. Ellis, the general manager of ScotRail. On that occasion the hon. Member for Dumfries and I were supported by colleagues and friends from the House, including my hon. Friends the Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie), the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker). To unite that group in one cause is even more spectacular than uniting the Ayrshire and Galloway districts in a common cause.

We went on to hold a public meeting in Kilmarnock. That was attended in large number by all the councils, authorities, churches, anyone who had any responsibility for representing people, and the people themselves. There were representatives from across the entire Ayrshire, Galloway and Dumfries geographical area. I chaired that meeting, which included as a speaker the hon. Member for Dumfries. He received a rapturous welcome in what might be called a Labour stronghold. The meeting was attended by Jimmy Knapp, the general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen. He felt so moved by what we had

[Mr. McKelvey]

told him that he was determined to be there. From an overseas trip he came directly up to Kilmarnock on a flight —there was not a train available to get him there on time—so that he could present the views of the NUR.

After the speeches, the general manager of ScotRail was presented with a petition. That petition called for the cancellation of proposals that would reduce rail services to Kilmarnock, the Nith Valley and Dumfries and Galloway and provide the opposite; that is, to enhance services for all of those areas to meet social need and assist in the development of tourism and employment opportunities in the future. That point has already been mentioned. We were able to say that the petitions had been signed by 4,500 people. It had been put together in less than 10 days. A total of 1,581 signatories were from Kilmarnock and Loudoun, 97 from a neighbouring constituency and 2,825 from Dumfries and Galloway. Names were still being added to the petition and it was to be forwarded to British Rail. Public feeling was very strong on the matter about the way in which we had been treated.

On Monday of this week, accompanied by two councillors from Kilmarnock and Loudoun district council, John Blaney and Gus Steele, a group of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Dumfries and my hon. Friends the Members for Cunninghame, South and for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, met the Minister of State to tell him what was happening. We felt that the Government ought to bear some responsibility for the attitude of BR, or at least to be made aware of its attitude, which was that we should not complain to BR because it was merely carrying out Government policy to make the line profitable.

One of the problems is that the Minister gave us figures, which he had been given by BR, which we could not believe. BR said that about two passengers were using the line each day. I took the opportunity to check what happened the previous day — Sunday. With the assistance of the union and BR, I discovered that between 16 and 20 passengers used the service to Kilmarnock alone. I know some of them, and I shall give the Minister their names in case he wants to check. There was Stewart Boyd, a regular traveller because he commutes to work in London, John Moffat, John Blaney, Gus Steele and several others — they know them but I do not — who could be named if an investigation was necessary. The train uplifted another 20 passengers between Kilmarnock and Annan.

The stations are unmanned, which presents a difficulty for some people who want to use the service. It is not possible, for example, to go to an unmanned station and get a sleeper ticket to the south from a machine. People who want to do that have to go to a travel agent, who will book the ticket through Glasgow, so the sale appears on the Glasgow figures, not the unmanned Annan station.

Some £380 was derived from those who made the short journey from Kilmarnock to Annan. Such a sum is not to be sneezed at, and it is additional to the fares that were paid through travel agencies. To compound the mystery of the missing travellers, Councillors Jim Mills and John Blaney, who were coming down to London on Thursday for a meeting with Dr. John Prideaux, the manager responsible for intercity services, managed to get a sleeper down, but could not get a sleeper back. Believe it or not, the sleeper compartments headed for Kilmarnock are sold out. BR says that the route is unprofitable, but people who want to travel on it cannot get a sleeper because all the places are sold. It just does not add up.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the sleeper is full of people wanting destinations on the Nith line or Glasgow? BR's proposed alternative service would cover the second point.

Mr. McKelvey: I cannot tell the Minister, nor can BR, where those people will alight. I know, however, that two passengers wish to alight at Kilmarnock and will not be able to do so because there is no room for them on the train. However the sleepers are booked and, whoever books them, it is evident that if I could not get on the train to Galloway, there would be no way that I could get to Annan. Even the Glasgow sleeper was full, so that evening none of the sleepers was available to get our two colleagues back to the north. They had to travel by plane in the afternoon, something that they did not want to do because they are not particularly keen on flying. Again, the opportunity of travelling by rail had been denied them.

That is part of the argument that we are using with British Rail. It has simply looked at book figures and told the Minister that only two passengers were on the train. I can understand why in that case it became unprofitable to run that line, but the figures are not correct. If the matter is looked at in that way, British Rail will be slashing lines and services the length and breadth of the land, even more than it is doing at present.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Dumfries will be happy to hear that one positive thing to emerge from this is that there has been an increased interest in services since the campaign started. The key factor is that British Rail does not advertise the services. In fact, it carries out negative advertising, hoping that people will not use the services so that the figures will show that no one is using the services that it is providing. British Rail should be marketing its services vigorously so that profitability can be achieved much more readily than at present.

We do not want the routes to be selected directly on the basis of the figures supplied by British Rail. If that were the case, the district and regional councils might have to promote some kind of survey to get the real figures, and they might have to bill British Rail if it is not prepared to carry out such a survey on our behalf.

The results that are deliberately brought about by the policies of sustained neglect on behalf of British Rail must be overturned by figures which show the true and honest position of the travellers. We are looking not for a decreased service in an area that has suffered serious economic blows in the recent past, but the reverse. We want the services, in an area that is crying out for them, to be increased and enhanced. If British Rail pushes forward in that direction, it will have all the Members of Parliament, all the elected representatives and all the public in that area on its side, united in the one cause.

6.57 am

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow):

"One cannot go to an unmanned station and ask for a sleeper ticket".

I commend the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudon (Mr. McKelvey) to *The Observer* and other such places which run "sayings of the week." My

hon. Friend is one of the genuinely witty Members of the House and this is a case for all his powers of ribaldry in a good cause. If I went, proverbially, tiger shooting in the cause of a railway, there is no one whom I would rather have with me than my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudon.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro). Let me tell him and the Conservative party a salutary little tale. In 1958-59 I was the Labour candidate for the Borders. I received 10,000 votes, and I remember it vividly because that was the time of the threatened closure of the railway at Hawick, Galashiels, Melrose, St. Boswells and Newcastleton. It was "Beechingised."

The result of all that was a Liberal candidate unexpectedly winning a by-election and the humiliation of a new Conservative candidate, the late Commander C.E.M. Donaldson, my opponent in 1959 having had a sizeable safe majority. That was a blue-chip Conservative seat, but once the railway was taken away it was transformed into a Liberal seat. The Liberal candidate, now the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the leader of the Liberal party, was the beneficiary of the removal of that railway.

I am not in the business of defending Conservative seats, but I gently remind the Minister that if these plans go ahead, one result will be that the hon. Member for Dumfries or his successor, will not win at the next election. Certainly the Minister of State, Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) will lose his seat. There is thus a political calculation to be taken into account. I hope that that will strengthen the Minister's hand when he points out these issues to those who run the Conservative party.

Neither the French nor the Gemans would dream of closing such a railway in any part of their country that was in any way comparable to Dumfries. Among the European nations, only the British would even contemplate doing such a thing.

In any case, I am not a Member of Parliament for the west of Scotland although I do have a strong locus. I should explain to the House that I have the good fortune to have been sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen for 10 years. Although not a penny comes to me personally, I believe that union sponsorship should be declared. I also declare an interest from the point of view of my constituency. On 3 November 1986 I asked the then Secretary of State for Transport whether he was

"aware of the great increase in traffic at the stations of Linlithgow, Polmont and Falkirk High and the success of the Edinburgh to Glasgow line in recent months? In those circumstances, is he sure that an added electrification route from King's Cross to Edinburgh and then on to Glasgow will not damage the successful traffic between Edinburgh and Glasgow? This is very important to my constituents."

The then Secretary of State for Transport, the present Secretary of State for Social Services, answered:

"I always consider the hon. Gentleman's detailed comments carefully. I am not aware of the precise details about increases in traffic, but I shall consider the matter."

To be fair to him, the right hon. Gentleman told me outside that he would consider the matter seriously. He added:

"I do not imagine, however, that what the hon. Gentleman has said denies the high quality investment which most people regard as of great benefit to the east coast line."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1986; Vol. 103, c. 671.]

To that I say amen. Investment in the east coast line is undoubtedly important. I believe that the Secretary of State for Transport did consider those matters.

On 6 April 1987 I asked what information Ministers had

"as to when British Rail expects to complete its assessment of the case for investment in the east coast route King's Cross-Edinburgh, and onward routes to Glasgow."

I should say that I have a high regard for the Minister because I believe, as do many in the NUR, that he has a genuine interest in railways. I do not say that to flatter him, but because we believe that it is true. He replied:

"East coast mainline electrification was approved in 1984 and it is expected that the scheme will be completed on schedule in May 1991. BR is still at an early stage of assessing whether there is a case for electrifying any further route from Edinburgh to Glasgow."

I should say that 1991 is not far away.

I followed up with a supplementary question:

"Before any conclusions are reached on the matter, could there be some opportunity for public discussion as to whether to electrify the Fauldhouse-Shotts route, or the Linlithgow-Polmont-Falkirk route? Are there not grave implications, one way or the other, for local services, which could be disrupted by long distance London-Glasgow traffic via Edinburgh?"

The Minister replied:

"The hon. Gentleman is making a perfectly fair point—one which should certainly be considered. At the moment no proposals have been received from British Rail by Ministers, so we are not yet in a position to give the further examination that is needed."—[*Official Report*, 6 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 8.]

Your parliamentary neighbour, Madam Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), who is now chairman of the NUR group and who has personal experience of the railways, has told me of the great difficulties on the Coventry-Birmingham line. If ever a train is late, local Coventry-Birmingham traffic is thrown into difficulty. Just imagine a long-distance route, on which there can be delays. If a long-distance London to Glasgow train were delayed, what would happen to commuter services between Edinburgh and Glasgow?

I speak as someone with both a constituency and a personal interest. There is nothing like a personal interest to goad Members of Parliament after a long night's sitting. I take on board the point made by the hon. Member for Dumfries about his sleeper. I also have a personal interest. I frequently use the Linlithgow-Edinburgh and Linlithgow-Glasgow railway line. If there are constant changes because of the need for through trains, what will happen? My questions are perfectly fair. I ask them on behalf of my constituents rather than for myself. As yet, there has been no answer.

Until an answer to this part of the jigsaw is forthcoming, for heaven's sake do not let us talk about closing down any west coast line or altering west coast services. Even though British Rail engineers say that an hour will be saved by routeing London to Glasgow traffic through Edinburgh, that is not necessarily an overall satisfactory consideration. I shall leave that point, because the Minister must have time to answer. Until there is a decision on electrification of the Edinburgh to Glasgow line, the Government should go no further with BR, in tampering with west coast considerations.

The debate also relates to the Settle-Carlisle railway line. On 20 December 1984, I asked the Secretary of State for Transport

"if he will make a statement on the future of the Settle to Carlisle railway line."

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

We have the great advantage of a Minister being in post for many years, rather than flitting from one post to another. The Minister said:

"British Rail has published a proposal to withdraw passenger services from this line. The proposal is being dealt with in accordance with the procedures laid down by Parliament. Objections from users will, therefore, be considered by the appropriate transport users consultative committees, which will report to my right hon. Friend on any hardship they consider withdrawal would cause. My right hon. Friend will then decide whether to give his consent to the proposal, having regard to all the relevant factors, including social and economic considerations."—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1984; Vol. 70, c. 277.]

I mentioned December 1984 because a great deal of water has passed under the bridge—perhaps I should say the viaduct—since then. It reinforces the view that it is a long saga. It has gained momentum. It is fascinating to see how those who have worked so hard on the Settle-Carlisle railway have had a great influence on national public opinion.

On 30 July 1984 I referred to the Ribblehead viaduct. I asked whether the line qualified for heritage funds, and the Minister replied:

"The eligibility of projects for heritage funds is a matter for the organisations which control them. I have control over none of these bodies."

I then asked:

"Is the Ribblehead viaduct any less of a monument to its age than, for example, Chatsworth? Will we simply allow it to crumble? This is quite apart from the value of the diversionary line from Scotland to England, which, presumably, will be more important if there is to be the east coast electrification?"

The Minister replied:

"It will be for British Rail to consider making an application at the appropriate time, when it knows the future of the Ribblehead viaduct, which is tied up with the decision—not yet taken—on the future of the Settle-Carlisle line. What the hon. Gentleman has said is absolutely reasonable and proper, but must be set in the context that there are eight listed or scheduled viaducts on that line."—[*Official Report*, 30 July 1984; Vol. 65, c. 10.]

What is the present thinking on the heritage aspects of the Settle-Carlisle viaduct?

On 21 April 1986 I ask the Secretary of State for Transport again about the Settle-Carlisle railway line:

"Is it not a fact that 80 per cent. of the work that needs to be done is in employment and less than 20 per cent. in materials? What are the real costs, in view of the numbers that would then be employed? Does that not put the preservation of the Ribblehead and other viaducts in a different light?"

The Minister replied:

"The hon. Gentleman has drawn an interesting point to our attention. However, Ministers will have to consider the proposals for closure in a quasi-judicial capacity. It would be quite wrong today for me to give an indication of my view of the hon. Gentleman's point."—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 1.]

What is the present thinking on the heritage aspects of the Settle-Carlisle line? I returned to the subject on 12 December 1986, when the Minister said at column 273 of *Hansard* that he could not make a statement because he had not seen the report of the transport users consultative committee, which was due on 17 December. There is a history to the matter, and this is an opportunity for the Minister to bring us up to date on the heritage and other aspects of the Settle-Carlisle line. We wish to allow the Minister time to reply, and I thank the House for hearing me.

7.10 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I join my hon. Friends in congratulating the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on raising this subject. It is splendidly appropriate that the House should be debating sleepers at this stage of our annual exercise in parliamentary insomnia, and I was reflecting on that as I made my way to the House at half-past five this morning.

The fact will not have been lost on the Minister that this is the second time in the past fortnight that he has been hauled to the Dispatch Box to answer for British Rail's efforts to sabotage some of its services to and from the south of Scotland. I hope that the Minister is getting the message, which has come now from the south-east of Scotland, as well as from the south-west of Scotland and from Northern Ireland, and has been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that he will use the influence that he certainly has to do something about the British Rail proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) has spoken eloquently on behalf of his constituents. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and other hon. Members from Ayrshire have made strong representations about British Rail's proposals as they affect their constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has quoted some relevant evidence that he has collected from various sources about the real level of use of the service on the Glasgow-Kilmarnock-Dumfries-Carlisle railway line. He has also highlighted an apparently disturbing failure by British Rail to consult local communities about its proposals to alter the services on that line.

I must say that I find it difficult to understand the attitude of British Rail towards its potentially excellent sleeper services. The new sleeper coaches are of a high standard of comfort and safety. The facilities for comfortable and reliable overnight travel should be an attractive alternative to the vagaries of air travel within the United Kingdom nowadays. Indeed, it is worth referring to a very effective advertising campaign that British Rail ran last year, or the year before, in which it compared the comfort and convenience of sleeper travel with the hassle discomfort and uncertainty of domestic air services. Sadly, it is becoming clear that British Rail wants to pick up sleeper passengers only at the major centres, such as Edinburgh, Glasgow and Carlisle, and that anyone from intermediate stations will have to whistle.

Sleeper services have great potential, but on both the east and west coasts British Rail seems hell-bent on sabotaging that part of its business by deterring potential customers. My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun complained about the lack of information and poor advertising of the rail services in his part of the country. In some of these areas, the sleeper service could appropriately be described as the secret service. One cannot understand why British Rail is trying to sabotage its service in this way, unless it wants to do away with it on those lines. In that case, it ought to be answerable to the Minister and to the House.

I suspect that this factor is not unconnected with the financial constraints imposed on British Rail by the Government. The impression given is that the service is run by accountants rather than by railway men, and by

London accountants at that, which is certainly a disturbing consideration for us in Scotland. This slide-rule approach to what should be a national service, compounded by the factual errors that were highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, means that passengers will have to travel to mainline centres to catch Inter City trains—or lump it.

On the east coast — we discussed this with the Minister earlier—my constituents and people from the north-east of England will have to travel all the way up to Edinburgh to connect with overnight trains to London. We now discover that, on the west coast, people from Ayrshire will have to travel to Glasgow to obtain services to London, and people from Dumfries and Galloway will have to travel to Carlisle to catch such services.

Inevitably, in circumstances such as these, local communities will lose out. They will be deprived of access to services which are convenient for holiday-makers and visitors going in both directions and provide essential lines of communication to business men, professionals and administrators who need convenient access to London in this extremely centralised United Kingdom. Without good transport facilities, such people will find it impossible to go on living in the rural communities of south-west Scotland. The economy will be affected if such people find it necessary to move away. People in Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire who will be bypassed will lose out; but British Rail will lose out, too, as a result of this cut in its services. It will deprive itself of the possibility of picking up a significant and potentially growing number of passengers at the intermediate stations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow rightly compared the situation with what happened on the Waverley line between Edinburgh and Carlisle many years ago. British Railways, as it was then known, attributed all the costs to the running of that line, including even a share of the running costs of Waverley station, without taking into account the fact that it provided an essential feeder service for its other main line services. British Rail has cut its own throat by doing away with that service. It has been harmful to the Border communities, which have lost their railway service, and to British Rail. I know for certain, because my wife unwillingly spent a long time there last Saturday, that Waverley station is still there, with its associated costs. What is missing, because of the Waverley line closure, is the revenue that could have come in from passengers in the Border area.

It is time that British Rail started to learn from this type of experience. It is cutting off its own life-blood by cutting off access to potential customers in these areas. The Minister can quote figures, but if my experience on the east coast is anything to go by, the position has been aggravated by poor information, lack of consultation and unsatisfactory or wildly fluctuating timetables.

I hope that the Minister will re-examine the issue and apply pressure to British Rail. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, I am a strong supporter of the railways. He is sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen, and I am sponsored by the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association. I believe strongly in the principle of the railway service. It has tremendous potential. It is valuable that BR is investing in electrification and other improvements, but it is sad that other, locally-based aspects of the service are now under threat. That could be bad for the long-term good of the railway service. I am alarmed by the damaging impact of Government financial constraints on this vital part of our national transport network. I support the efforts of my hon. Friends and of the hon. Member for Dumfries to protect railway services in their parts of the country, and I certainly hope that the Minister's response will be positive.

7.19 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and the hon. Members for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) made some significant points in this debate. I fully appreciate that British Rail's decision presents difficulties to those hon. Members and to others who regularly use the line. I can understand why they feel bitter about the handling of British Rail's decision.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) spoke about the inadequacy of consultation. I shall draw that to the attention of the chairman of British Rail. As hon. Members will appreciate, this decision was taken by British Rail and not by Ministers. British Rail did not consult me or my right hon. Friend, because we have no role in decisions of this kind. British Rail runs the railways and it is for British Rail to take and explain the hard decisions.

I fully appreciate the point that hon. Members made about the need for an explanation. I can only suggest that the hon. Members concerned take up these points directly with the British Railways Board. I understand that they are shortly to meet Dr. Prideaux, the sector director for intercity. They may also want to meet the sector director for provincial services, particularly in connection with the concern expressed by my hon. Friend about when the proposed Sprinter services will be introduced on this line.

It may help the House if I explain the background to British Rail's decision, and the relationship between Government and the British Railways Board. For many years it has been the policy of successive Governments that interurban long distance services should not be subsidised. This policy was first set out by the last Labour Government in their transport policy White Paper of 1977, which said quite plainly:

"There is no case for subsidising inter-urban services."

It is in pursuit of that policy, with which the Government agree, that we have told British Rail that its intercity sector will not be eligible for public sector obligation grant after the end of this financial year. We have set all British Rail's commercial businesses the combined objective of making a 2·7 per cent. return as a current cost operating profit on net assets before interest by 1989-90. The Government are well aware that this represents a tough target for British Rail, but it is not an impossible one and has been accepted by the chairman.

The intercity sector's performance has improved considerably and more improvements are forecast. Investment in major schemes, such as the electrification of the east coast main line, will obviously help. We believe that in the long term there will be significant improvements. British Rail will have greater freedom to manage its business and will have even more incentive to offer its customers an attractive service at an attractive price. That is how British Rail will succeed in the market place. It is in this context that British Rail has examined

[Mr. David Mitchell]

its intercity services to see where the level of service does not correspond to customer demand and where, as a result, the cost of providing a service is not met by f[illegible].

One of the conclusions it has reached is that some of the existing sleeper services cannot be justified. The position of the service along the east coast main line from towns and cities in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Durham was debated in the House a few days ago. The other is the Nith valley line, which runs from Carlisle to Glasgow through Dumfries and Kilmarnock to the west of but not quite paralleling the west coast main line. However, at the same time as it is withdrawing these trains, British Rail is introducing four new sleeper services that will link major centres of population in Scotland, the west midlands and the south coast of England. Therefore, improvements are being made and sleeper services are being tailored to meet market demand.

Hon. Members must recognise that anybody providing a service where the market is changing ought to meet increasing demand by providing additional services. The other side of that coin are the reductions where there is an inadequate number of customers to warrant providing similar services.

Mr. Dalyell: Has the whole problem of the Glasgow-Edinburgh electrification and the overcrowding on that increasingly used line been taken into account in this jigsaw?

Mr. Mitchell: That aspect of that line did not appear in the proposals of my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries in raising the matter of the Nith line, so I do not have the information the hon. Gentleman seeks. But I will write to him with the information as soon as possible.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister has confirmed that it is the intention of BR to continue running sleeper services between the main centres. The hon. Member for Dumfries pointed out that many communities along the length of that line would like access to those services. The Minister has explained that the services will be there but will take a slightly different route. Why is BR so hostile to the idea of picking up passengers at intermediate stations on services which it will continue to provide?

Mr. Mitchell: I will explain the position, and the hon. Gentleman may want me to give some detailed information when I come to the question of the costs of operating this service in parallel with the west coast main line service for sleepers.

There are just three intercity trains in each direction along the Nith valley line each weekday. One, the sleeper between Stranraer and London, calls at intermediate stations along the line in the small hours of the morning and is hardly ever used by passengers at these stations. The stops are principally for parcels, including the mail.

The hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) expressed concern on behalf of travellers from Belfast, and particularly those who go through the main town in his constituency, Larne—I am personally familiar with the port there. This service will be re-routed via Glasgow but the passengers are unlikely to notice the difference as they will of course be asleep.

The second intercity service is one of the sleeper trains between Glasgow and London which is routed down the Nith valley. Most of the passengers on it travel to and from Glasgow. According to BR's records, at the latest count, in October, there were an average of 10 sleeper passengers, or five at two particular spots. I must admit to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries, who came to see me with a deputation, as did the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, that I referred at that time to an average of two passengers. I now discover that that was a survey carried out by BR during August, and some may think that a slightly eccentric time to carry out a survey. The October survey, which I think hon. Members will accept as being a realistic time to carry out a survey, showed that there were 10 sleeper passengers.

Subsequent to my meeting my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries and the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun yesterday, I discovered that there were 24 seated passengers a night—not sleepers but seated passengers—who joined the train at intermediate stations on the Nith valley line on the south-bound journey. On the north-bound journey, when the train stops at Dumfries at 5.03 am and at Kilmarnock at 6.30 am the figures were much lower. I understand that some hon. Members may wish to challenge these figures, even the revised ones that I have now given.

Sir Hector Monro: The 25 seated night passengers travelling from Kilmarnock or Dumfries to London, on reaching Carlisle in future on the Sprinter service, will have to get out in the middle of the night and wait for goodness knows how many hours for perhaps a non-existent train to the south because they will not have available the sleeper service that waits in the siding at Carlisle. Is this not rather rough justice for them?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has made a legitimate point. As the situation now stands, there would indeed be a two-hour wait at Carlisle. I suggest that my hon. Friend may want to raise that matter with the intercity director and the provincial sector director who will be responsible for the line in future. My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun may want to ask British Rail for more information about the matter.

Mr. McKelvey: Has the Minister considered something that is puzzling me? Irrespective of the number of people travelling south on sleepers as only about one third of them come back, are we to assume that many people are leaving the Kilmarnock, Annan and Dumfries area to domicile themselves in London? How on earth do they return to the area—if, indeed, they are coming back?

Mr. Mitchell: I understand that they come back, but not on the sleeper train. It is not necessarily true that people who travel one way on a sleeper will return on a sleeper. The hon. Gentleman will accept that that is perfectly fair and reasonable. I do not want him to assume that the drift of population from Scotland has been accelerating in the way he inferred.

The intercity sleeper service will be re-routed along the west coast main line where it will not suffer the present disadvantage of needing a locomotive change at Carlisle because the Nith valley line is not electrified and the west coast main line is. That means that there must be a change from the diesel locomotive to the electric locomotive at Carlisle. Passengers from Kilmarnock will still be able to use the service by a connecting train to Glasgow, while those from Dumfries will be able to pick it up at Carlisle.

The third intercity service is the daytime through train between Euston and Stranraer. This will run only to and from Carlisle from next May, and there will be a connecting service to Stranraer.

To sum up, there will be changes to three current services. The Stranraer and Glasgow sleepers will be re-routed via the west coast main line. The daytime service between Stranraer and London will run only between London and Carlisle, with the service on from Carlisle to Stranraer provided by the provincial sector.

I am told by British Rail that all those services are under-used at present. British Rail has told me that savings from changing those three services will be £450,000 a year and the House may be surprised at that figure. The loss of revenue will be about £50,000. In addition, BR expects to make significant savings in infrastructure costs in the longer run. That means that at the moment passengers using those intercity services pay through fares only about one ninth of the total cost of those services. The rest is effectively paid for by the taxpayer or by higher fares for other passengers.

Mr. McKelvey *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. When I first heard that that level of saving could be achieved, I was surprised. He may want to probe the matter further with the intercity director. Of the savings, some £250,000 is derived from the Glasgow sleeper train and £100,000 because a £1 million locomotive will not have to be renewed. That is a substantial sum of money. Fuel and manpower savings are also taken into account. On the Stranraer sleeper, £60,000 will be saved from part of the cost of the locomotive, and on the daytime service £130,000 will be saved from the locomotive and three coaches.

Mr. Dalyell: Has the hon. Member taken into account in the manpower calculation the cost of unemployment benefit paid to someone who would otherwise be employed? The social aspect should enter into the calculation.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman may take that view, but the sleeper attendant does not necessarily come from an area of high unemployment. Moreover, we are talking about a commercial organisation. The hon. Gentleman has not suggested that all business men in his constituency who run commercial organisations should adopt the same view on the cost of employment.

Mr. McKelvey: It is becoming even more frightening. Is the Minister saying that the cost of the line is such that we will save £450,000, part of which would be due to the saving of a new locomotive which would have had to be replaced? If those figures were applied throughout the rail network, only electrified lines would be left, so there is no response other than to eliminate all lines which do not use electrification.

Mr. Mitchell: No; the provincial services of British Rail will continue to enjoy a very high level of subsidy. That subsidy will be available for the operations on the Nith line. We are concerned with three trains which are not provincial service trains, are not subsidised and will form part of the commercial rail network in fulfilment of the policy outlined by the Labour Government in their White Paper.

Considerable doubt must exist about whether the losses I referred to earlier can be defended, particularly given that the current sleeper passengers will be able to pick up connecting trains to Glasgow or Carlisle and still pick up the London services from there. The deputation from the Dumfries and Galloway regional council which my hon. Friend brought to see me earlier this week maintained that the intercity service ought to be continued because it is important to the development of the area. If the members of the delegation believe that to be the case, the remedy is in their own hands: under section 63 of the Transport Act 1985 they have power to pay British Rail for a service to be provided, and if they consider that they can justify the cost to their ratepayers they are at liberty to negotiate with British Rail on that basis. Before the council considers whether to take up the option, it should carefully consider the service which will be provided in the future.

After the withdrawal of through services to London on the Nith valley line next May, conventional locomotive trains will for a short time provide local connecting services, but in October 1988 new class 156 Super Sprinter trains will be introduced between Glasgow, Stranraer and Kilmarnock, via Dumfries and Kilmarnock. Those trains will have air suspension, large picture windows and carpeted floors, and will have a very high standard of comfort. On many trains a trolley catering service will be provided.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries referred to the "second-rate service". I hope he will feel, once he sees the new trains in operation, that it is anything but second rate.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman will recall, from a previous incarnation in Northern Ireland, that whenever there was an argument over whether there should be competition on the London-Belfast air routes we were told that at best British Airways were breaking even. Then, whenever competition became a factor, we discovered that they were making a considerable profit. Will the hon. Member for Dumfries be prepared to go carefully through the books and accounting procedures of British Rail? I am always extremely suspicious when I find that enormous losses have been made by services such as this one which are vital to the community.

Mr. Mitchell: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern.

I know that a number of hon. Members are to have a meeting with Dr. Prideaux who is responsible for marketing, the standard of service and the bottom line. He is in a position to flesh out the bare information that I have given to the House. I am sure that hon. Members will seek to extract from him the full, detailed, information so that they can understand and explain to their constituents the reasons that have led British Rail in the proposed direction.

The new services along the Nith valley and Stranraer lines will be slightly more frequent than the present services. Details of the new timetable are not yet available, but BR hopes to run a daytime service roughly every two hours. That is a distinct improvement on the present service. On the route via Dumfries good connections will be made, via the daytime services with the south-bound trains at Carlisle and a number of trains, including that from Stranraer, will run through to Newcastle.

[Mr. Mitchell]

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries asked about the availability of space at Carlisle. The delegation I saw yesterday mentioned the possibility that passengers who formerly used the Nith valley services would have difficulty in getting on west coast mainline trains because of the shortage of capacity. However, BR says that the daytime services from Carlisle that will replace the Stranraer through service will start from Carlisle and therefore there will be no shortage of seats. Generally, there are occasionally standing passengers on particular problem trains, such as those on Friday nights and holidays.

Sir Hector Monro: I must ask my hon. Friend to check that information with British Rail. I know that it has said that one train will start from Carlisle in the early morning, but all the other through intercity trains will be full of passengers from Glasgow. I know that that is true from travelling regularly.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend has been as helpful as possible, but I believe that the people in south-west Scotland — a large area — will feel thoroughly disappointed that no one is able to defend their point of view. It appears that BR is always right, whatever it says and whatever its facts and figures. The travelling public do not seem to matter. I am extremely disappointed that the Minister is not prepared to arbitrate on our behalf and to tell BR that it is wrong. The elected representatives of south-west Scotland — Members of Parliament and councillors — know that BR is wrong, but we are not getting any support.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has demonstrated well that the people of south-west Scotland have doughty advocates for their case. I am sure that that will be equally true when hon. Members meet Dr. Prideaux to discuss this matter in more detail.

I accept that the much improved Sprinter services, even with good connections, are not a complete substitute for through trains to those who use them. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries can be reassured about the general future of the line. Fear about that has obviously underlain a number of the anxieties that have been expressed.

British Rail is planning to provide a better local service and it hopes—as is usual when a service is improved—that more people will use it. Since 1984 it has demonstrated its faith in the future of the line by opening new stations at Auchinleck and Kilmaurs.

It is suggested by some that Scotland is not receiving its fair share of the benefits of investment in the railways. Surely that can be refuted. On Monday the first stage of ScotRail's new £1 million radio signalling scheme in the west Highlands came into operation. That follows the successful introduction of radio signalling between Dingwall and Kyle of Lochalsh in 1984. Two years later the scheme was extended to Wick and Thurso.

Scottish main lines will be served by the new class 158 express Sprinters, which will be introduced from 1989, giving a faster and more comfortable journey. Earlier this year, the electrification of the line from Glasgow to Ayr and Largs was completed. And, of course, Scotland will benefit from the electrification of the east coast main line from London to Edinburgh, the largest single investment for 25 years and the biggest ever electrification scheme.

I must reiterate a point that I made earlier. It is for British Rail to decide how best to operate its services within the guidelines set by Government. Anything else would be a recipe for confusion. But it has a responsibility for explaining what its plans are, and why changes are being made. From the information BR has given me, it seems that there are good financial reasons for the changes on which it has decided. Nevertheless, I fully accept that some hon. Members do not agree with all the figures that BR has given me. As I said earlier, I hope that my hon. Friends will take up with BR any figures with which they disagree.

It also seems clear that all the changes are not for the worse. For example, the new service that will be provided from next October will in many respects be better than the present one, although there will undoubtedly be a gap between the withdrawal of the intercity service in the spring and the promised October introduction of Super Sprinters.

It is a pity that BR failed to get its message across to the users of the line. There is not much point in its explaining to me what it is doing; I am not a regular user of the line. However, my hon. Friend is, as are Opposition Members. I very much hope that when they meet BR, as I understand they will this week, they will receive the explanations for which they have asked me.

We have had a searching debate. It is not for me to defend all the details of BR's activities; it is for BR to do that. I have sought to give the House the explanation that BR has given me—the reasons that have led it to the changes, which will result in reductions in the sleeper services on the Nith line, but also in the introduction of other sleeper services in areas in which BR, in its commercial judgment, anticipates a growing market. It sees the Nith line as a line that has not been growing over the years.

One point that the deputation put to me when they came to see me earlier this week is the extent of publicising BR's services on the Nith line. Certainly, I hope that they will take that up with BR, not just with Dr. Prideaux when they see him in connection with the intercity services. I hope that my hon. Friend and others will try to meet the sector director for provincial services, who will be concerned with the new Sprinter services, the new timetable and the new connections into the intercity services at Carlisle and Glasgow; and that they will follow up those points specifically at a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Dalyell: I should not like it to be thought that we are slagging ScotRail. It did a very good thing in opening the Edinburgh to Bathgate line, and many members of its management have shown imagination. I should not like the debate to leave the general impression that I—along perhaps with some of my hon. Friends — am being critical of ScotRail. Along with the NUR in Scotland, it has shown considerable imagination in many respects.

Mr. Mitchell: I—like the hon. Gentleman, no doubt—have travelled on that line to Bathgate. It is part of the provincial network, and, I believe, has the current Sprinters. It has been very well received, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing attention to it.

There is a good deal to be gained from talking to those who run the provincial services in Scotland about the timetable, and the provision that they propose to make in future on the Nith line. I hope that that will be followed up.

Flood Damage (Northern Ireland)

7.39 am

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that hon. Gentlemen who took part in the last debate had a very long night because, unlike me, they were not able to slip home for a few hours in bed. I do hope that you managed to get a few hours' sleep yourself before the rigours of the coming day.

We in Northern Ireland are particularly grateful to the hon. Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) for raising the matter that they raised, because it has a bearing on transport from Northern Ireland where there are some people who simply do not like flying all the time. Believing that if the good Lord had meant us to fly he would have given us wings, they prefer to keep their bottoms on something that runs on four wheels. I must confess that if I lived in Great Britain rather than in Northern Ireland I would tend to travel by rail rather than by aeroplane. I do not like aircraft anyway, and I feel most unsafe up there all the time. In any event, we hope that those who look after transport arrangements from Northern Ireland will add their voices to those of the hon. Members who have spoken for south-west Scotland on this matter, because we consider it serious for people who travel by rail from Northern Ireland.

As we come to the end of this long debate, I rise to bring to the attention of the House and the Minister responsible the consequences of the damage suffered in Northern Ireland in the very severe rainstorm in October of this year.

The House will appreciate that there were three swathes of destruction that swept across the United Kingdom in a matter of two or three weeks. The first to suffer was the south of England, which had hurricane winds which caused immense damage, and there was, no doubt, also damage caused by the rain which accompanied or followed the wind. Then there was the enormous amount of damage in Wales, caused by the rainstorm there, followed a week later by rainstorm damage in Northern Ireland. The amount of water that came down in a 24-hour period was quite phenomenal.

The Minister will be aware that I put down a number of questions to him and to other Northern Ireland Ministers about the damage. It was indicated to me that in Strabane district alone 300 dwellings were flooded, in Omagh 84, in Fermanagh 52, in Craigavon 35, in Coleraine 28, in Banbridge 24, in Armagh 16 and in Limavady 13. I believe that those figures are not complete, for there are isolated dwellings in the rural areas which were flooded and which I am sure do not appear in those figures. I have come across one or two in my own area. There were many other areas where there was a considerable amount of damage to a small number of dwellings. In addition, a considerable number of roads were damaged, and some bridges will have to be replaced. At least 25 have been found to be damaged, and I feel sure that that is not the complete list.

There is a real problem in funding from public sources the public works which will have to be carried out as a result of the damage suffered on this occasion. Of course, in so far as the public representatives there are concerned, Strabane district council and Omagh district council have been particularly active in bringing to the attention of Government the damage that was suffered in their areas, and the hardship and loss which were occasioned to many living in those areas as a result of the enormous amount of rain that fell. I would like to commend Strabane district council for the manner in which it has produced a briefing booklet on this matter, which it sent to a number of right hon. and hon. Members, detailing the damage.

I must say that the damage was not limited to that area and, while I have great concern for all who suffered, I know more about what happened in my constituency than in Northern Ireland as a whole. I am just sorry that there are not more hon. Members from Northern Ireland here to take part in this brief debate.

The interesting thing, as those of us who watched television forecasts at the time will be aware—perhaps a word to the House would not be amiss—is that most of the rainstorms that we get in the United Kingdom result from a relatively narrow band of cloud, perhaps 70 to 100 miles wide, sweeping across the British Isles, giving a comparatively short period of time during which rain actually falls. Those who watch the excellent weather forecasts on television will have noted that on this occasion, instead of sweeping across the British Isles, the band of rain seemed to travel along the line of cloud, so that it was prolonged and heavy, which led to serious flooding.

I am told by the Ministry of Defence that the daily rainfall totals were very rare, and have a return rate of 200 years or more. There has been heavier rainfall in the past, but it was over much smaller areas. To be told that this rain storm will occur only once every 200 years is quite horrific, but it proves how serious, unusual and damaging this rain storm was.

The Minister will recall answering a question that I asked on 12 November regarding the flows of the River Roe at that time. He said that the maximum flow recorded in this last flood was 171 cu m per second at 2 am on 22 October. At that time, the banks were widely breached upstream, so the recording gauge was showing a much lower figure than the amount of water that was coming down the river.

Will the Minister check the figures that he gave for the rainfall for that river? It is a fairly substantial stream at that point. The river was flowing fairly fast. I visited the main breaches just above that measuring point a few days afterwards. I noticed that at one point the bank was out for 15 yds and that at another it was out for 20 yds. The flood waters were near the top of a 9 ft high bank, so there was a 35 yd width of water coming through on to the agricultural land behind it. If one measures it, which is not hard to do, the breach in the banks was 35 yds wide, and, even at a depth of 6 ft and a speed of only 3 ft per second, that is nearly 70 cu m per second going through the bank.

I am sure that far more water was travelling down the river. The Minister should ask his officials to check their figures again. When I look at the minimum flow in cubic metres that is recorded for the River Roe at that point and the maximum that was recorded in this and other exceptional floods, I question whether, as an interested lay observer, they have got it right. I believe that far more water was travelling down the river because there is a substantial channel in the river at that point. I know that it can be affected by tides, but not to a great extent.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has written to me and pointed out a number of problems with

[Mr. William Ross]

regard to the flood banks. The reality is that 3 in of rain fell in the catchment area of the river within a few hours, and that was bound to lead to a considerable flood.

How much rainfall are the river banks of Northern Ireland expected to contain? Whenever drainage officials and engineers plan the height, width and size of the banks for any drainage scheme, they have an exceptional rainfall pattern in mind. While the rainfall return period for large areas may be 200 years, there is a shorter return period for rainfall in a given catchment area. I know that there have been rainfalls in various areas heavier than we experienced which have led to extremely large floods in individual rivers. When the engineers are planning flood banks, they obviously have in mind a maximum flood that they should be able to contain and control. What is the figure? What is the frequency of floods of that nature?

We have to ask: what qualifies as a disaster? If we have a normal flood and a normal rainfall the Government will say, naturally, "This is a fairly normal level of risk and we have no responsibility." If there is an abnormal incident, such as we experienced, the Government will say that it was unforeseen, no one could have thought that it would happen and, therefore, they are not guilty again because the flood banks are designed to contain much less rain. For the Government it is, "Heads I win, tails you lose." I believe that we have to define a natural disaster as an event which is unforeseen and causes large losses and damage to individuals and groups.

In many parts of the world such unforeseen events can be tidal waves, earthquakes, volcanoes or drought. In our case it was heavy rainfall. Other parts of the world experience heavy rainfall as well. However, the problem is that the Government put up their hands in horror and wash their hands thoroughly of any responsibility or need to provide adequate compensation and help for those who suffer. I question whether the attitude that has been taken by the Government hitherto is adequate in this day and age when we look at the problems suffered by the people in our country.

The leader of my party received a letter from Lord Lyell in which he said:

"A high standard of flood protection is set in drainage scheme designs but the Department does not, and could not, claim to prevent flooding in all circumstances . . . the Department of Agriculture is specifically exempted from liability for damage resulting from accidental overflowing of a watercourse."

The letter said that the Government did not consider it appropriate to declare a natural disaster as

"prompt and significant assistance has already been provided in a variety of measures and EC aid is on its way."

That is nonsense. The aid that has been provided is infinitesimal in relation to the scale of the damage and loss suffered. In that letter we see the Government washing their hands of any willingness to help on a major scale.

Whenever there is drought in Ethiopia, which sadly seems to be recurring, and when there are major disasters such as earthquakes, floods or fires in Third-world countries, Ministers come to the Dispatch Box and announce a package of aid. A considerable amount of help is often sent to foreign countries. Does charity not begin at home? Have we forgotten the needs of our own people, many of whom suffer grievously? As I have pointed out already, the floods in Northern Ireland were the third occurrence in a group of natural disasters hitting the United Kingdom. They happened one after another, ranging from the south of England to Wales and Northern Ireland.

Looking at the number of dwellings and commercial properties that were damaged in Northern Ireland, one begins to get an impression of the scale of the damage. Five hundred houses were damaged, as were 200 commercial properties, which included some shops in which the stock was washed out of the doors. Six manufacturing premises, schools, houses and hospitals were damaged, poultry, sheep, pigs, and cattle were drowned, and heaven alone knows what else. I know that in my area 70 acres of potatoes simply disappeared under water and have been a complete loss.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in 1985, the Department of the Environment acknowledged that the stone barrier wall running parallel to the river along Lower Main street from Strabane bridge to the camel's hump was faulty and perforated in no fewer than 10 places, and that an earlier report had been commissioned by the Department of Agriculture? Does he further agree that the Minister should have that latter report published, as it is perceived that the failure by those Departments to act has contributed to the flood damage to premises and property in the area?

Mr. Ross: The wall has been there for a long time. We must ask why repairs were not carried out promptly. One exceptional flood showed up all its weaknesses, and its collapse led to millions of pounds worth of damage in Strabane. The damage which would arise as a result of the wall collapsing was bound to be considerable, and the Government had a responsibility to maintain it.

The Minister may say that the Government do not cover people for matters that are normally dealt with by insurance, but that they have instructed Northern Ireland Departments to act as sympathetically as possible on individual problems. The problem is that not all damage is insurable, and some is insurable only at prohibitive cost. Farmers Union insurance covers most agricultural insurance in Northern Ireland, and I am informed that flood damage is covered as an extension of storm damage where the flood risk is normal. That means flood damage is covered when the risk is tiny.

A farmyard on the top of a hill will not be flooded very often, but some people have to live in flood plains because that is where their land is situated. Insurance companies do not want to know such people. If there is a history of flooding, the chance of getting cover disappears. The result is that the individual has to bear the cost. I believe that it is time that that cost was spread more widely. A relatively small proportion of people live in flood areas.

There are similar problems associated with insuring livestock in buildings. There is not much choice with poultry. One cannot let them out of the house, so they simply drown. A constituent suffered just that, and he faces a loss of £15,000 or £16,000. Stock in fields can be covered, but it rarely is. I have constituents who knew that the water was coming but could do nothing about it because the land was so flat and the area so extensive. Stock simply stayed out until it drowned. Sheep and cattle lose their heads, of course, and the poor things get frightened, so when there is water around their knees in the middle of the night it is impossible to chase them out of danger and in some cases it would have been a risk to human life to try to rescue the stock.

There were two breaches in the banks of the River Roe 35 yd total width at Ardnargle just below Limavady. Ardnargle is at the upper end of the lower flood plain, much of which has been reclaimed. It is perhaps the only area in Ireland where the land has to be pumped to keep it dry, as some of it is below sea level. A huge amount of water got out and flooded at least 1,000 acres several feet deep. The farmers discovered that although the floods dropped in a matter of hours, there was no way that they could get the water off the land. It simply stayed there because the outlets are 12 in or 15 in pipes. It was there for a week, and when I went there it was like looking at Lough Neagh. One man had a pool of water in a brand-new house. That did not look very nice. He lost many things. Other householders also suffered grievously at Limavady and Articlave where, although living 12 ft or 13 ft above the stream, they still had 3 ft of water in their houses. That was completely abnormal and unexpected. In some cases people were not insured and lost all their furniture and everything else that they possessed.

When the flood banks broke at Ardnargle the water went down behind the banks and stayed there. I have put a number of suggestions to the drainage division to try to have works constructed which will get the water out quickly. The officials and engineers are making arrangements to see me in the near future about that to see whether my ideas are feasible. I think that they are, but they may be rather costly.

I can only say that in an area of such valuable agricultural land one must take exceptional measures to protect it in future. It is also important to realise that my proposals will simply do what should have been done when the river was first banked nearly 30 years ago. There is no point in building banks to keep water out when there is no way of getting it out once it goes over or through breaches. This is not the only area where that can happen, but it is certainly serious here.

I hope that the Minister will give an undertaking to look seriously at my proposals, and, if they are not acceptable, to come up with something that will work.

In some areas no banking has been done because of the nature of the subsoil. I refer here to the Rivers Agivey and Bann where there are serious problems which cannot easily be righted. Will the Government find a means of paying grant to farmers and others to protect their dwellings by erecting low banks, or let the drainage division do it? Many dwellings in those areas could be protected in future by a bank 4 ft or 5 ft high with a long sloping profile. Many other measures could and should be taken to give future protection, but that does not compensate for the suffering caused by this most recent event.

The local councils, the Housing Executive and even the Coal Board, God rest them, did their best, but I have a bit of a crib against them all. Councils cannot take powers to deal with flood damage on this scale. The Housing Executive was caught without any means of drying out houses, although it did its best, and the coal board donated 50 tonnes of coal, but only to Strabane and Omagh. But, as I pointed out, the damage was far more widespread than that. It does not matter whether it is one of the 300 individuals who suffered loss as a result of 3 ft or 5 ft of water in a house in Strabane, or a farmer or other rural dweller who suffers the same sort of damage, the individual hardship is the same in all cases. Yet here one group of people received aid which was not made available to all. Surely that is inequitable and unjust and simply should not happen.

The DHSS made emergency payments and then asked for them to be paid back. Those emergency payments could only be made to one class of people—those who qualified in normal circumstances. Many people simply did not qualify for that aid.

Most modern furniture, especially kitchen furniture, being made of chipboard, was good for nothing but throwing out once water got into it. In many cases, furniture worth many thousands of pounds has had to be dumped. Of course, some of the people affected had insurance, but, for one reason or another, others did not.

The EEC appears to have made available £150,000, but the damage runs into millions of pounds. I do not know how that money will be shared out, but, even if it is shared equally, it is a tiny sum. Can the Minister tell me exactly how much aid has been made available, how much it represents per household, how it will be shared out and why the decisions were made as they were? There seems to be quite a lot of inequity in the system that was used.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Before the hon. Gentleman leaves that point, will he remind the House which Ministers came to see the results of the flooding that he has described to the House?

Mr. Ross: As I understand it, Lord Lyell visited some farmers and the Secretary of State visited one or two farms that were affected. I believe that most of the Ministers with this responsibility came down. Indeed, people were glad to see them. However, it is not really the Minister's face that those people want to see; they want to know whether some active, concrete help can be provided.

I turn now to the repair of public utilities, including roads and bridges. This will run into several million pounds. How will that be funded? Will it come out of the normal allocation of money, or will it be treated as an extra, which must be met from, for example, the Contingency Fund?

The plain truth is that the Government have a responsibility when banks have been breached. I think that they are trying to dodge that responsibility, and I do not blame them for that in the light of the cost that would be involved. However, I do not think that they should be allowed to get away with it either. A great problem is that there does not seem to be any system in Northern Ireland —or, indeed, in the United Kingdom—for dealing with natural disasters. It is all very well to say that the security forces, the councils, the Housing Executive and the voluntary agencies behaved magnificently, but there does not seem to be any cohesive plan to put into action. There does not seem to be any means whereby everbody is told to get out and do something when the disaster is actually happening. Above all, there does not seem to be any means of providing financial aid to those who have suffered, without any possibility of an insurance settlement. Indeed, they will not have much chance of getting insurance in the future, having been flooded once.

There does not seem to be much understanding of the emotional disturbance, specially to old people of being flooded. If the Minister were to consider the research that has been carrried out into this subject, he would find several consequences, a number of which are unquantifiable. There is the sheer destruction of the quality of

[Mr. Ross]

lifestyle, the anxiety that it will happen again, and the problem of damage to health, which, is a real problem to those who have suffered. There is also the risk to life. No-one lost their life, but some people came close to doing so.

Above all, can the Minister give me an assurance that the Government are to consider more seriously and sympathetically the way in which people will be compensated or helped for the damage and loss that they have suffered? It is not good enough for the Government to say, "Yes, it has been a dreadful time we are very sorry. We are going to help the Ethiopians, because of their starvation and drought problems, but we are only going to be sorry for the folk at home and not provide any real help for those who have suffered a substantial loss, whether it be furniture or belongings or the loss of thousands of pounds worth of crop and stock to farmers." In some cases, that will wipe out the farmers' profits for two to three years. It is not enough for the Government to say that they are sorry, because they have a greater responsibility than that.

Society should have a greater responsibility for those who are unfortunate enough to suffer in such circumstances and extend a helping hand to them. A helping hand is needed at this time. There is a catalogue of hardship and trouble not only in my constituency but throughout Northern Ireland, and it needs to be met. Although no hon. Members from the south of England or Wales are present, the Government should be far more sympathetic to people who suffer in extreme weather conditions. Their plight should be met with extreme and exceptional measures.

8.20 am

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) on the manner in which he brought this serious matter to the attention of the House. I shall make only a brief comment to the Minister. We have been corresponding about many areas in my constituency in which flooding regularly occurs. I hope that the Minister's statements will bring positive results and prevention in such areas in future.

In October this year, two locations in my constituency which normally would not be flooded, were flooded. It is possible that there will be repeated flooding through similar circumstances elsewhere. Such circumstances are preventable. First, flooding occurred at a house at Cairn castle, which is outside Larne. It was the direct result of the construction of a new building at a higher level. No consideration had been given to the drainage of the site. It is believed that the natural drainage had been upset by the developers. They simply filled in the drains to make a driveway to the new property. The result was that when heavy rainfall occurred water did not follow its natural course, but literally gushed down the steep roadway and flooded the unfortunate householder's property.

The second incident occurred at Inverary heights, which, again, is just outside Larne. It is a new private development. I have no doubt that before the development could proceed and planning permission could be given the approval of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food drainage division had to be sought and advice given about the size of the piping that was required to culvert a natural watercourse. However, the grille that was erected at the edge of the estate, behind the back garden of No. 7, became blocked. No. 7 has been flooded on two occasions this year. That has never happened before in the history of residents who have lived in Carrickfergus road for 30 or 40 years. Water penetrated housing foundations through the ventilators and the residents are alarmed that it could happen again.

I bring the matter to the Minister's attention and request that the planning service for which he has responsibility take steps to persuade new developers, be they large or small, to take proper account of natural drainage and avoid upsetting it. In addition, will the Minister ensure that where a grille has been installed with culverting, a secondary grille is put in front of it so that if the first becomes blocked and there is an overflow, the newly-installed culvert will catch the water and the surrounding areas will not be flooded?

More important, can the Minister tell me who is responsible for maintaining and cleaning the grilles at the entrances to culverted water courses if such permission is given? Is it the Department of the Environment, or the Department of Agriculture? Does responsibility revert to the land owner who has benefited from the sale of development land? Someone must be responsible, as presently people suffer neglect by whoever is responsible. I hope that it will be possible to avert flooding in future by closer co-operation between the Department of the Environment and the Department of Agriculture.

8.26 am

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The House is indebted to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) for bringing the issue to our attention. He is right to say that floods in the south west of Britain and in Wales received much attention in the press, but the disaster in Northern Ireland has not received the attention that it warrants or the aid that is needed from the Government. The hon. Gentleman is correct to press the Government to provide more assistance for rebuilding the infrastructure destroyed by the floods, and to provide additional financial assistance to those who have lost their property. The hon. Gentleman is doing a duty to all the people of Northern Ireland by bringing the matter to our attention.

I am pleased that the Minister is here to answer some of the specific questions put to him by the hon. Member for Londonderry. If the Minister is not an expert on meteorology, some of those advising him are and they should be able to provide us with information about the speed of water flow in rivers and the likely effects of erosion during a flood, and over 200 years. I am not sure that those questions can be answered at this time in the morning, but the Minister has notice of them. They might usefully occupy the Minister, or someone in the Northern Ireland Office, in a PhD study for the next three years. The questions are posing and imposing, and I look forward to hearing the Minister give his answers—which I hope I will understand—in a few moments.

It is a pleasure to speak in a debate on Northern Ireland that does not begin with a criticism of the hour of the day or night at which it is held. We all realise the crucial importance of this issue and we are pleased that it is being debated, even at the fag end of a very long day.

As the House knows, we are concerned with the floods that occurred as a consequence of heavy rainfall on 21 and 22 October, particularly in the western part of the

Province. As the hon. Member for Londonderry, East said, many hundreds of homes were damaged, if not destroyed, by the flood.

I shall rehearse the figures again, for the benefit of the Minister and of the House, to show the scale of the financial losses involved. At least £1·3 million worth of damage was done to household contents; about £5 million to £6 million worth of damage was done to shops and their contents; and an unknown quantity of damage was done to farms, farmlands and the cattle or other beasts on that land. The roughest estimate that can be given is that about £10 million worth of damage was caused by the flood.

The Northern Ireland citizens advice bureau described the area affected around Strabane as a disaster area. Strabane district council described the flood's results as a catastrophe. I am sure the Minister will have read the council's report, to which the hon. Member for Londonderry, East referred. I want to associate myself with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about it. It was a first class effort on the part of the council to highlight the difficulties and the plight of people living in that area.

The Government have readily accepted some of their responsibility for the damage. At least some of the seven bridges that were destroyed in the Strabane area have already been replaced by temporary ones, and plans are afoot to replace them more permanently. A plan has been announced to build a new flood wall in the Strabane area at a cost of £4·5 million. I see the Minister nodding his agreement to that. I might add that that is rather like locking the stable door after the horse has bolted. The Minister and the Government know that an incident in 1985 showed that the flood walls could be breached—as they were—and that there was a danger that if high floods occurred in the future the kind of catastrophe that took place on 27 October might result.

Mr. William Ross: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should draw to the Minister's attention the fact that the Government are largely responsible for unlocking the stable door in the first place. With regard to land drainage, there have been large grants to farmers and others all over the country for many years, which increases the flood over a shorter period of time. In other words, the flood profile, although not measurable, has certainly altered in a serious and disastrous fashion.

Mr. Marshall: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am sure the Minister heard the question, and will, we hope, reply to it eventually, perhaps in the form of a written reply.

It is right to ask the Government why the flood wall was not repaired after the incident in 1985, and why it took two years to bring to the design stage a scheme to replace the existing flood wall.

I shall now deal with the question of compensation for personal and business losses. As the hon. Member for Londonderry, East said, the Government have taken the line that it is not their responsibility, but the responsibility of people to seek compensation on their own insurance. That is a ridulous attitude for the Government to adopt. As the Minister must know, about 66 per cent. of the people affected by the disaster have no relevant insurance. That is not through any lack of forethought on their part. As the hon. Member for Londonderry, East said, one reason is that the cost of taking out insurance is prohibitively high. Another important reason is that the unemployment rate of about 44 per cent. in this part of the Province is not only the highest rate in the United Kingdom, but is among the highest in western Europe. It is hardly surprising that these poor souls cannot afford insurance. In that context, the £500,000 that the Government have made available is totally inadequate to meet the scale of the problem and the needs of the area.

It is time that the Government accepted their responsibility and their liability. The floods resulted from Government failure to take action on the flood wall. The danger was brought to the attention of the Government in 1985. I understand that it was reported to the Department of Agriculture and was known by the Government. Because of that, the Government should accept their responsibility. They should declare Strabane and the surrounding area a disaster area, admit their liability and negligence and be prepared to accept claims for compensation.

Mr. William Ross: While Strabane had many flooded houses, the damage throughout Northern Ireland was great. Instead of asking for help only for Strabane and Omagh, the hon. Gentleman should extend his remarks to the whole of the Province. As I said in my speech, the damage to a person in a rural area is just as substantial to that person as is the damage to a person in Strabane.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am not trying to ignore the difficulties in the other parts of the Province and I fully accept what he has said. However, I think he will agree that the concentration of destruction was far higher in the Strabane area than elsewhere in the Province. If the Government were to accept liability for the consequences of their negligence, all the people in the Province would be able to claim against the Government. I emphasised Strabane and district because of the concentration of destruction that took place there.

As I have said, the Government should declare Strabane and the surrounding area a disaster area and admit their liability and negligence in respect of the burst river banks and the river wall. I understand that the Minister visited the area on Thursday and, as is his fashion, he had many pleasant words for the people who live in the area. Unfortunately, his warm words bring cold comfort to those who are suffering financial hardship. He could give more succour and hope if, as a result of the debate, he was able to offer more financial assistance. I hope that after the debate the people in the area will no longer feel that they have been ignored by the Government at a time of desperate need. I hope that the Government can offer some comfort to the people of Northern Ireland, and especially to the people in Strabane and the surrounding area.

8.40 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): As the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said, it is usually at the fag end of the day that we conduct our debates on Northern Ireland. Perhaps at this hour of the morning we are sharper in our wits than we are at midnight.

I welcome the opportunity afforded by this debate to discuss the important issues that the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) raised concerning the

[Mr. Richard Needham]

appalling flooding that took place on the night of 21-22 October. As hon. Members have pointed out, the damage was extensive, particularly in Strabane and Omagh, but also on an even wider geographical basis than that.

The survey that I initiated after the Secretary of State asked me to take overall ministerial responsibility for the floods—and I pay tribute at the outset to the work that is being done by the Omagh and Strabane district councils in discovering the extent of the problems in their areas—showed that 337 houses in Strabane were affected, of which 199 are owned by the Housing Executive and 138 are either privately owned or rented. Structural damage was estimated at £370,000, with a loss of contents figure of £1·3 million. Of those 337 houses, 227 were not insured.

In Omagh, 148 properties were affected, of which 139 were privately owned and nine were owned by the Housing Executive. Estimated structural damage was £480,000 and contents damage £470,000, and in that case only 59 of those properties were not insured. About 50 properties outside Strabane and Omagh, to our knowledge, were affected, but I accept that it probably goes wider than that, and we shall do whatever we can to discover the numbers because, as the hon. Member for Londonderry, East said, it does not matter, when one is flooded, whether one is in a residential park of 20 or on one's own in the countryside.

In both towns, Strabane and Omagh, 200 commercial properties were flooded with substantial losses of contents and stock, which we have not yet been adequately able to identify, and six major industrial sites — Nestles in Omagh and Sintons in Tandragee, for example — also suffered severely.

In terms of agricultural land, fixtures and fittings, we estimate that £300,000 worth of damage was done in the constituency of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East, with the loss of 310 sheep, 13,000 poultry, 33 hectares of potatoes, 100 hectares of cereals and oil seed rape, of which about 50 per cent. may have to be resown.

It is right to bring to the attention of the House the size of the flooding on that night. It was an exceptional flood, one which would not normally occur more than once in perhaps 140 years. That gives an idea of the size of the downfall of water.

We must pay tribute to the work that was done that night by the emergency services throughout Northern Ireland. They behaved splendidly in dealing with the problems in appalling conditions. The police, the UDR, the fire service, the DOE, the Housing Executive, the electricity service, the district councils, the Health and Social Services Board, local voluntary groups, Help the Aged, the Red Cross, the Churches, St. Vincent de Paul and so on, all worked remorselessly to assist those who were suffering.

I accept what the hon. Member for Londonderry, East said about the need for departmental organisation to ensure that we have adequate co-ordination if such an eventuality should recur. In reporting back to the Secretary of State, I shall be looking at all these matters and making suggestions where necessary about the organisational structure which is currently in place for dealing with catastrophes of this sort.

The Government take their responsibilities extremely seriously. The action that we have taken already can be considered within two broad categories—action to help individuals, and action to replace and repair the damaged infrastructure. Under the assistance to individuals, we have paid out more than £250,000 in social security urgent payments to more than 500 individuals. Some of that money may be recoverable under the terms of the legislation. However, if some is repayable—and I cannot unilaterally change the existing rules of the social security system—we will ensure that any necessary repayments are carefully and sensitively handled and that people will not be asked to repay in quantity or in time more than they can possibly afford taking into account their problems as a result of being flooded. We will consider each case with great care.

There may be people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency of Londonderry, East who have not made claims under the urgent needs provision but who may well be entitled to those payments. They should go to their local DHSS office to discover whether they are entitled to claim. Even if a repayment is required, it is probably better to follow that route than to borrow money and pay interest to a bank or a money lender. Once the needs have been considered, repayments may not be necessary in any event. I have specifically asked DHSS offices to ensure that anyone who comes in now to make a claim will have that claim considered and met if possible.

Some £25,000 was given in residential and other help by the western health and social services board; and the Housing Executive has done everything possible to assist in drying out with the provision of humidifiers. I agree with the hon. Member for Londonderry, East that it is not necessarily possible to have the right amount of humidifiers and drying out equipment to cope with a sudden disaster of this magnitude.

Rehousing has been undertaken where necessary. As the hon. Gentleman remarked, 70 tonnes, not 50 tonnes, of coal were distributed in those areas that suffered the greatest calamity. I do not deny that there were a few properties elsewhere that also suffered. However, the Government decided that the maximum assistance must go to the areas that were worst affected. That also applied with the aid from the European Commission of about £57,000 which has been distributed to 500 households and represents about £126 each. We have also undertaken to repay any money paid out by the voluntary organisations so that the EEC money can go direct to families concerned and we covered £13,000 worth of the costs that the voluntary organisations had to pay out during the first few weeks. We are also in touch with the Industrial Development Board and the Local Economic Development Unit which are considering their client companies to see what can be done to help if their insurance was inadequate.

We have advised on disturbance and redecoration allowances, where applicable. The Strabane district council has set up a trust fund, and there are statutory provisions for local authorities to help in these circumstances if they wish. That has been done by Strabane.

Mr. William Ross: Councils can make available only very small sums, so they are only a drop in the ocean compared with the damage. Secondly, are the EEC funds being restricted to Strabane and Omagh, or will they be spread over all the people, including my constituents, who suffered? Thirdly, when he talks about the IDB and LEDU

industries, this could introduce another inequity if LEDU industries were not able to get insurance as they were in a flood plain. The whole mess must be sorted out.

Mr. Needham: EEC money was directed specifically at Strabane and Omagh as the worst affected areas. The European Commission asked that that be done, and it has been done. It has also been done at other times when natural disasters have occurred in the EEC, not just in Northern Ireland but in Spain or Italy, and money has been directed to those areas worst affected.

It has long been accepted, not only by the Government but by their predecessor, that Governments do not cover insurable losses, and I do not believe that any incoming Government would change that view. If people are not insured, I accept the point of the hon. Member for Leicester, South about deprivation, but many people who are unemployed have taken out insurance cover and paid their premiums over the years. Neither the Government nor any other Government would pick up the tab for insurable losses in calamities such as this, when insurance companies exist to cover them. It does not make any difference whether it is domestic, commercial, industrial or farming insurance.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East asked whether there is difficulty in people getting insurance, because their land may be flat or the houses in an area which may be prone to flooding. I have looked carefully at this and I have had no evidence put to me that it is difficult to get insurance to cover the one-in-140-years flood. No evidence has been given to me that the premiums were such in the areas affected that farmers, individuals, companies or commercial properties found difficulty in gaining insurance cover. If the hon. Member for Londonderry, East tells me that is not the case, I shall consider it when he writes and gives me the examples. As the Minister responsible, I would welcome any evidence of that.

We have tried to help those people who were not insured and to ensure that we can replace what they have lost, as best we can, through a whole raft of measures. For example, we have given the voluntary organisations in Strabane and Omagh an additional 45 ACE workers. If the hon. Member for Londonderry, East has voluntary organisations in his constituency which wish to undertake work to help others who were not insured and have had losses, if he comes to me with a proposal for additional ACE workers or for help through voluntary organisations — through YTPC schemes or other schemes that voluntary organisations would like to undertake — I assure him that I will look at it sympathetically. We shall do all that we can to help because the fact that somebody has been flooded in Londonderry is no different from somebody being flooded in Strabane or Omagh. I shall try to help the constituents of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East.

Mr. William Ross: I am sorry to intervene as I appreciate that we are running out of time, but since the Minister is in charge of councils in Northern Ireland, will he ask them to quantify the extent of the problem? Will he also ask those councils to conduct the surveys in a similar way to that adopted by the councils in Strabane and Omagh?

Mr. Needham: That is up to the councils. I can ask those councils all sorts of things, but whether they do anything will be entirely up to them. If councils feel that such a survey is worth undertaking, they are free to conduct one—there is no reason why they should not.

I have already said that the greatest amount of damage occurred in Strabane and Omagh. I accept that there are pockets of problems elsewhere. If the local councils feel that they should conduct a survey and then come back to me with ideas regarding what should be done, I shall consider them most carefully.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East has had great experience. Indeed, during his years in this House I have listened to him on many occasions. I acknowledge his background knowledge of agriculture. We shall check the figures regarding the water flow of the River Roe in the way that the hon. Gentleman has suggested and I shall come back to him with the answers.

Let us consider the parameters used by the Department of Agriculture when building flood banks. The Department considers the cost effectiveness of any flood schemes that are brought forward. On agricultural land a flood protection scheme would be created to guard against a flood that happened every five years. If that land was used for cereal crops, such a flood bank might be considered for flooding that occurred once every 20 years. For urban areas protection would be afforded against a flood occurring once every 100 years.

There are grants available to farmers, and if they want to make use of them they should get in touch with the Department to consider what could be made available. I urge the hon. Member for Londonderry, East to tell his constituents to do that.

The hon. Members for Londonderry, East and for Leicester, South invited me to accept liability for what happened at Strabane. They will not be surprised to learn that I shall do no such thing. The Department of Agriculture does not accept liability. If some people believe that the Department is liable, they have recourse through the courts and the courts will decide. I am concerned to make sure that everything is being done to ensure that those who have suffered as a result of the disaster and who are not insured are helped in every way possible within the rules.

I have explained to the House that the Government are doing all that they can to help and that we will bring assistance to all those, certainly in the Omagh and Strabane areas, whose domestic circumstances have suffered. The Government are committed to alleviate those people's problems.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I believe that the Minister visited the Strabane area last Thursday. In the minute that is left to him, will he give the House an idea of the representations that were made to him and his reply to such representations?

Mr. Needham: I went through the same proposals that I have gone through tonight. I also explained, which I have not had time to do on this occasion, about our spending on the infrastructure. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the money that we need to spend to replace the infrastructure will not mean cuts in other services in Northern Ireland.

I also went through the plans that we have, jointly with the councils, for assisting people through the voluntary organisations. Clearly the councils would have wished me to do more, and to compensate those who were not

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insured. I understand that, but I have explained to them and to the House why I was not able to do what they wanted.

Let me briefly turn to the points made by the hon. Member for——

It being Nine o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Copley Marshall and Co. Ltd.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

9 am

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Just as some of my constituents in New Mill might find it odd and unusual that I can go to bed on Tuesday night, wake up and come to the House on Wednesday morning and still be able to make a speech here on Tuesday, so some hon. Members might think it unusual that I can initiate a debate involving a small company which employs only about 45 people and has a turnover of no more than £1·5 million per annum. However, this is a matter of great concern to the firm in question, Copley Marshall and Co. Ltd. and to all its directors and employees.

The textile industry in my constituency, as in many other parts of west Yorkshire, was hit very hard during the recession, and it is a tribute to the hard work and resilience of companies such as Copley Marshall that they survived. Certainly the company went through a very difficult period, but it has now come through the worst and is beginning to prosper again.

As I have said, it is only a small company employing 45 people, and it is fighting hard to make its contribution to the country's economic revival. It is disheartening, to say the least, when small companies such as this find themselves obstructed by a brick wall of British officialdom and bureaucracy, yet that is exactly what has happened in this case. The company was refused an important licence for a consignment of Egyptian cotton yarn which was of vital importance to its business, although import licences had been issued on previous occasions in exactly the same circumstances.

The purpose of my initiating this debate is to convince my hon. Friend the Minister that he should issue an import licence for the consignment. However, I also hope that he will consider whether he should initiate an internal inquiry in his Department to see whether the procedures followed by the import licensing branch are as efficient and faultless as they might be, and to see how the problem—which was of its making—came about. Let me outline the story behind the case, so that the House can understand the problem that Copley Marshall is experiencing.

The company operates in a specialised field, in which it processes dyed cotton yarns for a number of purposes, one of which is use in car trims. Cotton yarn, when fully processed, is therefore exported to firms such as BMW, Mercedes Benz and Audi, as well as being sold to British companies such as Rover and Jaguar, which in turn export many of their cars. Copley Marshall is playing its part in Britain's export drive.

In 1985, Copley Marshall purchased its first batch of cotton yarn from an Egyptian supplier and received an import licence against an Egyptian export licence marked "Out of quota", and also marked with the initials IP. Following that, the company imported further batches, having obtained Department of Trade and Industry import licences against Egyptian export licences, one of which was marked "Out of quota" and endorsed with the initials "IP". Others were marked "In quota". A number of consignments were successfully and efficiently imported, processed by Copley Marshall and sold to a firm in Leeds, which processed the yarn further before exporting much of it. Incidentally, I should just point out

that Egyptian long staple cotton is the only type that is suitable for weaving the narrow fabric required for car trims.

Earlier this year Copley Marshall arranged to import two more consignments of cotton yarn from Egypt and, as in the past, having received the export licence from the Egyptian authorities, arranged to have the yarn shipped to this country. Once the yarn arrived here, however, the company found to its horror that the Department of Trade and Industry was refusing to grant the necessary import licence.

The company made immediate representations to the Department and, receiving no joy, contacted me, whereupon I wrote to my hon. Friend and received, I am sorry to say, the same negative response as the company had received. The reason given for refusing an import licence was that the company had been issued with the wrong type of export certificate by the Egyptians. The fact is, however, that the company had satisfactorily imported previous consignments with exactly the same export licences as it possessed for this year's consignment.

The Department of Trade and Industry admitted in a letter to me, dated 13 August, that its import licensing branch had issued import licences in error against earlier applications. Presumably it was referring to the two earlier Egyptian export licences which has also been marked "Out of quota" and "IP". The company had arranged this consignment in good faith and bearing in mind that there had been no problems whatever with the earlier consignments for which it had had similar export licences, it came like a bolt from the blue to be told that the export certificate issued by the Egyptians was incorrect and therefore an import licence would not be issued. That was news to the company. It was the first time that there had been any problems whatever.

The disturbing aspect of this whole episode is that once the company found itself in this predicament the Department of Trade and Industry seemed somewhat reluctant to do anything to sort out the problem; a problem which was very much of the Department's making, having earlier issued an import licence, albeit in error. The Department suggested to the company that it should seek a new, correct export certificate from the Egyptians. The Egyptians were, however, not in the least bit interested in doing that, because the company had had to pay for that batch of yarn, as it had all the other batches, with an irrevocable letter of credit. The Egyptians already had their money in their pocket and refused to issue a new export licence. So that avenue was closed to Copley Marshall.

The only alternative suggested by the Department was that the company should sell the batch of cotton yarn to a buyer from a non-EEC country, or to a buyer within the EEC, who would guarantee to re-export the yarn to a destination outside the EEC. The company tried all its contacts, in countries as far away as Uruguay, Canada and the United States, but found that no one was in the least interested in buying the product on those terms. So the company has come up against a brick wall and it really does not know where to turn next.

I believe that it is now up to the Minister to help Copley Marshall get out of this serious dilemma. What, therefore, I want to do is to urge the Government to treat this as a one-off consignment and to issue the appropriate import licence so that the cotton yarn can be processed in the normal way. The Minister can rest assured that the company will never again import Egyptian cotton yarn in this manner. The mistake, to which the Department of Trade and Industry was a party, will, I can assure my hon. Friend, not be repeated.

I do not believe that it is good enough for my hon. Friend to say that the quota for Egyptian cotton has been exhausted for 1987, because the earlier consignments, despite the incorrect export licence, found their way to this country and caused no major problems. So I urge the Minister to make an exception for this one batch, which is now sitting in a bonded warehouse in Bradford, gathering dust. It is paid for and it is just sitting there, waiting to be used.

It is fair to say that this episode has cost Copley Marshall a great deal of money. Warehouse charges to date amount to £2,939, the loss of interest amounts to £857 —a total of nearly £4,000, which is irretrievably lost— and there is still £45,000 outstanding. Whitehall bureaucracy and red tape are hindering British industry when it is doing its best to lead the economic revival that Britain so badly needs.

The chairman of Copley Marshall wrote to me and said:

> "There is no hint of an apology in any of the ministry's letters admitting mistakes in the past. I am afraid that it is this sort of high handed attitude that makes one despair of doing business with government departments".

I find it difficult to disagree with him.

I ask my hon. Friend to review the position and grant a one-off import licence to ensure that this company can continue to make its contribution to economic regeneration in my constituency, and to show that the Whitehall machine can respond in a flexible way to specific problems as they arise. If my hon. Friend cannot say that he will grant a licence, I make a plea for him to say that he will not refuse one, but that he will reconsider the matter.

I regret that this saga has had to be aired in the Chamber, but, as the Minister knows, I wrote him three letters on the subject and tabled a parliamentary question, but received no joy. I desperately hope that this morning he will be able to give me a positive message that I can take to Copley Marshall on Friday afternoon when I report the results of today's debate.

I hope that I shall be able to report that this Conservative Government care about small firms such as Copley Marshall in deepest west Yorkshire, and that the Government are flexible and prepared to bend over backwards for small companies that are in trouble. I assure my hon. Friend that if he could give me that import licence to take with me on Friday he would become a hero in New Mill, while at the same time doing his best to further the cause of British enterprise.

9.12 am

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on initiating this excellent Adjournment debate. I have a constituency interest because Mr. Donald Pedder of D. Pedder and Co. in Rochdale is a constituent, and it is he who has arranged these contracts with companies such as John L. Briery and Co. Ltd. and Copley Marshall and Co. Ltd. I have written to the Department on this issue.

The main thrust of my hon. Friend's speech was that Copley Marshall has been misguided by a mistake in the Department and by the Egyptians into thinking that the

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

arrangements that it has used for some time would continue, and that, against that mistake, it has continued to place business.

We all know that it is not easy, in this day and age, to run a company, with so many orders, and matters that we have to take account of, although in fairness we have simplified matters somewhat. Nevertheless, it is difficult to run a business these days.

In good faith, D. Pedder, my constituent, has placed contracts with the two companies that I mentioned, and, as a result, is in awful trouble; the company has paid for the goods, yet they are rotting in a warehouse. I should have thought, in these exceptional circumstances, that the Minister, if he has not come with the good news in his reply, could say that as it is in a dreadful position these goods could be released and worked on. In the future the company will have to realise that rules are rules.

I am the first person to want quotas on textiles imported into the United Kingdom to be upheld. We fought for that for many years, as did the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley. We are not trying to break quotas. We are trying to rescue a company that has got itself sandwiched because of a mistake, perhaps partly of its own doing. However, it was issued with the inward processing stamp, which means that goods have to be re-exported outside the EEC.

Therefore, if my hon. Friend the Minister does not have a happy reply for us today, I wonder whether he would be prepared to go back to the Department and say, "I wonder whether in these exceptional circumstances we can get the company off the hook as long as it is understood that in future no more licences will be issued against that quota."

9.15 am

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Alan Clark): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) for putting his case in such a straightforward and persuasive manner. I assure him that the disclaimer with which he started his speech relating to the scale of the company and the size of the problem was unnecessary. He put his case in a lucid and persuasive way, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) in his brief intervention. I congratulate both of my hon. Friends on putting their case so clearly.

Before I state my inclination on the matter, which I shall do at the conclusion of my set speech, I should first set out the reasons why imports into the United Kingdom of Egyptian cotton yarn are restricted and the rules governing the issue of import licences, which are needed before goods can enter the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth said how important the issue of quotas is. As he knows, I take a great personal interest in that subject. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth attended the last debate we had on the multi-fibre arrangement, and I know that both my hon. Friends have intervened on the subject when it has come before the House.

My hon. Friends will know that there has been an agreement for several years between the European Economic Community and the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt concerning trade in textile products. Under the terms of that voluntary agreement, the Egyptian Government have given an undertaking to restrain their exports of cotton yarn to the Community. They have also undertaken to limit their exports of cotton yarn to a certain level each year for each member state, including the United Kingdom.

The Egyptian authorities implement that undertaking themselves, by issuing export certificates in respect of exports of cotton yarn up to the agreed level in each member state. This system is known as "double control". Anyone wishing to import Egyptian cotton yarn into the EEC must apply to the relevant authorities for an import licence. The import licence will be issued only if the application is accompanied by a valid export certificate issued by the Egyptian authorities.

In addition, the agreement with the Egyptian Government contains special provisions for those shipments which are destined for re-export outside the EEC. Those shipments, which may be re-exported either in the same state or after processing, do not count against the annual restraint levels. The export certificate issued in those cases is the same as that for goods not destined for re-export, but an endorsement of the letters IP is put on the certificate. IP stands for inward processing.

It follows that an application for an import licence in respect of Egyptian cotton yarn which is not intended for re-export outside the EEC can be accepted only if the export certificate does not bear the IP stamp. In the case of the import licence application by Copley Marshall, which is the subject of this debate, the application was refused because the export certificate bore an IP stamp and the goods were not for re-export outside the EEC.

Those are the facts leading to the refusal of the licence application and I do not think my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley would dispute what I have said so far. His argument is that, as the Department's import licensing branch had on two previous occasions failed to spot that export certificates bore IP stamps, there is some kind of obligation to make an exception in respect of the application in question.

It is, of course, regrettable that officials did not detect the earlier cases where incorrect documentation had been present. I regret it and make no excuses. All I can say is that about 180,000 import licence applications are handled each year, and even with the most rigorous system of checking, some cases will slip the net. In those cases, importers may, as happened in this case, benefit unjustifiably through receiving a licence to import goods which should not have been allowed into the country.

Of course every effort is made to avoid such mistakes, but I cannot believe that it is contended that we should allow earlier instances of faulty documentation slipping through the net to be accepted as justification for issuing a licence where inadequate documentation has been picked up. That would make a mockery of the import licensing system. It has always been the responsibility of importers to ensure that they are fully aware of the regulations and documentary requirements in respect of any transaction that they undertake.

It is a pity that my hon. Friend's constituents committed themselves to importing the cotton yarn before ensuring that their documentation was in order. I am sorry if they suffered financially as a result of the refusal. It is essential, however, when operating our import licensing controls, that we keep to our agreements, and that we are consistent in our treatment of importers. Privileged treatment for Copley Marshall would be very unfair to any

other importers where application has been refused because of incorrect documentation and who may have suffered loss or inconvenience putting matters right.

I very much regret, therefore, that I am unable to reverse the decision to refuse the application for an import licence. I can only repeat the advice which I have earlier given my hon. Friend, that if Copley Marshall is unable to obtain an export certificate without an IP stamp, it should seek a customer for the yarn outside the EEC, or a customer inside the EEC who is in a position to process the yarn and re-export it.

Having heard what my hon. Friend said about the company's efforts to find a customer for the yarn which is in bond and clearly a financial incubus upon it, I shall take one more look at the matter. I emphasise that I make such an undertaking without giving any commitment as to the result. My hon. Friends have stated their case clearly. The Adjournment debate process is meaningless if both parties come to the House in set positions and the debate is simply an exchange between two deaf advocates. I shall reconsider the matter, bearing in mind the company's evident hardship. I must also take into account the possibility of my setting a precedent and the implications of that for others who have had a similar experience but disposed of the yarn having suffered some loss but who are back on the right track.

As I have said, I am giving no commitment as to the result, but I shall re-examine the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-four minutes past Nine o'clock am.

House of Commons

Wednesday 9 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Urban Development Corporations

1. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take powers to establish urban development corporations in areas of dereliction in major conurbations in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): The powers to establish urban development corporations contained in the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 apply equally in Scotland.

Mr Steen: The fact that one represents a constituency a few miles south does not mean that one has not had the opportunity——

Mr. Foulkes: Get on with it.

Mr. Steen: —to appreciate the excellent work done in some of the Scottish urban areas, particularly in Glasgow——

Mr. Foulkes: Ask a question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that we shall be able to conduct this Question Time in good humour and in good order.

Mr. Steen: I have not started to ask my question. I said that the fact that one represented a constituency a few miles south did not mean that one could not appreciate the wonders of Scottish urban redevelopment. Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important things in urban regeneration is to encourage vacant public land to be privatised and to get some of the dead land moving in private enterprise?

Mr. Lang: I was most interested in what my hon. Friend had to say, given his well-known expertise in this subject. I entirely agree with him. We believe that the private sector has a very important role to play in the initiatives that we are proposing in urban areas in Scotland.

Mrs. Fyfe: Has the Minister considered the fact that Strathclyde regional council and Glasgow district council are doing their desperate best to help decaying urban areas such as my constituency? If the private sector is dying to invest in Maryhill, where is that money? Why do we not see some of it?

Mr. Lang: I hope that in due course, as we bring forward our proposals, the private sector will become increasingly interested in them. We certainly look forward to working with Strathclyde regional council and Glasgow district council in pursuing this worthwhile initiative.

Shop Premises (Amusements)

3. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to regulate the growth of fruit machines, slot machines and video machines in shop premises and the number of amusement arcades in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Local authorities have power to control the number of fruit machines and slot machines in shops and the number of amusement arcades in their areas. Reports on these facilities, commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, are expected shortly. We will then consider whether the law requires to be amended.

Mr. Marshall: I welcome part of the Minister's reply, but it does not go far enough. He greatly underestimates the problem and the strength of feeling in communities in which amusement arcades are located. Furthermore, it seems that every appeal to the Secretary of State by an applicant is upheld, despite local objections and opposition. Why will he not give local authorities every necessary power to control and monitor the situation and take the necessary action when and where it is needed?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point, and I should mention that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced in May that he had set up a research project to examine the use that young people make of machines in amusement arcades. In addition, he asked the Gaming Board for Great Britain to prepare a report on amusement arcades and a further announcement can be expected when the work has been completed — it is hoped to be before Christmas. I would mention one brief point concerning children. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 gives local authorities wide discretion to attach conditions to licences, and there is no reason why they should not impose an age restriction.

Mr. Canavan: Has all this emphasis on fruit and gaming machines anything to do with the so-called enterprise culture that that bumptious balloon in 11 Downing street is trying to foist on the people of Scotland?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That sort of comment does not help at Question Time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has raised a valid and serious point. It will be considered seriously, as he wishes.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is considerable anxiety about this issue, whether it relates to Glasgow, Shettleston or to the far west of the United Kingdom in my constituency of St. Ives? While I greatly welcome my hon. Friend's reference to the Home Secretary's comment, will he and all other Ministers take account of the widespread feeling on this issue?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most certainly. One important point is that a fruit machine involves a game of chance, whereas a video games machine can involve a test of skill. Many matters require close examination, and that is being given.

Maternity Services (Grampian Region)

4. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the future of maternity services in the rural areas of Grampian region.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): None recently.

Mr. Bruce: May I assure the Minister that he will receive some representations in the near future? In the light of Grampian health board's proposals to close no fewer than six maternity units in the rural areas of Grampian, thus leaving no provision outside the city of Aberdeen and the town of Elgin, does the Minister accept that the position is unacceptable? These proposals have been out for consultation several times previously and public opinion has been clearly stated, but the health board is effectively ignoring it. Would it not be better if the Minister got on with the business of having elected health boards as a matter of urgency, rather than school boards which people do not want?

Mr. Forsyth: The health board has not even issued its consultative paper, so it is premature for the hon. Gentleman to say that people have not had a chance to make representations. There is no proposal for a closure at Elgin. The pressure on maternity facilities is at Aberdeen maternity hospital, where the board proposes to build a new 56-bed unit. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that, instead of pleading the case for facilities which have had occupancy rates of between 16 and 33 per cent.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend recognise that there is genuine anxiety on this issue, that we are dealing with people, not just numbers, and that those in rural areas deserve as much consideration as those in urban areas? Will he recognise that it is not just a question of the number of babies delivered in these areas, but of the useful post-natal and other gynaecological services required? If submissions are made to him, will he please think about the matter constructively, sensitively and sympathetically?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and I assure him that the health board will consider all representations before any decisions are taken. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will consider carefully any submission that my right hon. Friend makes. It cannot make sense to maintain units that are so underutilised that the quality of health care for my right hon. Friend's constituents and others who are expecting babies in the Aberdeen areas is prejudiced.

Mr. Harry Ewing: As the maternity services in Grampian region and throughout Scotland depend largely on nurses, does the Minister think it fair that he will pay only £300 in poll tax from his £40,000 a year income, while nurses must pay £300 from their small salary?

Mr. Forsyth: I do not think that we can take any lectures from the hon. Gentleman or his party on nurses' pay. The Labour Government cut nurses' pay by 20 per cent. and this Government have increased it by 30 per cent. in real terms. We have also increased take-home pay by cutting taxes, which he and the Labour party have opposed at every opportunity.

Nuclear Waste

5. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had and proposes to have with Nirex regarding nuclear waste disposal.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I have met Nirex representatives from time to time to be briefed on their work. I have at present no plans for a further meeting.

Mr. Welsh: Does the Secretary of State expect that if Nirex goes ahead with any preliminary investigations it will follow exactly the procedures adopted in England, without any short cuts? Will he ensure that the Scottish public will be informed if any on-site investigations take place? Does he accept that the Scottish public have an absolute right to be informed of any such activities?

Mr. Rifkind: Nirex's present investigations are concerned with determining what type of site is geologically suitable, whether underground, under the sea, or tunnelled out from the land. It will be a considerable time before it thinks in terms of any individual location in any part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets and consults Nirex, will he draw its attention to the fact that there is great anxiety in parts of Scotland as a result of the mis-statements and misinformation that have come from the Scottish National party? I draw his attention to the fact that Schiehallion in my constituency was named as an area where nuclear waste would be dumped. There is no substance to the story, which came from the SNP.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend should take some comfort from the fact that no constituency in Scotland has not been told by the SNP that it has been chosen as the location for nuclear waste.

Mr. Doran: Will the Secretary of State advise the House in simple terms what steps he will take to stop Scotland becoming the nuclear dumping ground for the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should realise that all parts of the United Kingdom use nuclear power and are responsible for the production of nuclear waste. The location for the deposit of nuclear waste should be chosen on geological grounds that are consistent with the requirements of public safety.

Rail Services (Strathclyde)

6. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Strathclyde regional council on the effect on Strathclyde's economy of the proposed reduction in rail services.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such representations.

Mr. McKelvey: Then it is just as well that I asked the question. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that there was a debate on the matter in the early hours of this morning as the snowflakes were falling outside. Has the Secretary of State received information from his surrogate, who was present to hear a debate opened admirably by my colleague, friend and ally — on this issue — the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro)? There is increasing

anxiety and alarm about the proposed cuts on the Kilmarnock-Carlisle-Dumfries railway line and the effects that they will have on the social and economic life of the area. Scottish Members are increasingly worried that decisions on cuts in British Rail services in Scotland are being taken in London and are then foisted upon Scottish managers, although they are willing to accept the role of lackey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have agreed with British Rail performance objectives designed to achieve a significant increase in efficiency and requiring an overall improvement in services. It is for British Rail to determine how to achieve those objectives, but I understand that some extra InterCity services will be laid on.

Sir Hector Monro: We are all grateful to my hon. Friend for coming to the House early this morning and listening to the debate. Did he appreciate from the debate the strength of feeling in south-west Scotland about the economic problems that will result if the railway service is downgraded to the extent proposed by British Rail? Does he accept that the Government must bring home to British Rail the fact that their overall policy of bringing jobs to south-west Scotland will be adversely affected? He cannot leave it to British Rail to make such a decision.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have met the manager of ScotRail and made it clear to him that many hon. Members believe that we need a high standard of service. I understand that British Rail will provide services connecting Dumfries with a sleeper service at Carlisle.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister accept that his response is entirely inadequate? On Monday my hon. Friends and I met the Minister for Public Transport and put our case very strongly. In my constituency, which, with that of the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), has the highest unemployment in the country, a railway station has just been opened at Auchinleck. Now British Rail is cutting services from that station. Strathclyde region wants to reopen New Cumnock station, but there will be no services for it if British Rail continues in this way. Should not the Scottish Office take some action to force British Rail to reconsider the matter?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should say that the introduction of sprinter trains to the line next year will improve services by offering more trains and shorter journey times. I stress to the hon. Gentleman that there are no current plans to stop running passenger services on the line.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Under-Secretary examine carefully the rates of return and capital that InterCity especially is expected to produce in the Government's current programme? Will he undertake to reconsider the matter with Ministers at the Department of Transport? The east coast route is of special concern to me. Services will inevitably be prejudiced by the penal rates of return which British Rail and ScotRail are expected to achieve on their InterCity services.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I shall draw the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport to the matters mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that a major influence on economic development in the Strathclyde region is the incompetent and high-cost policy of Strathclyde regional council, under which 25 per cent. of pupils leave school with no qualifications, and council house repairs are 35 per cent. more expensive than anywhere else?

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: We are in favour of both high standards of efficiency and high standards of service.

Rating Reform

7. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on consultations that have taken place between his Department and local authorities with regard to the appropriate training programme for canvassers engaged on the preparation of the register for the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: The training of canvassers is a matter for community charges registration officers.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Minister accept that what we are embarking on in Scotland is the compilation of a national register, which will detail every individual from birth to death? In addition, will he give some information and guidance to local authorities about the dangers of disclosing information, obtained for poll tax purposes, for other purposes, put a prohibition or restrictions on those gathering that information, and introduce appropriate penalties for disclosure for purposes other than the community charge?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. We are not contemplating the compilation of a national register or one that would last from birth to death. The regulation on the registration process is out to consultation and local authorities have an opportunity to give us their views on that. We shall take full account of the consultation process before making the regulation.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in these matters, helpful advice might come from apparently unlikely quarters? May I refer him to column 198 of Standing Committee A on the Local Government Bill, when the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), speaking from the Opposition Front Bench, recommended that the administrative arrangements for the community charge in Scotland should be privatised? Will my hon. Friend therefore, at all times, pay appropriate attention to recommendations from Opposition Members?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion. It is important that the register be compiled as efficiently as possible.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: Will the Minister explain why a leaflet and publicity campaign costing £130,000 and more has been launched in Scotland on the community charge, saying that people on and below the poverty line will pay 20 per cent., when in a written answer to me he revealed that in some parts of Scotland those on basic incomes will have to pay 41 per cent. of the community charge, including the community water charge?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is giving a misleading picture. The leaflet was published as an information document. Its need is justified not least by the fact that so much misinformation is being put about by the Labour party.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Minister agree that if the canvass for the register is to be done in sufficient time to allow the tax to be brought in on 1 April 1989, as is proposed, it must start on 1 April 1988, or soon thereafter? If that is so, how many regulations will have to be laid before the House for that process to start? How many canvassers will have to be advertised for and appointed, and what training will have to be carried out? Does the hon. Gentleman have any hope that the process of making regulations, and advertising for, appointing and training staff, can be completed by 1 April 1988?

Mr. Lang: We intend that the process should start on 1 April 1988. Three or four regulations will need to be tabled by that date, and we expect that that will happen. The other points raised by the hon. Gentleman are matters for the registration officer.

Nuclear Waste

8. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when officials of his Department will next meet Nirex to discuss plans for nuclear waste disposal in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Office officials have no specific plans to meet Nirex, but they will attend the Nirex seminar for local authorities to be held in Edinburgh on 14 December.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Under-Secretary aware, even if the Secretary of State is not, that the Nirex document "The Way Forward" makes it clear that Scotland is a No. 1 target for nuclear waste disposal? Furthermore, will the hon. Gentleman give us a guarantee that any such proposal for waste disposal will face the rigour of a full public inquiry, and that such an inquiry will not be limited in scope in the way that the Dounreay inquiry was rigged?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I certainly can give that assurance. A planning application will be required before any site investigations on land. Subsequent procedures have yet to be determined. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that if there were a proposal to build a repository in Scotland a public inquiry should be held. The purpose behind the document is to look at geologically suitable areas in Britain.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Does my hon. Friend recognise that many of us welcome the publication of that document and the opportunity that it gives for informed debate? Has he noticed that the Scottish National party shies away from any form of informed debate? Will he point out to the SNP that much of the low-level and medium-level waste comes from medical sources? Why does it not support the use of nuclear materials for those good purposes?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for setting the matter in perspective. We are concerned about the safe storage of intermediate and low-level nuclear waste. We believe that the Nirex document is a useful step forward in that process.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Minister agree with the decision taken by Nirex in advance of the consultation process to opt for a single national disposal facility? Is it credible to have one such facility, given the present level of radioactive waste, and the future level because of the Government's commitment to a massively accelerated nuclear programme? Scottish Labour Members will not tolerate Scotland being used as a dumping ground for the nuclear waste of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should like to set the facts straight. Sellafield is to be investigated by British Nuclear Fuels plc as part of the Nirex programme. It has been made clear that no decision has been taken on sites for investigation other than Sellafield. That is the present position.

Mr. Kennedy: I echo the plea of the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) for informed public debate. Will the Minister instruct his officials, when they attend the 14 December seminar, to echo to Nirex the plea for informed debate? That would involve making maps available to hon. Members representing constituencies such as mine. We believe that drilling has taken place on the isles of Raasay and Rona. Like the Isle of Skye, neither island appears on the map of Britain that Nirex published in the report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's point to Nirex.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend agree that those of us who were in the House in the early hours of the morning and who listened to a debate on this subject, prompted by the Welsh nationalists, now realise the sheer hypocrisy of the nationalist parties in Wales and Scotland? Today the Scottish nationalists say that Scotland is the prime target for a nuclear dump, whereas last night the Welsh nationalists said that Anglesey was the prime target for a nuclear dump. We completely reject this scaremongering by the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I thank my hon. Friend for making that point. I am sure that there is potential opposition to any proposed investigation of a site. Nirex seeks public comment on its approach to site selection and will publish a report on comments received.

Mr. Dewar: I wish to reinforce the plea for an assurance that there will be no question of slipping through vital decisions about sites without full consultation and discussion in the localities concerned. Does the Minister accept that there is a strong case against dumping intermediate waste in the way suggested in the Nirex report? Does he agree that the identification of possible sites can lead only to uncertainty and understandable fears? Is not a more sensible management strategy on-site storage in stable conditions, which can allow constant monitoring?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Our experts and international experts strongly believe that on safety grounds it is much wiser to store intermediate and low-level waste in this way. I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance about there being the fullest possible public information and consultation on this subject.

European Regional Development Fund

9. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants Scotland has received from the European regional development fund in each of the past three years.

Mr. Lang: Scotland has received grant commitment from the European regional development fund of £103 million in 1984, £69 million in 1985, and £84 million in 1986.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend think that those grants have been sufficiently well publicised? If not, what steps is he taking to ensure that their size, scale and nature are properly publicised in Scotland and that the benefits that accrue to Scotland are made known to the people?

Mr. Lang: As my hon. Friend will know, it is always difficult to obtain publicity for good news. However, his question enables me to publicise the fact that, among national programmes of Community interest, in 1985 Glasgow received £68 million, and we hope that this year West Lothian will be successful with a bid of £27 million. We are also hoping to succeed with a bid for Strathclyde, as an integrated operation, that will be worth £300 million over the next five years.

Mr. Steel: Is the Minister not well aware that areas of Scotland such as Galloway and the Borders do not qualify for assistance under the European regional development fund because they are not defined as assisted areas by the national Government? As the European Community is reconsidering the guidelines for that fund, with a view to opening it to rural development, irrespective of assisted area status, will the Minister assure us that the Scottish Office will support such a change?

Mr. Lang: As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the arrival of Spain and Portugal in the Community has made pressure on funds that much greater. Therefore, we cannot be sure that we will receive as large a proportion in future as we have in the past. However, the Scottish Office will do its best to ensure that Scottish interests are well advanced within the Community.

Sir Hector Monro: Is my hon. Friend aware that we welcome the tremendous help for the infrastructure of Scotland from that fund? Will he consider the issue of forest roads used in the extraction of timber, especially for those areas that do not have assisted area status? Will he discuss with other Departments and within the European Community the possibility of including that sort of development?

Mr. Lang: I shall certainly consider that point. As my hon. Friend knows, any regional authority that approaches the Government for capital allocation in that context can rely on having the matter sympathetically considered.

Mr. Buchan: Is the Minister aware that during the last year for which figures are available, 1986, we had a net loss in the Common Market of £1·7 billion—the equivalent of about 20 days of the regional fund? Would it not be better if that £1 billion were spent on development in Britain, rather it being poured into the food mountains of Europe?

Mr. Lang: That is a perfectly worthwhile negotiating stance. However, it would be wrong to analyse each individual fund and try to ensure that this country made a profit from each and all of them. That is not what the Common Market is about.

Secondary School Pupils

10. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of the number of pupils in secondary schools in Scotland for each of the next five years.

Mr. Rifkind: The estimated numbers in each of the years 1988 to 1992 are 328,000; 313,000; 306,000; 305,000; and 308,000 respectively.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving those figures, which I am sure he agrees point to the need for rationalisation of secondary schools in Scotland. No one suggests that rationalisation is ever easy, but is he aware of the concern of a number of my constituents who exercised their right under the parents' charter to send their children to Paisley grammar school, which is now targeted for closure, apparently precisely because it is popular with parents?

Has my right hon. and learned Friend received a report from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary following his visit to that school? Does he agree that the wider implications of the threat to Paisley grammer school point to the need for opting out provisions to be included in the forthcoming Scottish Education Bill so that Scottish parents can have the same rights as English parents?

Mr. Rifkind: Given the high degree of overcapacity in schools in the Strathclyde region, we all understand that it is appropriate for Strathclyde regional council to reduce the number of schools commensurate with the total school population. We hope that in pursuing that policy it will take into account the views of the parents and the academic achievements of individual schools. I have no doubt that if it does apply such criteria there will be a powerful case for the continuation of Paisley grammer school, which clearly meets that criteria in an impressive fashion.

Dr. Reid: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that it is the height of hypocrisy that, when he is pursuing policies that force cuts in education in Scotland, his henchman turns up here to ask a question under the pretence of fighting for the preservation of school places?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should realise that the rationalisation of schools has little to do with the size of resources and everything to do with the size of pupil populations. In case he is not aware of the fact, Strathclyde regional council estimated that, out of a total capacity of 590,000 pupil places, over 200,000 places were surplus to requirements in 1985. That will be true, irrespective of the level of resources. It would be absurd to suggest that there is not a need in Strathclyde, as in other regions throughout Scotland, to reduce overcapacity. The point at issue is not the need to close some schools but, in making that choice, whether the schools with a proven academic record of great achievement should be put on such a list.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister will know that parents in my constituency are going through a worrying period. Some have children at primary and secondary schools that could be under the axe. Does he not consider that if his colleague the Minister is to go on television and single out one school, he should be evenhanded and look at every school in Strathclyde? Paisley grammar school is important to some hon. Members and to the parents in the region, but other schools are just as important.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no doubt that all schools are important to the parents whose children attend them. That is why I have stated that I believe that the relevant criteria are parents' wishes and the proven achievements of the school in question. It seems sensible to take into account whether a particular school has a remarkable record of achievement with regard to the academic qualifications of those who attend it in determining whether it would be sensible to close such an establishment at such a time.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As the money that is spent on surplus places could be better spent on children in schools, will my right hon. and learned Friend say how much is presently being wasted on empty places?

Mr. Rifkind: I cannot give a precise figure, but it goes without saying that if only about two thirds of the accommodation presently available for schoolchildren in Strathclyde is utilised, enormous savings are clearly available to the regional council to be used on the education of children in a way that is more useful to them than the heating of half-empty buildings or the maintenance of unused buildings.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that he will prevail upon the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), to desist from meddling in matters that are not his direct responsibility? Does he agree that the Under-Secretary's visit to Our Lady and St. Francis' high school in Glasgow was mischievous and that his visit to Paisley grammar school was calculated to make life difficult for the education authority which is seeking to fulfil its statutory requirements? Such irresponsible actions serve only to use and abuse parents who are genuinely concerned for their children's future education.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend was perfectly entitled to respond to parents' invitations to visit the school and to see it for himself. Given that the Scottish Office provides the resources that are used, which cover a substantial proportion of the costs of maintaining such schools, it is absolutely appropriate that my hon. Friend should have visited them. I cannot help but notice the hon. Gentleman's embarrassment at the fact that the high quality of certain schools is brought to the forefront of public attention.

Mrs. Fyfe: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot take a point of order now. The hon. Lady may wish to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of that unsatisfactory reply I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment.

Schools Management

11. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what extra resources will be made available for the implementation of the schools management proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend takes account of changes in local authorities' statutory responsibilities in determining the provision for local authority current expenditure each year. I do not expect, however, that these proposals will give rise to significant additional costs.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister is bound to be aware that COSLA estimates that it will cost at least £15 million a year to set up and administer the school boards that are envisaged under his proposals. Does he not agree that that would be an enormous and wasteful drain on scarce resources that could better be used in classrooms rather than on financing his ideological white elephant?

Mr. Forsyth: I was interested to see the COSLA estimates, which started at £12 million and after a few days increased to £15 million. Those estimates were based upon an assumption that costs that will be incurred by local authorities in bringing new systems for financial control into effect will be part of this process. Even if we take the COSLA approach of "think of a number and double it", relative to the total education budget that is broadly equivalent to an extra two or at most three pupils at an average secondary school.

Mr. Galbraith: I have asked the Under-Secretary of State three questions on schools boards, none of which he has answered satisfactorily. In particular, he will never say how much support exists for the ceiling proposals. Will he admit to the House that he will not answer me because there is no support for the ceiling proposals whatsoever, and in view of that will he remove them from the legislation?

Mr. Forsyth: I say to the hon. Gentleman in the House that we have embarked upon the biggest consultation exercise ever undertaken by a Government Department. We have had a marvellous response, which we are now analysing. Most people have been sufficiently thoughtful in their response as to preclude us from being able to carry out the kind of crude for and against analysis for which the hon. Gentleman asks.

Mr. Douglas: That is the height of deceit.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I heard "deceit". I do not know who said it, but it is not a parliamentary word. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Douglas: In view of your stricture, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw, but the information concerned——

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend, when he is considering resources for school boards, bear in mind that some of us support the ceiling proposals, myself included? Will he also bear in mind that many of the comments made about parents being unsuitable and untrained to take part in school boards could just as easily be made about unsuitable or untrained councillors or Members of Parliament? That is the kind of nonsense that we have been getting from the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support. I assure him that while there are differences of view about the extent to which the ceiling powers should be available to school boards, it is important to remember that the proposals in the consultation paper made it clear that school boards could get ceiling powers only if they are requested and are able to persuade the local authority to give the powers to them.

Mr. Maxton: No.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says "No". There was provision for the Secretary of State to have a general power to raise from floor to ceiling, and we have made it

clear throughout the consultations that we envisage using that in the circumstances where many schools had opted for ceilings.

Housing Associations (Rents)

12. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the increase in rents for housing association dwellings arising from immediate enactment of the proposals in the Scottish housing White Paper.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Our White Paper proposals would make tenancy arrangements more flexible for new lettings and enable housing associations to set appropriate levels of rent, depending on the funding arrangements agreed. Our proposals envisage that subsidy arrangements for new developments would be geared to rent levels which average working households in a particular area could pay.

Mr. Worthington: That reply is at some distance from frankness. In my constituency the rents on a rehabilitated, typical 16-unit tenement, at the 30 per cent. housing action grant level, would go up by 225 per cent., and at the 70 per cent. housing action grant level would go up by over 100 per cent. Is the Minister aware that that is typical of the rent increase that will occur in the west of Scotland? Does the Minister agree with that statement?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, Sir. What I would say is that there are some housing associations where private sector funding is not likely; for example, certain kinds of housing for disabled associations and special interest groups. It is tremendously important that traditional clients should continue to be catered for. I envisage that 100 per cent. public funding could come from a combination of housing association grants and loans, but we envisage the private sector coming in in other circumstances.

Mr. Forth: What can my hon. Friend tell the House about the historic level of rents in Scotland, compared to that in England, bearing in mind that the average income in Scotland is now the second highest in the United Kingdom, second only to London?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Average rent levels in Scotland are lower than those in England; there is no question about that.

Mr. Home Robertson: Since housing association rents are already 30 per cent. higher than council rents in Scotland, what possible justification can there be for a formula which is likely to double the rents of housing association tenants in Scotland? Since housing benefit will not protect all the tenants who are the hardest hit by the new mechanism, is it not yet another example of ministerial weasel words for such a mechanism to be described as affordable rents?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It most certainly is Government policy that rents should be affordable and within the reach of tenants. I reject the figures that the hon. Gentleman gave. I cannot speculate about the rent levels for individual lettings, but under the new arrangements rents will relate to the cost of providing and maintaining property, taking account of the assistance available. Housing associations will continue to meet the needs of their traditional clients.

Further Education (Funding)

13. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet representatives of regional authorities to discuss the funding of further education.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend meets representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities regularly to discuss local authority expenditure. The most recent meeting was on 4 December, when the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89 was discussed.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister advise the House whether he intends to meet representatives from Grampian regional council in view of the urgent need to assure that area of Scotland that there is a long-term future for the college of commerce, which was recently closed because of structural problems? Does he accept that the 8,000 students, most of whom are represented by hon. Members from the Grampian region, want to be assured that there is a long-term future for them? Will he advise us whether he is considering a special grant to ensure that the college of commerce is rebuilt speedily?

Mr. Forsyth: The question of the Aberdeen college of commerce is a matter for the Grampian region. Students are able to continue to attend their classes in different locations, and for those students who are taking advanced courses I have ensured that grants continue to be paid from the Scottish Education Department. It is for local authorities to determine their own priorities within the capital programme. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, my right hon. and learned Friend will take account of the special problems that have occurred in the Grampian region when deciding upon allocations. It is not possible at this stage to anticipate them.

Unemployment and Health

14. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will commission a study on the effects of long-term unemployment on health in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so. To date, research has not identified any clear relationship between long-term unemployment and health.

Dr. Moonie: I am amazed at the Minister's response, considering that a report published by the DHSS in 1981 on unemployment and families cited no fewer than 47 references which underline the relationship between long-term unemployment and poverty. Perhaps ex-Tory Members of Parliament in Scotland would be a suitable case study.

Mr. Forsyth: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman does not read the *British Medical Journal*. If he did, he would know that in January and April there were a couple of articles about the research commissioned by the Medical Research Council on that matter. None of that research provided evidence to support his theory. Experts agree that people can help themselves and their families to stay healthy by making simple changes to their life styles. [HON. MEMBERS: "Like getting a job."] A healthy life style does not depend on a high income. I am disappointed that Opposition Members seem to think that the matter of health in Scotland is so amusing.

Earnings

15. **Mr. Irvine:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent figures he has available for average weekly earnings in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates in Scotland in April 1987 were estimated at £187·90. Only those in the south-east and the north-west of England had higher gross earnings.

Mr. Irvine: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that those highly satisfactory figures reflect the success of the Scottish economy in moving away from the excessive reliance on the declining industries of past years towards the industries and services of the future?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is quite correct. It never ceases to amaze me how Opposition Members cannot decide whether to be upset or disbelieving when such information is provided for them.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Will the Secretary of State accept that the low wages that contribute to the average are reprehensible, whether they are paid in Ipswich or Inverness? Will he also accept that there is an individual Scottish life style—including the need to accept climatic conditions—which means that, for example, it costs 20 per cent. more to heat the average house in Glasgow than it does in Ipswich? When will the Secretary of State bat for Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course, with regard to low wages, everyone looks forward to the day when wages and salaries can continue to increase to improve the real standard of living of the population as a whole. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will be the first to appreciate that it would be counter-productive to the interests of the unemployed to insist on wage levels that meant that they could not be employed in the first place.

State Security

16. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate will now authorise Strathclyde police and the procurator fiscal of Glasgow to return to BBC Scotland all tapes, recordings, documents and other material seized from BBC Scotland on Sunday 15 February in relation to the Zircon programme; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No material relating to the programme concerning project Zircon was removed by Strathclyde police from the premises of BBC Scotland, Glasgow, on Sunday 15 February.

Mr. Dalyell: What, then, were the supposed reasonable grounds for suspicion that allowed the Special Branch to go into Queen Margaret drive and eject from their beds, at 3 am, senior executives of the BBC? What is the explanation for that now?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must be quite clear that I have to answer on behalf of the Lord Advocate and ensure that the law is properly carried out, enforced and that the correct procedures are involved. I believe that the hon. Gentleman's question goes beyond my sphere of responsibility—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—and I believe that it goes to the root of intelligence matters that are the responsibility of others.

Mr. Galloway: Mr. Brian Barr, the programme maker of distinction who made the Zircon programme, is one of my constituents. For nearly one year he has had a cloud of suspicion hanging over him that he might have been party to undermining the security of our country. He has been harassed by unwilling and embarrassed policemen acting on Government instructions. Legal edicts flew across the Atlantic to harass his colleague, Duncan Campbell, as far away as San Francisco——

Mr. Oppenheim: What is the question?

Mr. Galloway: The question is, will the Minister have the grace to apologise to Brian Barr, Duncan Campbell and their colleagues for the besmirching of their reputations that this investigation has caused? Now that the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* Now, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not answering this question. It is for the Front Bench to answer.

Mr. Galloway: Now that Mrs. Thatcher — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

Mr. Galloway: Will the Minister accept that we need a bit of glasnost in this country in relation to official secrecy and do something about that soon?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should make it clear that on 27 November the Lord Advocate announced that, having considered a number of reports from the procurator fiscal in Glasgow, he had instructed — following consultation with the Attorney-General and having regard in particular to public interest—that no criminal proceedings would be instituted in Scotland— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I believe that that is the information that the hon. Gentleman asks me to confirm this afternoon. I do not consider that any action taken by the Law Officers or the police in this connection has had the effect suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Does my hon. Friend agree that if security is compromised most people in this country would say that no one is above the law, not even the BBC?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is obviously the duty of the Lord Advocate to see that the law is properly enforced as it now stands.

Mr. Home Robertson: Have the Government learnt any lessons from this rather squalid episode? As the Minister either cannot or will not respond to the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), will he tell the House which Minister is responsible for this aspect of policy and who will answer the fair question put by my hon. Friend?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This matter has been fully debated and the Lord Advocate is satisfied that the proper procedure for obtaining the search warrant was followed, and that the involvement of the procurator fiscal and the sheriff was in accordance with the established law of Scotland.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the totally unsatisfactory nature of that reply, I give notice that I shall seek to raise this matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

Foreshore Pollution

17. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations from Edinburgh district council about his policy towards controlling pollution of the foreshore; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such representations from the council.

Mr. Brown: Although I recognise that the capitalist system stinks, why does the pong linger along Granton foreshore, an area which the Minister knows well? Is it the fault of the Lothian chemical works, or does the responsibility lie elsewhere? I remind the Minister that it is a serious matter and not to be sniffed at. We want an answer quickly.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The prime responsibility lies with the Forth river purification board and the district council. The industrial pollution inspectorate is undertaking monitoring as part of its enforcement role. Measurements have been made around the Lothian chemical company and the results were satisfactory, but, obviously, a close watch is being kept on these matters.

Regional Aid

18. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on current regional aid to industry in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The net provision for regional assistance by the Scottish Office in 1987-88 is £120 million.

Mr. McLeish: A recent opinion poll in Scotland suggested that 70 per cent. of Scots do not believe that the Government care, especially about jobs in industry. Does the Minister acknowledge that there has been a dramatic cut in regional development grant over the last few years from a peak of £339 million in 1982-83? Is he also aware of the chronic problems facing some sectors of the Scottish economy and some areas because of the need to restructure their industrial base over the next two or three years? Will he take seriously the problems of industry in Scotland, have discussions with Lord Young of Graffham, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and come up with an effective regional policy that will start to reduce in number the 330,000 Scots who still languish on the dole queues eight years after the Government were elected?

Mr. Lang: I hope that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the dramatic success of the Government's economic policy in reducing unemployment in Scotland by some 55,000 this year. So far as regional assistance is concerned, this party needs no lessons from the Labour party, which slashed the regional assistance budget for Scotland in one year by 46 per cent. when it abolished the regional employment premium.

Mr. Millan: Will the Minister confirm that it is part of regional policy to attract the head offices of major corporations to Scotland and to maintain in Scotland the head offices of major corporations that are already there? In view of the Government fiasco over Guinness and Distillers, may we have an assurance that the same thing will not happen over Britoil? Is he aware that just a year ago the chief executive of Britoil told Glasgow Members that the company would not welcome a takeover, that it wanted the protection of the so-called golden share for at least five years, and that it was committed to staying in Glasgow? If the BP takeover succeeds, all that will be prejudiced. May we have an assurance that the Government, who can stop this takeover, will stop it?

Mr. Lang: I was not aware that BP had made a takeover bid for Britoil. It is desirable for company headquarters to remain in Scotland. Sadly, the nationalisation of many fine old Scottish companies took the headquarters of those companies forth of Scotland to the south of England. However, we are now developing the enterprise culture, as a result of which the number of companies in Scotland is expanding rapidly, and those companies will have large headquarters in Scotland in the future.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is my hon. Friend aware that, despite the fact that the standards of living of the Scots are far higher than those of people living in the east midlands, taxpayers in the east midlands, including my constituents, have to pay a huge subsidy to the Scots in the form of regional aid, which is not available to my constituents? Is it not time that Opposition Members stopped whingeing and wrote letters of thanks to my constituents, who are subsidising them?

Mr. Lang: It is certainly the case that the share of regional assistance going to Scotland has risen from 21 per cent. in 1979 to 31 per cent. of the total, but that reflects the special Scottish circumstances that have made it necessary. We are concerned to achieve value for money for United Kingdom taxpayers—and there, I am sure, I am at one with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Lambie: When will the Minister carry out an investigation into abuses of regional aid in view of the correspondence that I recently sent him on two firms in the Cunninghame district?

Mr. Lang: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is a matter that is being closely considered at the moment. I hope to be able to write to him about it shortly.

School Boards

19. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many officials in his Department are currently engaged in assessing the merits of the response to his consultative document on school boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for Ministers to make judgments about the merits of the arguments put to them.

Mr. Galbraith: Once again the Under-Secretary of State avoids the question. Will he say what criteria he uses to assess these responses and when he is likely to tell us the result? Will he once again confirm that in the responses there is no support whatever for the ceiling proposals and that these will be left out of the later legislation?

Mr. Forsyth: I can do better than that. I can direct the hon. Gentleman and anyone else who is interested to the

House of Commons Library or to St. Andrew's House, where I have arranged for copies of all the submissions, other than those marked "confidential", to be available. There is no secret, and I think that the hon. Gentleman will find, after he has spent some days examining these responses, how impossible it is for us to make the kind of crude analysis that he requests.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I will take points of order after the statement.

Public Expenditure (Scotland)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the allocation of my public expenditure provision in the next three years.

I plan to raise net expenditure on the services for which I am responsible to £8,505 million in 1988-89. This is some 6·9 per cent. more than planned expenditure for the current year, and nearly 5 per cent. more than was planned for 1988-89 in the last public expenditure White Paper. In each of the following two years expenditure provision is to grow by over £100 million.

Within the total figures, the provision made for the services within the Scottish block has been enhanced in the normal way by the consequences of applying the territorial formula to changes agreed in the survey for comparable English programmes. An annotated table giving the allocations for each service is available in the Vote Office, and I am arranging for it to be published in the *Official Report*.

Provision for industry next year will be increased by £25 million, or over 10 per cent. compared with the plans published in January. Within this, £10 million will be allocated to the Scottish Development Agency and £5 million to the Highlands and Islands Development Board, which should allow increases in gross expenditure in real terms, and £7 million to direct grants to industry. I have also decided to increase the funds available for tourism in Scotland by £1 million.

My planned provision for housing continues to concentrate resources on capital investment in improving public sector housing rather than indiscriminate subsidies. It will also continue to deal with the backlog of payments of private sector improvement grants. The total planned resources for the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation in Scotland will be increased, allowing the SSHA to plan on the basis of some £55 million in total expenditure, and similarly £132 million for the HCIS, for projects including housing co-operatives. Further provision will be available later for suitable new urban regeneration housing projects. Extra provision is included for the establishment of Scottish Homes and its build-up in the later years. Subject to final decisions on the level of subsidies, the planned increase in resources for housing investment in 1988-89 will be about £30 million. This will be the third successive year in which investment has increased.

Expenditure on agriculture and fisheries will increase by £11 million, £16·5 million and £13·7 million over the three years of the survey period. In particular, provision is made to encourage developments under the agricultural development programme.

Planned spending on education will rise to £2,186 million next year, or 9 per cent. more than this year, reflecting the priority that I attach to this service. This will provide principally for current and capital expenditure by local authorities. I look to them to make the most effective possible use of this money in delivering the education service, especially the introduction of standard grade, for which central support will continue to be available.

I intend to increase spending on the health programme by about £130 million next year to £2,393 million, and by over £100 million in each of the following two years. Within this increased provision, there will be over £1,660 million for hospitals and community health services next year, £85 million more than this year's level of funding. Health boards will also be able to retain the resources released through their economy and efficiency programmes, which should amount to over £20 million next year. This should enable them to meet pay and price inflation, develop in new directions for breast cancer screening and treating AIDS sufferers, and to improve their services in line with national policies and priorities.

Provision for family practitioner services is to be increased by almost £35 million to £475 million next year and to £540 million by 1990-91. This takes account of expected growth in public demand for these services, and of the proposals set out in the Government's White Paper "Promoting Better Health".

I am conscious of real pressures on social work resources from demography and new demands, so I have increased provision by just over 12 per cent.

My plans provide £680 million in 1988-89 — an increase of 9·5 per cent. over this year's provision — to meet the needs of law and order services. This should be sufficient for an increase over present police establishments and for the cost of the new working practices under the fresh start agreement, which have just been introduced in the prison service. Capital expenditure over the three years will be £154 million, which is intended to provide for a continuing programme of refurbishment of the prison estate, for new or improved court houses and the needs of police and fire services.

Planned provision for transport will be £12 million above that planned for 1987-88, which followed several years of high relative levels of provision. Provision for 1988-89 will, however, necessarily be £8 million below the level forecast in the last White Paper because of the need to transfer resources within the block to local authority current expenditure. Nevertheless, the resources available will enable investment in trunk roads to be maintained broadly at current levels, with important bypasses being given priority. A start will be made on the upgrading of the A74 in the later years, but my provision will still leave room for other worthwhile projects.

I have been able to increase provision for the other environmental services programme, which maintains essential public services and functions, mainly by local authorities. It includes an increase of £6 million for the urban programme, which is a prime means of directing Government funding into the regeneration of our inner cities. The development of industrial infrastructure in the new towns, which contributed to over 4,000 new jobs in 1986-87, will also be able to increase significantly.

Provision for expenditure on the arts within the Scotland programme will rise by just under 6 per cent. This should enable local authorities to respond constructively to the Miles report on museums in Scotland, and will support Scottish national institutions in making further improvements in their infrastructure. It will also allow planning of the second phase of the new Causewayside building for the National Library of Scotland to proceed.

The increase that we are entitled to under the formula for local authority current expenditure in 1988-89, is less than the extra cost of the generous rate support grant settlement that I announced to the House in July. This is because of the higher level of local authority spending in Scotland compared to England and Wales. I have therefore made up the balance from the rest of my block,

[Mr. Malcolm Rifkind]

so the amount available for local authority capital expenditure and central Government expenditure in 1988-89 is lower than it would otherwise have been. I have no plans for a similar transfer in the later years, in the hope that local authorities will control their current expenditure and thus avoid diverting resources from their capital programmes and other important services within the block.

The allocation that I have announced today reflects the priority that I attach to the needs of the different services in Scotland in exercising my discretion within the Scottish block. The increases that I have announced demonstrate the Government's continued commitment to meeting Scotland's needs. We have been able to do this because of our successful management of the economy, which has allowed public expenditure to be increased substantially at the same time as its share of national income has been reduced.

Following is the information—

	1987-88		*1988-89*			*1989-90*			*1990-91*	
	[1]*Cm56-II Provision*		[1]*Cm56-II Provision*	[2]*Revised Provision*		[1]*Cm56-II Provision*	[2]*Revised Provision*		[3]*Provision*	
	Net	[3]*Gross*		*Net*	[3]*Gross*		*Net*	[3]*Gross*	*Net*	[3]*Gross*
Agriculture	186	187	187	200	200	190	210	210	210	210
Industry	257	295	241	266	297	250	260	290	260	290
Tourism	13	13	13	14	15	10	20	20	20	20
Transport	601	602	621	613	614	630	660	660	680	680
Housing	695	868	702	639	882	730	700	910	720	920
Other environmental services	610	684	633	693	773	650	710	790	740	820
Law, order and protective services	621	624	642	680	683	660	690	690	710	720
Education	1,956	1,961	2,041	2,186	2,190	2,090	2,230	2,230	2,290	2,290
Arts and libraries	82	82	84	87	87	90	90	90	100	100
Health and social work	2,605	2,658	2,714	2,829	2,837	2,830	2,950	2,950	3,070	3,080
Other public services	118	118	122	125	125	120	130	130	130	130
LA current expenditure not allocated to services	124	124	127	40	40	130	40	40	40	40
Nationalised Industries external financing	87	87	−20	134	134	−170	−70	−70	−190	−190
	[4]7,954	8,301	8,108	8,505	8,875	8,220	8,610	8,950	8,770	9,090

Note: Figures for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are rounded to the nearest £10 million.

[1] White Paper (Cm56-II) figures adjusted for pre-Survey changes.

[2] Figures reflect Survey changes and changes since the Autumn Statement. Some figures may be subject to detailed technical amendment.

[3] Gross provision consists of total net provision plus capital receipts.

[4] The figure differs from the net outturn figure of £8,220 million shown in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement for 1987-88; the main differences are continued spending by local authorities above the level provided for; NHS pay settlements; and higher than expected Electricity Board costs.

AGRICULTURE

The expenditure plans will permit development of the Government's agriculture and fishing policies, with particular regard to the environment and the rural economy.

INDUSTRY

Overall provision has been increased by £25m—10·4% —in 1988-89 compared with last year's White Paper. Provision remains broadly constant over the forward years. The increased provision will allow increased spending by the SDA and HIDB both of which will have increased spending power, in real terms, in 1988-89 compared with 1987-88 and on direct grants to industry.

TOURISM

Total provision for 1988-89 has been increased by about 10% compared to the level in last year's plans and is planned to increase by about a further 20% over the forward years. The major part of tourism expenditure is undertaken by the Scottish Tourist Board which will be enabled to increase both its marketing effort and the grants it makes for tourist facilities.

TRANSPORT

Provision planned for (excluding grants to transport nationalised industries) will be £12m more than planned for 1987-88 albeit £8m less than planned provision for 1988-89 set out in last year's White Paper. This level of provision will enable investment in the trunk roads programme to be maintained at broadly current levels, with important bypasses given priority. Substantial increases have been made in provision for current expenditure by local authorities, although this constrained the amount available for capital expenditure by local authorities. The Government remain committed to subsidising shipping services and civil aviation facilities in the Highlands and Islands. Provision for the later years has been increased over the levels provided for in Cm 56. A start will be made on the promised upgrading of the A74 in the later years, but the programme will still permit other worthwhile projects to proceed.

HOUSING

The increased provision for Housing is concentrated on capital investment which is planned to increase by £30m and deal with the backlog of private sector improvement grants; and provide the SSHA and Housing Corporation in Scotland with the resources for their mainstream and urban information work.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The Other Environmental Services programme maintains essential public services (mainly by local authorities) concerned with health and safety, and environmental crimes. Increased provision has been made in the total programme including in particular £6 million for the Urban Programme to direct funding into the re-generation of inner cities; and £15 million extra capital provision to assist local authorities in implementation of the Community Charge in 1988-89 (in addition to extra current expenditure for this programme which the Secretary of State announced in July). The development of new industrial expenditure and jobs in the New Towns will also increase significantly. (Over 4,000 new jobs were created in the Scottish New Towns in 1986-87).

EDUCATION

Provision has been increased by £180·1 million or 9 per

cent. Within this figure local authority provision has been increased by £164·1 million, including £90 million which is unallocated to particular services pending the review of staffing standards. Central support for education reforms has been maintained (Standard Grade) or established (£0·8 million for curricular development, assessment and management planning). Increased provision for higher education (£8·5 million) will significantly ease the running cost pressures on the centrally funded sector.

LAW, ORDER AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES

Plans for the prison service give full cover for the cost in staff and supplies of the expected inmate population; provide for the costs of keeping Low Moss Prison open until 1989 and for the cost of introducing new working arrangements for prison officers in accordance with the Fresh Start agreement. For the police, provision will meet fully the expected cost of the service with a modest annual increase in manpower and will maintain central support for the Scottish Crime Squad and its Drugs Wing and to the Scottish Criminal Records Office. There will be continuing support for crime prevention measures. The plans also allow for higher levels of demand for legal aid services and for increased running costs in the Courts. £154 million of capital spending is planned over the next three years, on new or improved court and prison buildings including the replacement of Peterhead Prison, and on the needs of the police and fire services.

ARTS AND LIBRARIES

Provision for local authority expenditure on Arts and Libraries has been increased by £6·1 million (or over 10 per cent.) compared with 1987-88. Central government provision reflects completion of phase 1 of the National Library of Scotland and planning for phase 2.

HEALTH

Expenditure on the National Health Service in Scotland will be increased by about £130 million next year, which is about 5·8 per cent. above this year's level of spending, and by over £100 million in each of the two following years. The provision for hospitals and community health services will be increased by £85 million, or 5·5 per cent., to over £1,660 million. Health Boards will also be able to retain the resources released through their efficiency programmes, which should amount to over £20 million next year. Plans for the Family Practitioner Services allow for expected increase in public demand and for the proposals for improving the services set out in the Government's White Paper "Promoting Better Health". Capital spending on the health service will total about £370 million over the next three years.

SOCIAL WORK

Total provision for Social Work is planned to rise by some £47 million primarily for local authority current and capital expenditure. The figures reflect the transfer of responsibility from the Secretary of State to local authorities for certain court disposals of children.

OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES

The expenditure covered by this programme is to provide for the administrative costs of the Scottish Office, including the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, and of three smaller Scottish departments: the General Register Office (Scotland), the Scottish Record Office and the Department of the Registers of Scotland.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I note that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's press department has been hard at work in anticipation of today's events. One result was an item in the latest issue of the *Sunday Times*, which talked of a significant boost to Scotland's share of Government spending and produced a most tempting list of goodies.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the final product that has been unveiled today does not live up to the advertisement, and that this kind of creative journalism does nothing for his credibility or for the standing of politics in Scotland?

The right hon. and learned Gentleman states that he intends to raise expenditure to £8,505 million. The House will be somewhat underwhelmed, as the Autumn Statement announced a figure of £8,510 million. The difference is no doubt accounted for by the fact that in the Autumn Statement we tend to even up the figures. The truth is that the figure is the same as was announced in the Autumn Statement. If we take that figure, allow for inflation and compare it with the expected outturn for 1987-88, one finds that there is a cut in real terms of between £80 million and £85 million, and not the increase that was so enthusiastically trailed by the Secretary of State.

It is a complicated set of figures, presented in a slightly different way this year. I should like to ask the Secretary of State about some of the specific totals. Is it not true that, on housing, taking the net figure for 1987-88 against the net provision for 1988-89 produces a cut in cash terms of £56 million and in real terms of £87 million? If we take the gross figure for 1987-88 and compare it with that for 1988-89, including the expected capital receipts from the sale of public sector housing, the cut still remains at £25 million in real terms. Is that not an abdication of responsibility, given the scale of the housing crisis in Scotland? The Secretary of State talks about the concentration of resources. Is that not a cruel euphemism for another significant cut in the already savaged housing budget?

Will the Secretary of State admit that, although he spent more than £300 million on industry last year, £206 million on regional aid, and just under £100 million on the Scottish Development Agency, he is planning to spend in net terms only £266 million next year and £260 million in the two years to follow? To put into perspective the rather extravagant claims that he has been making, is it not true that he spent in current terms just over £330 million as recently as 1985-86? Why does the Secretary of State boast so shamelessly of success in negotiating on Scotland's behalf in the Cabinet when he will spend less next year than he did in the current year? Will he give us a specific guarantee that Scotland will not be affected by any alterations in regional aid policy dreamed up by his noble Friend Lord Young?

I shall now deal with the health and social work budget. In net terms for 1987-88, the budget was £2,605 million. It is now rising in net terms for 1988-89 to £2,829 million. I concede that that is an increase in real terms of £107 million. Does the Secretary of State really think that that is adequate? Is there not an element of sleight of hand, as in the real terms increase of £107 million we have to accommodate the £130 million increase in cash terms in the health budget to which he referred and the 12 per cent. increase in the social work budget that he is also parading in his statement?

Whatever happens to the figures, does he not admit that they simply do not deal with the major problems facing the Health Service in Scotland and certainly will not face up to the problems referred to by the president of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh? Professor Michael Oliver said that Ministers "won't or can't hear" and that it will take a "few deaths, a few scandals" to move them. Will that view not be confirmed by today's announcement?

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

The figures seem to be totally inadequate and no amount of juggling with the totals can disguise the fact that this is a disappointing performance by the Secretary of State. I repeat that, if one takes the outturn figures given by the Government in the Autumn Statement for this year and the expected expenditure figures for the Scottish Office, the total budget for next year is cut in real terms by over £80 million and that cannot be good news by any standards.

The Secretary of State has made minor adjustments to individual spending totals within a budget that has declined overall in real terms. Much though he may try to make of it, I wish that he would pay more attention to the problems facing Scotland — the problems that will continue to trouble the people of Scotland—and less to the sort of political sleight of hand and packaging that has been a mark of the Secretary of State's performance in recent weeks.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me saying that, if the worst that he can say about my statement today is that it was disappointing, that shows its worth in terms of the real benefits that it will bring the people of Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman confirmed that the amount referred to today was the same as in the Autumn Statement. Therefore, perhaps he should attach more importance to these matters than to speculative items in newspapers, which he seemed to assume to be holy writ.

The hon. Gentleman said that there was a reduction in the net amount available for housing. He will be aware that what matters to people in Scotland is how much is to be invested in the housing stock of local authorities, the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation. Whatever the hon. Gentleman says, he cannot avoid the fact that, as I said in my statement, £30 million more will be available for investment in the public sector housing stock in Scotland, which will be highly beneficial. *[Interruption.]* It is the gross figure that shows how much will be spent on the improvement of the housing stock and on building new sheltered or special needs housing, and that represents a substantial increase which will be available to the various recipients.

The hon. Gentleman will be content to know that the Scottish Development Agency will receive resources higher than it has received at any time in its history, enabling it to carry out more excellent work on urban regeneration.

On regional policy changes, I must ask the hon. Gentleman to keep his patience for a while. I can assure him that any policy developments in regional aid will have been come to in the full consideration of how we can best boost employment and economic development in the various regions of the United Kingdom.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for conceding that my announcement today represents an increase in real terms in health expenditure. *[Interruption.]* That is exactly what the hon. Gentleman said. I listened to him, even if his hon. Friends did not. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for conceding that.

I must also point out to the hon. Gentleman, and, indeed, to others in Scotland who point to the continuing needs of the Health Service in Scotland, that their views will carry more weight if represented in a more balanced fashion. For example, if they pointed to the fact that since 1979 new capital investment in the NHS in Scotland has resulted in the completion of 51 major new hospital developments, providing over 5,770 beds and some 481 day places, and to the fact that 32 major developments are now under construction or in planning, that would represent a balanced view of the situation affecting the Health Service in Scotland at present.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, with the excellent announcement last week on Ravenscraig, today's financial statement is more good news for Scotland? Is he aware that the continued high expenditure on trunk roads is most welcome, and will that include the Dumfries bypass? Finally, does he further agree that the 9 per cent. increase in education is excellent news towards increasing the quality of education and the facilities required to that end?

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Yes, I can confirm that the proposed construction of the Dumfries bypass will be going ahead. I am also grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the important extra help that we are giving to the development of education, particularly standard grade, in Scotland.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Secretary of State accept that there is no real news in this statement? Of course, it adds flesh to the bones of the Autumn Statement, but it takes us no further. Does he accept that he led the House to expect that there would be advances beyond the Autumn Statement? Is there not a real need for a rural development agency within the SDA, or however erected, particularly having regard to the troubles of Scottish agriculture, since that will enable some stability and long-term planning in that sector?

On prison and hospital services, does the Secretary of State really think that the figures that he has announced this afternoon will adequately measure up to the real and acute problems that these important sectors face? Does he accept that there is the whiff of an underlying theme in the statement that the Government are moving directly away from the local authorities and the provision of services through the local authorities in Scotland? Surely, if that is the Government's policy, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should have the courage to say so openly and not in this underhand fashion.

Mr. Rifkind: I am surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman say that no further information has been provided that did not appear in the Autumn Statement. The global amount available to the Scottish Office was announced in the Autumn Statement and as in previous years this announcement deals with the distribution of that sum to the various functional responsibilities of the Department. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman now has the exact details that he requires. He knows how much will be available for health, housing, education and the various other aspects of Scottish expenditure. Had the hon. Gentleman been listening to the statement, he would be aware of that fact.

Rural development is a matter to which I attach very considerable importance. The Scottish Development Agency has a responsibility for the whole of Scotland, and I believe that the extra resources available to the agency will help it to carry out activities in rural areas. In addition, the extra resources being provided for the Scottish tourist board will be of particular importance in rural areas because tourism is clearly one major source of potential further employment and growth.

I have indicated the resources that will be made available for prisons and hospitals. As the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) conceded, the figures represent increases in real terms in both categories. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) would have acknowledged that.

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): Do not the opposition parties' questions show a total inability to recognise what is good news for Scotland? Conservative Members recognise the achievements of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State on behalf of Scotland, which will also be recognised in Scotland. Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that the improvement of the A94 Perth-to-Aberdeen road to dual carriageway standard will go ahead as planned?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I can confirm to my right hon. Friend that most of the trunk road developments currently envisaged will be going ahead because the overall resources for the trunk programme are being maintained. The particular projects and allocations will be announced in due course, but I would not expect any significant changes in the trunk road programme. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his earlier comments.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Why does not the Secretary of State answer the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about totals? The figures that my hon. Friend cited were absolutely accurate and were taken from the Government's own document. The outturn for the current year is expected to be £8,220 million. The figure announced for next year is £8,505 million—an increase of only 3·5 per cent. in cash terms, which is less than the rate of inflation. The figures announced in today's statement represent a cut in expenditure in real terms in the next year.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman is incorrect. The figures that I announced represent an increase of 6·9 per cent. over planned expenditure for the current year and an increase of nearly 5 per cent. over what was planned for 1988-89 in the last public expenditure White Paper. I realise that Opposition Members are desperate to find grounds to criticise the statement, but they will find it very difficult.

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend, especially on his last reply, which confirmed that, while public expenditure is increasing in real terms it is falling as a proportion of gross domestic product — in Scotland as in the rest of the United Kingdom — as a result of the success of the Government's economic policy.

Can my right hon. and learned Friend say anything about new towns industrial infrastructure? I am not sure whether I missed that part of his statement. On trunk roads, I take it that I am correct in assuming that it goes without saying that major route improvements will go ahead in the trunk road programme, but can my right hon. and learned Friend say anything about the structural maintenance of trunk roads?

Mr. Rifkind: The development of the industrial infrastructure in the new towns can be increased significantly and the road maintenance programme can be maintained at a high level. There will be a reduction in the local authority capital programme on roads, but that will not affect the maintenance programme, particularly with regard to road safety matters.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State help the House by telling us whether he has resolved the dilemma in the Cabinet? If the enterprise culture is indeed coming to Scotland, should he not announce dramatic decreases in public expenditure? On the other hand, if, as we suspect, the enterprise culture is there, but needs dramatic subventions from the Treasury, these subventions, particularly those on urban aid, are inadequate. A £6 million increase in urban aid is wholly inadequate, not just to deal with the burdens of a central city, but to deal with areas such as the mining communities, which have been decimated for many years. We need a re-assessment of the amount and the criteria for urban aid, so that those areas come within its orbit.

Mr. Rifkind: The figures that I have announced do not represent some dramatic increase in expenditure purely for Scotland; this year we have had an announcement of increases in Government expenditure in the United Kingdom as a whole. The figures that I have announced today are figures to which Scotland is entitled on the basis of the formula which has been used for several years to determine appropriate levels of provision.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the enterprise culture is found significantly in Scotland in areas of tourism? Does he agree that the Government recognise that, which is a reason why they have increased the funding to assist the pump-priming of tourism which will create many new jobs in rural areas? Can he confirm that the Scottish Office has spent about £670 million on trunk roads on major routes throughout Scotland since 1979? Will he confirm that the expenditure on education announced today will make it possible for the schemes that his hon. Friend the Minister is introducing to come to pass?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, I can confirm those points. An additional £1 million is being made available for tourism, primarily for the Scottish tourist board, and I can confirm the substantial road infrastructure improvements, to which he referred.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): May I remind the Secretary of State that, during the general election campaign, he called a press conference and declared that part of his party's manifesto was to upgrade the A74 to M74 status? Today we hear that that has again been postponed for later years. I have 32 miles of this inadequate A74 running through my constituency. How many men, women and children will be slaughtered on this unsafe road before the Secretary of State carries out his manifesto commitment?

Mr. Rifkind: Obviously, the hon. Gentleman knows little about road construction. He should appreciate that one cannot simply start the construction of a new motorway within weeks of announcing one's intention to do so. The planning and design work is already in preparation and we intend to upgrade the A74 to motorway status in order to connect the motorway network of Scotland with that of England and Wales. The announcements that I have made today will enable us to continue to make good progress towards achieving that objective.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does the Secretary of State accept that he is better at news management than at winning budget increases for Scotland? It has already been pointed out that the totals announced today are exactly the same as those in the Autumn Statement. We are only hearing about a rejigging of the programmes within that.

If we examine the details of provision for 1990-91, the picture becomes even worse. In 1990-91, £8,770 million will be provided, but at 1986-87 prices that is £7,550 million and compares with £7,577 million in 1979-80. Can the Secretary of State explain how, with a succession of apparent triumphs in Cabinet, Scottish public expenditure will be less in real terms in 1990-91 than it was in 1979-80?

Mr. Rifkind: I am somewhat amused and disconcerted by the great surprise among Opposition Members that the grand total of the announcements that I have made today is exactly the same as the grand total contained in the Autumn Statement a couple of months ago. As the purpose of today's statement is to announce how that money is to be distributed, it should have come as no great surprise. In each of the years during which the Government have been in office, expenditure in Scotland has remained at the same proportion of comparable expenditure in England. The fluctuation from year to year has been very small.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. and learned Friend is to be congratulated on continuing, in his usual excellent way, the privileged position of the Scots in the United Kingdom. Will he confirm that public expenditure per capita in Scotland is still 20 per cent. or more above that in England? Will he confirm that public expenditure as a percentage of gross national product is 48 per cent. in Scotland as opposed to 41 per cent. nationally? Does he believe that, in future, the Conservative party will obtain a response and gratitude from Scottish people as it has in the past?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct to highlight public expenditure. He will be aware that, not just as between Scotland and England but within Scotland and within England, we must vary expenditure according to need. Just as public expenditure varies in different parts of England, so it does in parts of Scotland. It is not always entirely helpful to use all-Scottish and all-English figures other than as a method of statistical presentation.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): The Secretary of State will appreciate that the distribution of funds is important. May I test his good news? Will he assure the House that the health authorities that have been required to cut expenditure this year will have those cuts restored in the next financial year? Although Lothian health board has £18 million-worth of capital expenditure this year, will the Secretary of State assure the House that the board will receive additional funds to rebuild the Royal infirmary so that it need not rely on Victorian endowments simply to patch and mend?

Mr. Rifkind: As the hon. Member for Garscadden conceded, I have announced today real increases in the provision for the Health Service in Scotland. The provision of individual health boards will be determined in due course and I cannot comment now on the amount that will be available to Lothian health board.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Not during questions on a statement.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to reject the whining, whingeing and synthetic indignation from the Opposition to which we have become accustomed? Does he accept that many hon. Members who represent English constituencies—mine is in the far south-west—have gained the distinct impression that Scotland is almost being force-fed with public expenditure? In support of that, may I point out that we do not even have a development agency, whereas the budget of the Scottish Development Agency has just been increased by 10 per cent? Despite what Opposition Members say, expenditure on tourism is expected to increase by more than 20 per cent. in Scotland. May we have similar treatment for England?

Mr. Rifkind: Similar industrial and environmental work to that of the SDA is carried out in the areas of England, albeit in different ways. Although there is no development agency for England, the work of industrial assistance and environmental improvement is carried out by organisations such as English Estates. The main advantage of having an SDA is not the amount of resources that it attracts, but the opportunity that it provides to co-ordinate the responsibilities of several Departments, which in Scotland are all the responsibility of the Scottish Office.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Now that the Secretary of State is providing money to upgrade the A74—which I welcome, since it is the main road from Scotland to England—is it not time that he considered other roads, including the main A737 through the Garnock valley connecting Irvine new town and Hunterston with the main motorway system in the Glasgow area? The construction by the Finnish company, Caledonian Paper, of a new pulp paper mill will cause a tremendous increase in traffic. The Clyde port authority has published new plans for further development at Hunterston. Is it not time for the Secretary of State to stop blaming Strathclyde regional council, and instead give it the money to upgrade this road, which will be necessary in the development of all of north Ayrshire?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank the hon. Gentleman for welcoming our proposals for the A74. Strathclyde regional council must determine its priorities for non-trunk roads.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I be the first to represent the interests of the taxpayer in discussion of this boondoggle? Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House why this slush fund has been welcomed with so little gratitude by the recipients on the Benches opposite? Can he tell the House why, when we have a Conservative Government, those who are most Socialist receive the most public money? Will he also tell my constituents how much subsidy, on average, they pay per capita to each constituent represented by hon. Members opposite?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend will appreciate that the response of the Opposition is almost exactly the same as the response to the statements of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and others who represent Departments involved in such matters. The

expenditure is not paid for solely by my hon. Friend's constituents: it is paid for by taxpayers throughout the United Kingdom, including my constituents.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): The Minister mentioned urban renewal. A project in my constituency — the conversion of Spiers wharf warehouses into houses—has the support of Strathclyde region, Glasgow district and the SDA. Those houses are on the bank of the Forth and Clyde canal. It appears that the British Waterways Board is receiving no support from the Department of the Environment in cleaning that canal. Since the project depends on the renewal of the 12 miles of canal from my constituency to Kirkintilloch, will the Secretary of State meet his opposite number in the Department of the Environment to see what can be done to improve matters?

Mr. Rifkind: The most appropriate action that the hon. Gentleman could take would be to raise those matters directly with the relevant Minister at the Department of the Environment. If it has responsibility for such matters, that would be the sensible way of pursuing his constituency interest.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I was surprised to hear my right hon. and learned Friend say that the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) was unhelpful. In my experience, my hon. Friend is one of the most helpful Members of the House, and I thought that he made a good point on behalf of the taxpayers of England.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that, in 1986-87, public spending per head in England was £1,968 and public spending per head in Scotland was nearly one third greater, at £2,519? Will his statement today improve that disparity? Will public spending per head in Scotland be brought down towards the level in England? Does not this annual rattling of the begging bowl in Scotland tend to give the Scots a sense of inferiority?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend will be the first to appreciate that expenditure should take into account need. That factor has long been recognised as justifying different expenditure in different areas of the United Kingdom. Many parts of England receive higher expenditure than do parts of the south-east. Conservative Governments have always attached great importance to such matters, because it is crucial to ensure that our provision takes into account the requirements of an area. I believe it to be entirely justified.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to drift from net to gross, and from gross to net, according to which matters he is dealing with. Will he turn his attention to what he said were the preferable figures — the gross figures? When one looks at them, one sees an immediate collapse in direct spending on industry in Scotland. Is that not disgraceful, given the level of unemployment that we have?

Mr. Rifkind: What I announced today was an extra £25 million for industry in Scotland. If the hon. Gentleman does not see that as an improvement, it is difficult to know what would impress him.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): In view of the insults thrown at the people of Scotland by the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), will the Secretary of State advise the Scottish tourist board to spend some of the additional money that it has—the £1 million—on telling the people of Scotland not to go to St. Ives for their holidays? The hon. Gentleman's constituency could not survive without the thousands of Scots like myself who spend their holidays there. Does the Secretary of State agree that the hon. Gentleman's constituents who run hotels and boarding houses will not be happy tomorrow when they read what the hon. Gentleman has said about the holidaymakers who go to St. Ives?

Mr. Rifkind: I look forward to many thousands of Scots continuing to visit St. Ives, and I also look forward to many residents of St. Ives continuing to visit Falkirk.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Does the Secretary of State accept that the answers that he gave to his four hon. Friends — the foolish foursome — about public spending in Scotland were too difficult for them to understand because there were too many big words? Perhaps he should give a clearer explanation in a written answer. The reason why there is more public expenditure in Scotland is that there is more unmet need and higher unemployment than in the south. One has only to look at the constituencies with the highest unemployment and the lowest pay to see that. Conservative Members should look at the figures. The Secretary of State has an educational job to carry out. Conservative Members should think about that and not spend their time tiresomely insulting Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady might appreciate that there might be less irritation, perhaps misunderstanding, about the requirements of her constituents, if occasionally she was willing to recognise that, far from her constituents being deprived as a consequence of the Government's decisions, they have benefited from a recognition of the differential levels of need.

The hon. Lady should realise that the constant refusal to acknowledge that her constituents receive differential levels of expenditure, and that that has continued under the Government, means that perhaps she has herself and her colleagues to blame, when there is evidence of such frustration among hon. Members from other constituencies. I must say to the hon. Lady that it is not just hon. Members from constituencies south of the border, but hon. Members with constituencies elsewhere in Scotland, who sometimes feel concerned at what they see as the differential levels of expenditure in constituencies such as that represented by the hon. Lady. If there is a refusal to recognise support when it is being provided, that may be part of the explanation for the concern.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Secretary of State has shown today that he is incapable of distinguishing between levels of planned expenditure and outturn expenditure in terms of public expenditure in Scotland. However, I hope that he is capable of recognising that, in Tayside, the efforts to provide proper community care services have been hamstrung by the inability of Tayside health board or Tayside regional council to find sufficient resources from within their present budgets, which are under the continual pressure of cuts. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman satisfied that the level of spending on health and social services that he announced today will be sufficient to enable both those bodies to provide the funding that they are seeking? If he receives future representations from those two bodies for extra funding, will he grant those extra funds?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that in most years — virtually every year — outturn expenditure tends to be higher than planned expenditure. Therefore, if one is trying to make any attempt at a valid comparison between Governments proposals this year and proposals in previous years, it makes sense to compare planned provision with a planned provision announcement at a comparable time in a previous year.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): Will the Secretary of State reflect—[Hon. Members: "Reading."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to hold a note in his hand if he wishes, as long as he does not read it.

Mr. McLeish: The behaviour of certain Conservative Members is eloquent testimony as to why the Tories have done so badly in Scotland.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman talk about the real economy in Scotland, not the one that he would like us to believe exists? His statement on the industry increases is slightly misleading because our calculations suggest that there is a £2·6 million reduction in the budget. Indeed, if one takes the juggling of figures between the SDA and the HIDB in direct grant, it may well be that some parts of the industry budget are suffering to accommodate an increase in other parts.

The Secretary of State should also reflect on this. We hear about whingeing. What about the 320,000 Scots who are whingeing on the dole queue? What about the 100,000 Scots who are whingeing on Government special programmes? Will not the right hon. and learned Gentleman take seriously the fact that investment in industry, jobs and the economy in Scotland does not measure up to the problems that we face?

Finally, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reflect on one other development, which the Secretary of State for Employment may or may not have told him about? We shall have an extra 40,000 places next year on the Government's new adult programme. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman provide resources in the statement so that those concerned can embark on projects that are worth while and provide effective training—or is that to be a workfare scheme on the cheap?

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to unemployment, the hon. Gentleman should recognise that there is unemployment in Scotland, as there is elsewhere in the United Kingdom, but he might have referred to the fact that unemployment in Scotland has fallen by some 55,000 since January this year. If that decline in unemployment continues at that rate, we can look forward to unemployment ceasing to be the serious problem that it continues to be at present.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): Does the Secretary of State agree that when one looks at Health Service expenditure and applies the National Health Service prices and wages deflator, which is the correct deflator, one sees that the increase is under 1 per cent? One needs 1 per cent. to stand still, but we have an increase of under 1 per cent. As we are already budgeting for an increase in primary care, that means that there will be effective cuts in the hospital service. Where will those cuts be in the hospital service?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not concede for one moment that there is to be a cut in health expenditure in Scotland. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the views expressed by his hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Does the Secretary of State agree, looking at the housing figures, that the capital allocation for next year remains below the level, in real terms, of the capital allocation for 1979-80? Does he further agree that the way in which the increase on last year's figures has been achieved in the capital allocation comes about by including the total cost of covenanting schemes within one year's allocation instead of, as is more appropriate, spreading it over the life of those covenanting schemes?

Mr. Rifkind: I remind the hon. Gentleman, if he is going back to 1978-79 — *[Interruption.]* I can see why the hon. Gentleman does not want to go back to 1978. As he will recall, it was the previous Labour Government who were responsible for a massive cut in capital expenditure on housing in Scotland. That is a fact that we shall not let the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends forget. Capital expenditure on housing in Scotland has gone up over the past few years. Today I have announced further provision, which will mean extra investment in capital expenditure on housing in Scotland of some £30 million. That can be only for the benefit of those who depend on that north of the border.

State Security

4.18 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to question No. 16, on the Zircon affair. I contend that it was an orderly question, otherwise the Table Office would not have allowed it. There was no attempt by Ministers to transfer it. Indeed, on the rota, the Secretary of State answers on behalf of the Lord Advocate. It will be within your recollection, Mr. Speaker, that I asked a careful and orderly supplementary question which, incidentally, I discussed with Professor Anthony Bradley, professor of constitutional law, and Professor Robert Black, professor of Scots law, at the university of Edinburgh. I think that the supplementary question was equally in order. Therefore, how can the Minister answering say that it was not within his sphere of responsibility? In whose sphere of responsibility would it be?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for answers in this place, provided they are in order. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has made a pertinent point and his best course is to take up the matter with the Minister concerned.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I recognise your difficulties, but I want to support my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). There is no Law Officer in the House—I make no complaint about that; it is the chance of electoral fortune. It was specifically arranged that the Secretary of State would answer for the Lord Advocate. When a direct and proper question is put, it is an abuse to say that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, who speaks for his lord and master, is not responsible for answering for the Lord Advocate's actions. He must be responsible. The matter must be satisfactorily resolved.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. At no time was there any suggestion that the question originally tabled by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was not an appropriate or proper question. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State correctly pointed out that the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question drew attention to matters that were not the responsibility of myself as Secretary of State for Scotland or of the Lord Advocate, and he therefore properly declined to comment on it.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. If what the Secretary of State says is right, the matter can be the responsibility, as I have suspected for many weeks, only of the Prime Minister and Mr. Ingham. They were the only people who could then take responsibility for the Zircon affair and for what happened in the raid on the BBC in Glasgow, when executives were thrown out of their beds at 3 o'clock on a Sunday morning. We all know now that no charge of substance has been laid. This is a great attack on liberty by the Government. If the Lord Advocate and the Secretary of State for Scotland are not responsible, the Prime Minister must be.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member does not expect me to adjudicate on such matters. One point about which I am totally clear is that this is not my responsibility.

Mr. Dewar: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raise a serious point. The supplementary question was specifically about the criteria applied by the Lord Advocate in making an important and controversial decision. It must be right that the House can question the Lord Advocate's actions. If you cannot help us as to who is responsible, perhaps you can help by advising us of the proper machinery, because the Government seem reluctant to answer these questions.

Mr. Speaker: The best way out of the problem would be to direct this to the Government Front Bench which will have time to consider it, before business questions tomorrow.

Local Government Bill

4.23 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you can give the House some guidance. The Local Government Bill, as amended by Standing Committee A, was printed today. I understand that it is to come before the House on Report on Monday. There are a number of important issues of principle in the Bill. We hear that the Government intend to amend the Bill to give effect to the demands of the Commission for Racial Equality.

The Bill proposes that certain services, at present given exclusively by local government, should be subject to tender. It is proposed that the conditions upon which outside bodies may tender should be governed by the Bill. Clause 18 (10) proposes that a concession should be made in respect of section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976.

Important issues of principle arise, but those of us who wish to table amendments will not have time to do so. I hope that you will think that this is an occasion on which you can state in advance through the usual channels that some delay would be appropriate. A personal matter is involved as well. The Secretary of State may wish to have more time to prepare his speech, because he was one of the six Tories who voted against the Second Reading of the Race Relations Bill on 4 March 1976. He has a proud position of being opposed to all this nonsense. I am sure that he would wish to have more time to reconcile his position on 4 March 1976 with what may be proposed on Monday next week.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Government revealed that they might wish to bring forward amendments on Report in respect of matters—including provisions transferring the control of stray dogs from the police to local authorities—on which they were not then in a position to finalise their view. It would be helpful if Government amendments on these matters and on others with which the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) dealt—although I may take a different view—were introduced on Report in this House rather than be seen by this place only after their introduction in the other place. It seems that there is likely to be a substantial amount of local government business in the House next week—by all reports, at least two days on the Local Government Finance Bill. It would be appropriate, therefore, in order to allow hon. Members the opportunity to consider these

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

matters, to postpone the Report and Third Reading of the Local Government Bill at least until the first week after the new year.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that it is usual in a Bill of this significance and magnitude, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said, to have at least a week between the Bill finishing Committee and coming back to the House on Report. This is a significant matter, as my hon. Friend said, especially since some of us believe that it is possible that the Government have been rolled over by the Commission for Racial Equality. The nature of the proposed amendment is, through the tendering process,

"to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups."

If that authority is given to local government, it will negate the vast purpose of the Bill. Many Conservative Members would be most uneasy about that. A period should be allowed to elapse so that not only the usual channels can operate but the Government can obtain feedback from their supporters as to how unsatisfactory such a measure would be.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a great deal of business before the House. If the proceedings are delayed, those hon. Members who wish to be called will not be called.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I make a brief plea on behalf of Scottish Members. The Leader of the House will know that the Bill has ramifications for Scottish legislation. Scottish Members were not able to get on the Standing Committee— *[Interruption.]* We were not able to get as many as we would have liked on the Standing Committee. We should like the opportunity to consider the matter properly on Report and Third Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The timing of business in the House is not a matter for the Chair. The Leader of the House is on the Government Front Bench. There is a business statement tomorrow, and I am sure that he has heard what has been said and will carefully consider it.

BBC (Injunction)

4.28 pm

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I inquire whether there has been an application from the Prime Minister or the Attorney-General to make a statement on the Government's litigation in the courts against the BBC?

Mr. Speaker: I have had no indication of any statement of that kind.

Mr. Morris: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware of the matter which I raised on Monday, when I asked specifically whether, if I mentioned the name of Mr. Peter Day, the media might be in difficulty in reporting that name? You replied that it was a hypothetical matter. I am informed that on Monday evening, when "Today in Parliament" was reported, part of my observations dealing with the name of Peter Day was excluded on legal advice. That, therefore, is the reason why the Government returned to the High Court today to ask for a variation in the order that they obtained on Friday. Even this Government realised that they had encroached far too much on the liberties of this House. What happened on Monday exemplified exactly what I surmised might happen—that it would put the BBC in fear of being in contempt if it reported that name.

Does the Government's right hand know what the left hand is doing? The Government obtained an injunction on Friday regardless of the injunction that had been changed in the House of Lords on 30 July, when a proviso was allowed so that proceedings in Parliament could and would be reported. Is that an indication of the way that the Government are, either deliberately or in ignorance, muzzling this House?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I can confirm that in the High Court this morning judgment was reserved, but a proviso was added by consent in these terms:

"Provided that this Order shall not prohibit—

(a) fair and accurate reporting of proceedings in open court in England and Wales;

(b) fair and accurate reporting of proceedings in either House of Parliament whose publication is not prohibited by that House;

(c) publication of any facts concerning the Security and Intelligence Services, including the identities of present or former members, already made public with the authority of the Crown.

Until further Order."

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may remember that on Monday, when these points were raised with you, you said that it was for the broadcasting authorities to decide what they reported. Clearly, they were acting under legal advice —hence the variation order. Surely the points that were raised on Monday by my hon. Friends and myself are of crucial importance in the preservation of parliamentary reporting and, indeed, parliamentary democracy.

Now that the Government have been forced to retreat, will you, Mr. Speaker, use your good offices to ensure that on no future occasion will the BBC again be placed in the position—as it was today when reporting "Yesterday in Parliament" — of not being able, on legal advice, to report the remarks of a Conservative Member of Parliament? At a time of growing Government censorship

of the media, it is absolutely essential that what is stated in this House can be reported in the media, including the BBC. Clearly, that was not the position until the variation order was obtained in the High Court. It is a disgrace.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I inform you that it was I who, last night, tabled a parliamentary question asking for the injunction to be varied in the way that it then was in the application made by the Government this morning? In part, that derives from a difficulty that I raised with you a week and a half ago, when I asked for a public ruling on a point of order. You very kindly wrote a reply——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not refer to a matter of privilege about which I have written to him.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I had not intended to do so, Mr. Speaker, but only to refer to a date that you gave in your reply of 30 July. I followed that through, and in the injunction that the Government took out against *The Observer* and *The Guardian* at the end of July I found a proviso under paragraph 3. I then examined the injunction taken out last Friday and found that that proviso was missing. It was on that basis that I tabled a question asking for the inclusion of that proviso.

Had it been possible for your ruling to have been public, Mr. Speaker, I believe that much embarrassment could have been avoided because we would earlier have been able to identify the fact that the proviso was missing. It was because of that that the BBC felt embarrassed and could not publish freely in the way that perhaps you, Sir, thought that it should.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman wrote to me on a matter of privilege and I replied to him in terms that he well understands.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should be grateful if you could confirm that under the terms of the altered judgment—which, as the Leader of the House made plain, was a judgment by consent—the position of the House has not changed by consent between the Attorney-General and a judge—or, indeed, any member or all of the judiciary. The statement by the Leader of the House implied that the consent was an agreement to restore the position of absolute privilege for hon. Members of this House and qualified privilege for the newspapers and broadcasting media to report the terms of our debates, which may contain the use of our absolute privilege. It would be a tragedy—as I am sure you would agree, Mr. Speaker—if it was thought by anyone that the terms of this House could be agreed by consent between the Attorney-General and a judge in an attempt to give some sort of legal status to a power that they do not have to change our position in this House. Our position is that we have absolute privilege to speak as we like, without fear of libel actions against us, and that the media has qualified privilege to report those terms.

I seek your support, Mr. Speaker, in confirming that position, and to stop the Government attempting to erode, by legal means, the powers of this House. We represent an important bulwark against any Executive trampling on the rights of this House and, through it, the people outside.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As matters develop, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is widespread concern about the consistency of public policy on confidence in the security services. There is also increasing concern about attempts, through applications for writs, to impose censorship on the newspaper and broadcasting media.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, on Monday I applied for a debate under Standing Order No. 20, together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), whose application was heard. You indicated that if applications were made later this week, you would listen to them with concern and interest. Following the statement by the Leader of the House, will you accept from me an application under Standing Order No. 20 to discuss a matter that is specific and important, and which should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the applications for writs that stop the media giving the public information about the organisation and activities of the security services"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, I would not accept such an application at this juncture.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are dealing not only with an attempt at censorship, but with incompetent censorship. Had the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) been taken up, the Government's embarrassment now would not be such as it clearly is.

When I originally raised this matter with you, Mr. Speaker, on Monday, and asked whether the BBC would be absolutely free to broadcast in its programmes "Yesterday in Parliament" and "Today in Parliament" anything appertaining to the matters surrounding the injunction and the programme "My Country, Right or Wrong", you said that it was hypothetical and that, therefore, you could not give a ruling. Notwithstanding what we have heard from the Leader of the House, will you either make a ruling today—or consider giving such a ruling—that makes it absolutely clear that the BBC is at complete liberty to broadcast anything said in this House if it so chooses, and that the only determination bearing on its choice should be that of editorial discrimination and freedom and not the terms of an injunction awarded by a court to the Government?

Mr. Speaker: We can deal with the matter. I confirm what the hon. Gentleman has said. The privileges of the House are absolute. There should be no doubt about that. I fully accept the concern that was expressed earlier this week about this matter. The media do not have absolute privilege, as the hon. Gentleman correctly said. They have to consider what they put out or publish. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. A new point is developing in this mini-saga. We have absolute privilege, and we would turn to you, Mr. Speaker, if any attempt were made for that privilege to be qualified in any way. If the Government are to trample on democracy in the way that they have done in relation to this case, it seems that they have some responsibility to report to Mr. Speaker when they take steps that may lead to that privilege being qualified.

It is one thing for the Government to try to qualify that privilege, but they have other interests in the matter. They

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

just want to get their own way. I should have thought that Mr. Speaker has the responsibility to ensure that, at all times, that privilege is unqualified. Therefore, it would be within the bounds of decency for a Government spokesperson to go to Mr. Speaker and say, "By the way, we are taking action in the courts today or tomorrow. The result may be that we shall qualify privilege in the House of Commons. Since we are decent chaps, we thought we should let you know."

This business has shown that those on the Treasury Bench, including the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House, do not give two hoots about democracy and are not interested in Mr. Speaker, either.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hypothetical matter that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned were to occur, I should be the first to come back to the House and report it. It has not occurred. I assure the hon. Gentleman that it will never occur as far as I am concerned. It is my duty to ensure that the absolute privileges of the House are always maintained.

Mr. John Morris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will the Leader of the House now respond and further consult with either the Prime Minister or the Attorney-General so that we may have a proper explanation before the House rises and so that we may know why there has been a variation and what the Government's general position on censorship is?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Such matters can properly be canvassed tomorrow.

Companies (Political Donations)

4.42 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to ensure that shareholders in public companies are balloted before a company assumes political objects.

In the first six months of 1987, companies donated more than £2 million to the Conservative party and Right-wing front organisations for the Conservative party. When end-of-year figures are produced, that amount will be considerably greater than £2 million, because 1987 was an election year. British industry does not donate simply to the Conservative party; it also donates a little to the alliance. That is a sign that British industry does not always back winners and has a soft spot for those who will inevitably be losers.

The top 10 donors in 1987 are United Biscuits, British and Commonwealth Holdings, Trusthouse Forte, Kleinwort Benson, Lonsdale, George Weston Holdings, Hanson Trust, Northern Engineering Industries, Newarthill, Willis Faber and Trafalgar House. They have two characteristics in common. First, not one company consulted its work force before it decided to donate to the Conservative party. Yet their work forces create the wealth that allows such companies to make political donations. The very party to which such companies donate often acts against the interests of their employees. Secondly, not one of the companies balloted its shareholders before a decision was taken. So much for the rhetoric of company democracy and popular capitalism.

I mentioned that the alliance parties have also benefited. Alliance Members tell us that the alliance is particularly keen on ballots of employees and shareholders before companies make political donations. Consistent with the alliance, they are inconsistent with principle on the matter.

Of 23 political donations made by companies to the alliance parties, 21 were made without any reference to democracy or ballots. Again, in practice, alliance rhetoric is found to be threadbare and vacuous. Principles are not applied in practice. In ony two cases out of 23 did the companies hold ballots before they donated money to the alliance parties and, more important, before the alliance parties accepted the donations.

We have a record of no democracy in British companies. In addition, there has been a new and much more sinister development in British politics, and that is the development of bought influence in the House of Commons. It is a development of the past few years, but it has become very deep in that time. It shows itself in consultancies and directorships on the Government Benches. Many Conservative Members now find themselves bought by companies to a great extent. My constituents have a right to know why Conservative Members vote in a certain way and what influence is upon them when they cast their votes.

In addition—you will recall it with some feeling, Mr. Deputy Speaker — there was the naked exercise of bought political influence in the House only three weeks ago, when the P and O company offered to take Tory Back Benchers to various hotels to put on various parties and to offer various video shows. The only matter of concern was which video was to be shown to hon. Members and their partners before they were asked to vote for that company and that company's interests.

Hon. Members should contrast that with the treatment of trade unions. What do trade unions have to do if they are to make political donations? They have been bound by law and by statute since 1913. In the Trade Union Act 1984 they were forced to ballot their members every two years so that they could decide whether their trade union should continue to have political objects. There is no such right for shareholders or employees. In addition, individual trade unionists have the right to opt out of paying a political contribution. I do not have the right to opt out of paying a political contribution when I buy a pint of beer from the firm that subsidises the Conservative party. Why do similar rights not apply in relation to shareholders, consumers and employees?

The Educational Institute of Scotland recently balloted its members about setting up a political fund. Would it not be nice to see companies being bound by the same sort of rules before they give their money to the Conservative party?

We hear a great deal from Conservative Members about the language of popular capitalism and shareholder democracy. If that is the way ahead, why are Conservative Members not consistent? Why do they not provide shareholders with the right to hold ballots—to have a voice — before their companies decide to donate politically? What justification can there be for not consulting shareholders about such a crucial decision? In the *Financial Weekly* of July this year, a PR spokesman for Distillers gave the reason why the company did not bother to ballot before it donated to the Conservative party. That anonymous PR spokesman said:

"The company made its first political contribution last year. But this is a subject that we don't talk about."

It is wonderful to have public relations people who do not talk about particular issues. Then we have the paternalism and arrogance of the chairman and chief executive of Hill Samuel, Mr. Christopher Castleman, who said:

"Whatever we do we consider to be in the best interests of Hill Samuel's shareholders. But we do not think that they should be balloted."

That is somewhat different from the language that applies to trade unions, which are required by law to ballot their members, and have done so for many years. Why cannot the shareholders of Hill Samuel and other companies be similarly balloted?

The Bill is modest. I am not trying to stop companies from donating to the Conservative party or alliance parties, however many parties there are now in the alliance. I am trying to make donations by companies to political parties legitimate, because at the moment they are made without democratic support, and in my eyes and the eyes of the public that is illegitimate.

If the Bill is not opposed by Conservative Members, they will agree with shareholders' charters and shareholders' democracy. If they are silent and do not oppose the Bill, I hope that they will make every effort to ensure that it has an easy passage through the House next year, so that shareholders will be able to control the political objects and activities of their companies.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Derek Fatchett, Mr. Terry Davis, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Ms. Jo Richardson, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. John Battle, Ms. Hilary Armstrong, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Mr. Joseph Ashton and Mr. Ernie Ross.

COMPANIES (POLITICAL DONATIONS)

Mr. Derek Fatchett accordingly presented a Bill to ensure that shareholders in public companies are balloted before a company assumes political objects: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 April 1988 and to be printed. [Bill 68.]

Orders of the Day

Rate Support Grant (England)

4.51 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move,

That the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1988-89 (House of Commons Paper No. 163), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

I announced to the House in November, following consultation, my decisions on next year's rate support grant settlement. Hon. Members will therefore be familiar with the report's contents.

However, I must remind the House that we have provided a generous settlement for local authorities. The aggregate Exchequer grant of £13,775 million is an increase of £750 million and 5·75 per cent. more than for 1987-88. Provision for local authority current expenditure, at £27,538 million, is 7 per cent. more than this year.

No doubt Opposition Members will complain about those figures. They go on about the £18 billion that they say we stole from local authorities. Let me nail that figure once and for all. In 1979-80, the last rate support grant settlement of the Labour Government, grant totalled £8,101 million. At 1988-89 prices, that is equivalent to £14,691 million, whereas in this settlement we are providing £13,775 million, which is £916 million less—not the £18 billion we so often hear about.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): How does the Secretary of State reconcile what he has just said with the parliamentary answer he gave me, using his Government's figures, which pointed out that the accumulated reduction in rate support grant since 1978-79 in England, at 1987-88 prices, is £3,896·2 million? He then listed all the figures and gave the cumulative total of £21,573 million.

Mr. Ridley: Because the hon. Gentleman asked what would be the difference if the rate support grant percentage had been maintained, despite the vast increase in local authority spending, so of course he gets a figure like that. I am giving him the true figures, not the ones he asked for. It is just as important to get the question right as the answer.

The settlement will allow non-rate-capped authorities to hold their spending broadly steady in real terms. Education authorities are enabled to increase their spending by rather more because of the additional allowance we have made for schoolteachers' pay.

Our expenditure plans make realistic provision for local authority expenditure. There is, of course, plenty of scope for authorities to make savings—for example, by taking advantage of the savings brought by competition, and implementing the efficiency savings identified by the Audit Commission. Authorities continue to spend more than I believe they should: the settlement therefore provides for a margin between the total of grant-related expenditure — authorities' need to spend — and the level of expenditure provision.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North East): Will my right hon. Friend undertake to amend the figures on the education component of the rate support grant for Bolton council and check his other calculations?

Mr. Ridley: I understand that there has been a miscounting of the number of schoolchildren in Bolton. Those figures are in the report, and at the first supplementary opportunity the figures will be put right and money can be adjusted immediately afterwards.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Minister believe——

Mr. Ridley: I have not given way.

Mr. Skinner: The right hon. Gentleman could give way now, if he wants to.

Mr. Ridley: I do not know that I do want to.

In making the settlement I have borne in mind the need for stability. The mechanisms for distributing grant and the methodology for calculating grant-related expenditure are therefore broadly the same as in the current year. This has been widely welcomed.

The 5p safety net at ratepayer level provides an important protection against grant losses and the 10p cap at authority level on grant gains prevents what would otherwise be an unreasonable effect on the distribution of block grant. How much rates will rise will of course depend upon how much local authorities decide to spend. But ratepayers in areas where local authorities choose to budget sensibly should on average receive rate bills which increase by around the rate of inflation.

I refer to the storm damage which occurred last October. I have now completed my consultation with local authorities and the associations about my proposal to exclude from total expenditure — in effect, to relieve from grant losses — that 25 per cent. of an authority's spending on clearing up after the storms in October above the Bellwin threshold but not met by special assistance. I announced my conclusions in a written answer yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price). It may help the House if I explain them in more detail now.

Authorities have pressed three points about the proposed exclusion. First, there are substantial costs which fall outside the Bellwin scheme. I had expected authorities to treat those costs as capital expenditure, but some do not believe it would be right to do so, although in some cases it must be cheaper for them to do so. If they treated it as revenue spending, they would lose grant as things stand at present. Secondly, if they decide to go down the capital route, they do not believe it is right that they should lose grant on the servicing costs. Thirdly, they cannot complete the emergency repair work required by the October storms by the deadline of 31 January.

They have argued that, despite the special assistance we have made under the Bellwin scheme, and the total expenditure exclusion I had proposed, the Exchequer would stand to make a profit from the storm. Whilst they were content to meet their own costs, subject to the special financial assistance, they believed it was wrong that they should lose grant on such exceptional, emergency expenditure.

Throughout, it has been the Government's intention to assist local authorities to meet the costs of the quite exceptional storm on 16 October. It has been no part of our policy that the Treasury should somehow make a profit as a result of expenditure which authorities could not have allowed for. In the light of local government's comments, I have decided to propose a wider expenditure

exclusion which will remove any possibility of such a profit occurring as a result of authorities spending above the Bellwin threshold.

I propose to exclude from total expenditure not just the authorities' share of expenditure eligible for special financial assistance, but all revenue spending above the Bellwin threshold on clearing up the storm, and, in addition, the costs of servicing capital expenditure. It does not mean that authorities will be left with no burden to shoulder. They will be required to meet the full costs and grant consequences of their spending up to the Bellwin threshold, plus the 25 per cent. above the threshold not met by special assistance and any spending which is ineligible for Bellwin.

Dr. Cunningham: Does what the Secretary of State has just said mean that he is being less than candid with the House? If local authorities still have to bear the consequences of a 1p rate, they will still be liable to pay grant penalties on that expenditure, and many of them will have to do just that.

Mr. Ridley: On 21 October, I explained that we assumed that authorities had made some provision for contingencies, including grant losses, which might occur. Over and above those contingencies assistance has always been available, to which I have constantly referred.

That is my revised proposal, on which I will be consulting local government. I have also been asked to extend beyond 31 January 1988 the time during which authorities may undertake Bellwin-type eligible work, or to dispense with a deadline altogether.

We are bound to impose some deadline if extra Exchequer assistance is to be granted prudently and correctly for works carried out in response to what is an emergency on a particular date. I am anxious, however, to respond, as flexibly as I can, to the comments of the authorities affected and to hon. Friends who have approached me on this matter. Accordingly, I am proposing a new date of 1 March 1988. I have also been asked to provide additional GRE against the costs of servicing capital expenditure on storm damage. My proposal to exclude servicing costs from total expenditure would make such an addition to GRE inappropriate.

Following my announcement, local authorities will have a clear idea of how the Government are prepared to help in the work of putting right storm damage. To make it absolutely clear, we are providing 75 per cent. grant on eligible spending above the threshold. This is cumulative, so that if another Bellwin emergency occurs this year, or later this winter, eligible expenditure on that emergency can be added together to claim grant. We are proposing to exclude all revenue expenditure above the threshold, whether eligible or not, on the clearing up operation for the calculation of grant loss. We are proposing to exclude all debt charges incurred as a result of storm. We are allowing an extra month for authorities to complete the necessary emergency work for which grant can be claimed. We have also offered extra capital allocations.

It is, I believe, a generous package, which meets the legitimate demands of local government. The next step is for local authorities to make their claims, whether for special assistance or for capital allocations, and my Department will deal with them as quickly as possible. Today's debate is principally about the settlement for 1988-89. However, I am today also sending authorities our proposals for supplementary reports for earlier years. I am planning to make three supplementary reports shortly after Christmas. These will be the reports for 1983-84 and 1984-85, based on audited figures, and a further interim report for 1986-87. The main purpose of those reports is to adjust grant entitlements in the light of the latest information about authorities' expenditure in each of the years concerned. If the House approves them, they will be implemented in April.

As the House will be aware, in each of those years there was grant recycling. That means that, if one authority gains grant because it has reduced its expenditure, then other authorities which have not reduced expenditure will lose grant. The amounts involved in recycling can be quite large. That is particularly so for 1986-87, because for that year the slopes used in the formula for calculating entitlements were steepened to provide greater pressure against high spending. That was to compensate for the removal of targets and holdback. In aggregate, authorities' returns now show their estimated expenditure in 1986-87 to be some £208 million less than they returned last June. If that represents the true picture, it is welcome news.

A few authorities have increased their expenditure, and will lose grant. Those authorities which have reduced expenditure by proportionately more than average will gain grant. But those authorities which have reduced their expenditure, but by less than the average, will find that they also will lose grant. This is an unsatisfactory feature of grant recycling, and indeed is one of the reasons why we decided to scrap it for the current financial year and the next two years. However, the law requires the system to operate for earlier years as was intended. The House will have an opportunity to debate those reports in January. If they are approved, they will be implemented in April.

Four other reports will be made in 1988-89. Among other things, we will use these reports to correct an error made in the 1986-87 settlement concerning the Greater London council's expenditure on highways, known as the "Bromley error". The Local Government Finance Bill published last Friday includes a clause which will amend my powers so that the error can be corrected. In order to do that, I will need to determine new multipliers for authorities in supplementary reports for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Grant changes resulting from correction of the Bromley error for 1987-88 and 1988-89 will be implemented as soon as possible after the supplementary reports are made. The implementation of the 1986-87 report will be held over to 1989-90. Ratepayers in Bromley, Kingston and the other boroughs affected can be sure that, in due course, they will receive their correct grant entitlement.

On the related matter of rate limitation, the House will also wish to know that I have reached decisions on the applications from the only two authorities—the London boroughs of Southwark and Tower Hamlets — which asked for their expenditure levels for 1988-89 to be redetermined at a higher figure. In the case of Southwark, I have decided not to increase the expenditure level but to confirm it at the original figure of £134·193 million, which I determined in July this year. In the case of Tower Hamlets, I have decided that a small increase of £2 million would be appropriate — bringing its expenditure level next year to £126·033 million. Associated with that increase for Tower Hamlets is a requirement that the authority reports to me at intervals about the steps it is taking to improve its efficiency in certain areas identified

[Mr. Ridley]

in its application. The other 15 authorities selected for rate limitation in 1988-89 chose not to apply for a redetermination, so their expenditure levels remain as originally determined in July.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I welcome the Secretary of State's acceptance of the case put by Tower Hamlets when it asked for redetermination, although he will not be surprised that I regret that he could not do the same for my borough of Southwark. What was his view on the application for redetermination of ILEA and those of the joint boards which also asked him to set a higher limit?

Mr. Ridley: It is typical of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that he welcomed the increase in the limit for Tower Hamlets without mentioning his regret that the ratepayers of that borough will have to pay more money, but I shall let that pass. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Transport and the Home Secretary will make their final decisions and publish them to the House on the services for which they are responsible.

Indeed, I am announcing today, in a written answer, the proposed rate limits being notified to all 17 of the authorities designated for 1988-89. Those limits are based on the expenditure level for each authority and take account of the amount of block grant it is estimated to receive and, where appropriate, the position of its financial reserves. I should emphasise that, under the terms of the Rates Act 1984, the limits are still provisional at this stage. I hope that most of the 17 authorities will agree the proposed limits. If not, they will be able to make representations and I will consider the matter further. Finally, if there is still no agreement on the limit, an order will be laid before the House for it to determine the matter in the new year.

The effect of the proposed rate limits varies at individual authority level from an implied increase of 11·5 per cent. in the local rate in Tower Hamlets to a reduction of 43·5 per cent. in Ealing. The overall effect of the limits is an average reduction across the 17 authorities of just over 9 per cent. in local rate levels—equivalent to some £140 million less in rate bills when compared to those faced by ratepayers in those areas in the current year. Overall, therefore, this represents very good news for domestic and business ratepayers in those areas of high local authority spending.

In addition to the 17 authorities subject to rate limitation, the Inner London education authority and the 19 joint authorities in London and metropolitan areas are also subject to precept limitation in 1988-89. As I said to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), details of the expenditure levels and proposed precept limits for those authorities will, as usual, be announced in due course by my right hon. Friends, when they are ready to do so.

I recognise that this is not very exciting stuff. Indeed, I fear the heyday of RSG debates has probably passed already and there is likely to be only one more such debate. Domestic rates and RSG have become endangered species. This is the last but one settlement of this kind. Few if any will regret their passing—not even the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who said last week that he was not interested in defending the status quo. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that.

Next week we will start to consider the new system—hon. Members may regard today either as the lull before the storm, or the hour before the dawn, as they wish—subject to a three-line Whip. Under the new system, we will get away from slopes, thresholds, nets and caps, holdback, targets and grant forfeit. We say farewell to them with few regrets.

There will be two major simplifications. First, grant entitlement will not be related to actual expenditure. Grant will be allocated at the beginning of each year, and will not subsequently change. We shall no longer need supplementary reports going back three, four or five years to make final adjustments.

Secondly, there will no longer be resource equalisation based on rateable values. It is equalisation that moves large amounts of grant around the country, and produces results that are often impossible to explain to hon. Members, let alone for them to explain to their constituents. In future, need will be the only factor which influences the distribution of grant. That will not only be simpler, but it will also be fairer. Next week I will invite the whole House to support those proposals. In the meantime, I commend these proposals to the House as the right ones at this time.

5.12 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is the Government's assertion that the British economy is strong, that the country is prospering and that we are doing rather well. Yet today we are asked to approve the same mean and aggressive Government proposals for financial support to enable local authorities to maintain public services as we had to do in recent, more difficult years. Apparently, our asserted prosperity makes no difference to the Government's judgment about how they should support ratepayers.

I had to smile at the intervention of the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and the Secretary of State's reply, which more or less summed up the Government's attitude. The Secretary of State often gets his sums wrong when he is giving grant away, but he always seems to get them right when he is taking money away from local authorities.

No attempt has been made to ease the burden on ratepayers. That burden has been increasing consistently, often dramatically, and always deliberately in every year since the Conservative Government came to office in 1979. Instead of masquerading as the friend of the ratepayer, the right hon. Gentleman should bear in mind—he must know this—that the average, rebated domestic rate bill in 1979-80 was £155; in 1987-88 it will be £428. That represents an absolutely staggering increase since the Government came to power. Since 1980, domestic rates have, on average, increased by no less than 13·6 per cent. every year. That is the effect of the rate increases. When I intervened earlier the Secretary of State rather disarmingly said that he was giving me the right figures—I assume that all the figures are the right figures because they all come from parliamentary answers given to my questions. From the Government's figures it is clear the average rates increase each year over the past eight years has been 13·6 per cent.

Those increases have occurred because the Government have deliberately, dramatically and consistently reduced their support to local authorities and to ratepayers. That is the most obvious and important reason why rates have become a significant problem for those on small incomes, those with fixed incomes and people livimg in inner city or rural areas.

The proposals before the House make no attempt to tackle the problems of the inner cities. In spite of the complexities and deficiencies of the rate support grant, it remains a good way of providing extra cash to help in the necessary, but under this Government neglected, attack on poverty, unemployment, discrimination and dereliction in our urban areas. Again, we see that the authoritarian, central powers of the Rates Act 1984 are used to enforce legally the Government's political judgments on local authorities and that is in direct conflict with the decisions of the local people in local elections. Today we have witnessed the Secretary of State's continuing attempt to mislead people about the Government's inadequate response to the unavoidable costs faced by ratepayers following the extraordinary storms in October. I shall deal with each of those aspects in turn.

The Government's proposals for rate support grant for 1988-89 have the familiar features and purposes of Government policy — a failure to meet the established spending needs of local councils to maintain decent and effective levels of service and the Government's decision to impose again a Treasury clawback tax when councils spend above the Government's arbitrarily-imposed expenditure limits.

The system will work to increase grant when services are reduced in quality and range and when expenditure is cut. Against that well-established background, it is not surprising that various local authority associations—the Association of County Councils, the Association of London Authorities and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities — have serious objections to the Government's proposals. The Secretary of State has talked about the huge sums involved, but it is worth reflecting on the fact that the block grant figure of £9,482 million works out as little as £201 per head of the population in England. It is not true that this vast sum, which it is difficult for people to imagine, means huge financial support for the population. These are relatively modest amounts based on the sum per head of the population.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will my hon. Friend tell us what reduction has taken place since the Government were elected in 1979 in the proportion of local government expenditure covered by central Government? Will he draw attention to the problems of Bradford which emphasise what he is saying? Uniquely, Bradford has an increasing population, yet it is being penalised by loss of grant and has seen a reduction in rate support grant since 1979 of more than £70 million.

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is referring to the question that I asked the Secretary of State this afternoon. In 1979 the Labour Government provided rate support grant at a level of 61 per cent. of relevant expenditure. That figure has been systematically reduced to 46 per cent. under the Conservative Government since 1979. Although I do not have the figures for the city of Bradford in my head, I know that, as a result of those reductions, the accumulated national loss of grant is £21,573·6 million, using the figures provided by the Secretary of State. In spite of what the Secretary of State said, I assume that those, too, are real figures.

The provision for local authority current expenditure —the measure of expenditure which determines the level of services provided—represents an increase of less than 4 per cent. over the current year's budgets. That is a more meaningful measure than the 7 per cent. increase in the provision for 1987-88, quoted by the Secretary of State. That provision was an unrealistic assessment of what authorities were likely to spend in the current year. The 4 per cent. increase is less than the Government's latest estimate of general inflation in the year 1988-89 and fails to reflect authorities' likely year-on-year increases in costs.

The expenditure groups—the bodies made up of civil servants and local authority administrators — forecast that local authorities will need to spend slightly in excess of £29 billion in the coming financial year simply to maintain current service levels. There is, therefore, a £1·47 billion current expenditure shortfall in what the Secretary of State is asking the House to accept. Those are the best available figures and they have been arrived at by civil servants in the Department of the Environment and by officers of the local authority associations. The Secretary of State knows what those figures are, yet he insists that what he is recommending is fair and generous. Of course, it is not. It is a serious shortfall in maintaining the status quo.

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): The hon. Gentleman suggests that the only way that local authorities can reduce their spending is by cutting services, but that is palpably untrue. Does he agree that rate-capped authorities have enormous scope for making savings by cutting waste and increasing efficiency?

Dr. Cunningham: I was not making that assertion. I was making a different point: that the Secretary of State's recommendation falls a long way short — £1·47 billion short — of what is needed just to maintain current programmes.

Mr. Ridley: I am a little astonished by this point. If, by some misfortune, the hon. Gentleman ever finds himself in my shoes, doing the job of Secretary of State, will he give an undertaking to let local authorities have, both in provision and grant, as much as they ask for on every occasion?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give such an undertaking. It is Labour policy to allow grant to grow at the rate of growth in the economy and so bring additional support to local authorities for services and to ratepayers. That is a reasonable and practicable proposition, but we could not guarantee that every year local authorities would get exactly what they asked for. However, that system would be far more likely to meet their legitimate needs and demands than has the system operated by the Government for the last eight years.

Mr. Thurnham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that his party was thoroughly defeated at the general election because the electorate would not accept the way the Labour party accepted profligate and illegal spending by extremist Left-wing councils?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I do not accept that. There were many reasons why the Labour party was not successful in the election. The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his opinion.

[Dr. Cunningham]

The reason that he gives may have been a factor, but it was not the only reason. However, this is not the occasion to go into the reasons. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to attend some of our listening conferences, we could debate those issues then.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government's response to local authorities' demands is to say that this year there must be a cut in the current committed expenditure of 5 per cent., or £1·5 billion, and that there will be a cut in the areas of greatest deprivation, including the inner cities which they claim to be helping? They will suffer most. They will get the smallest slice of the cake and they will be most heavily penalised.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman is right. That is indicative of the internal conflict within the Government in this respect. The Prime Minister said, virtually on the day of victory, that the Government would give priority to helping communities in the inner cities, but they continue to deny local authorities the necessary resources to tackle the job more effectively.

I want to support my comments, as the Secretary of State disingenuously expresses some surprise about them. He knew those figures before we did. That view is endorsed by the Association of County Councils and is shared by all local authority associations. In a recent letter to me, the ACC said:

"To the extent that shire counties seek to protect services and to implement much needed service developments, they will suffer severe block grant losses. Present indications are that over £200 million of shire counties' block grant will be returned to the Treasury; this alone will cost the equivalent of a 5p rate and will necessitate precept increases which, on average, will exceed 10 per cent. The AAC would accept the Government's right to form a global judgement on what the economy can afford by way of aggregate local authority expenditure. However, if, as on this occasion, that global view falls well short of the 'present policies' forecast of the Expenditure Steering Groups, Ministers must recognise the practical implications of this at local authority service level."

That is an emphatic answer to the point raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The Association of County Councils' comments are exactly in accord with the views of all the other local authority associations.

The 1988-89 settlement represents little change, and little change in methodology, compared with the current year, but the Government are maintaining their severe grant regime designed to increase grant when services are cut and penalise authorities which increase expenditure. The Government are, in effect, planning a 5 per cent. cut in local authority expenditure, and it could be even worse than that.

I come again to the point made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, that it makes nonsense of Government claims that they want to bring additional resources and more help and support to the people of the inner cities, when all that they are doing is making the problems of those local authorities and communities even harder to resolve. It would have been quite within the power of the Secretary of State to recalculate grant-related expenditure assessments and thus bring more resources to the inner cities. It would have been one of the quickest ways in which the Government could respond to the challenge posed by the problems of the inner cities. Yet the right hon. Gentleman has deliberately chosen not to do it.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Member care to comment on the fact that the urban development corporations have already brought in money from the private sector, which the local government sector simply would not have done? In Teesside this already amounts to £100 million worth of private money.

Dr. Cunningham: Yes, of course. It is incontestible that urban development corporations have brought extra resources to inner cities—and a lot of it is in the form of public expenditure. But we are not in favour of this creeping corporate state approach to our towns and cities. We have just seen an announcement this week. Disgracefully, it was not made in the House, so no hon. Member was able to question the Secretary of State about his decision — a quite cowardly way to announce Government policy. The Secretary of State laughs. If he had the guts and the courage to believe that the House would support what he was doing, he would announce his decision here and hon. Members would have an opportunity to discuss and ask questions about it. He seemed not to want to do that or to subject himself to the judgment of the House.

I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that, in respect of that announcement, in at least one case—that of Leeds —the Government's decision on policy is likely to result in less investment, because existing plans already in train are threatened by that decision. Much more by way of investment, including private sector investment, already in the pipeline will be completely blocked by the Government's decision, which seems to have been taken without any proper consultation, any thought or any understanding of the situation.

Of course, it is true that urban development corporations will attract private sector investment and involvement, not least because of the public expenditure commitment—the servicing, the availability of the land and the freedom from planning controls. All those benefits are bound to attract investment. I would just caution the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), however, to read the words of the director general of the Confederation of British Industry. He has warned the Government publicly against by-passing local authorities in the inner cities, because, he says, that sort of approach will not solve the problems.

There is, therefore, much room for argument about the Government's approach, but I certainly do not applaud either the nature of the recent decisions about urban development corporations or the manner in which the right hon. Gentleman announced them in a written reply on Monday.

The Government's policy on grant distribution is objectionable. The Government's main aim still appears to be a reduction in the level of local authority services, despite the growing needs of the communities that those authorities serve. Unemployment may be falling generally, but it is still very high among people living in the inner cities in particular, despite the growth of jobs for people who commute into London. Many people in inner London are still subject to very high unemployment. There is still discrimination against people in black and ethnic minority communities and, what is more, the Local Government

Bill—in spite of our amendments, which have all been rejected—will not help that situation and could, in some respects, make it even worse.

I am astonished by some of the implications of what the Government are doing. I want to make a particular point about the precise meaning of the Government's proposals on housing benefits. Representations have sought to clarify exactly what is suggested and what is meant by the Government's proposals.

It seems to us that local authorities will be required to pay increased housing benefit, yet the increased expenditure that they incur as a result and that they cannot avoid may itself be subject to penalty. It is a preposterous state of affairs. I cannot understand why, in the consultation process, the Secretary of State has refused to clarify the situation.

Let me illustrate what I am trying to make clear to the House. The Government suggest that they will make certain amounts available to local authorities for the statutory cost of their share of housing benefit. In 1986-87 they made available £237·5 million, in 1987-88 it was £250 million and they propose £289 million in 1988-89. But the actual cost to local authorities in 1986-87 was £252 million and it is estimated to be £262 million in 1987-88. There is no estimate available yet for the current financial year, but the trend is obvious. There is a gap between what the Government are making available and what local authorities are required by law to pay. If they incur that additional expenditure, they are likely in many cases to incur penalty on top of that. No one seems to have taken any account of that. I hope that we will be given some explanation from the Minister for Local Government when he replies.

The Government have also consistently underestimated the provision required for the administration of housing benefit. A similar comparison demonstrates that point well. In 1984-85 they made available £82 million; the actual cost was £120 million. In the coming financial year, 1988-89, it is suggested that they will make available £187 million; the best available estimate is that the cost will be in excess of £190 million. I hope that we can have some explanation of the Government's position in that regard as well. It is quite intolerable for the Government to impose these legal requirements on local authorities, then not properly fund what they require the authorities to do, then penalise them for making the expenditure that they cannot avoid making—and then still claim that they are interested in protecting the ratepayers. It just does not add up.

I turn briefly to what the Secretary of State had to say about the Rates Act 1984, because, here again, some important questions are unanswered. Will Ealing be rate-capped with an expenditure limit that is actually below its grant-related expenditure assessment? What can possibly be the justification for that? The grant-related expenditure assessment was introduced by this Government. It is supposed to denote what local authorities are required to spend to support an adequate level of service. The expenditure limit in Ealing is below that level. *[Interruption.]* If the right hon. Gentleman is going to contest the figures, I will give way, but he seems to indicate that there is nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Ridley: I am trying to help.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman is certainly not helping the ratepayers of Ealing in taking the view that he does about the state of affairs in that borough.

Will the right hon. Gentleman carefully and, I hope, properly discuss with the rate-capped authorities—in a way that he did not do on expenditure limits—the full implications of his announcement today? I should also like to repeat the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) when he made his statement on the rate support grant a few days ago. Why does the right hon. Gentleman not announce the criteria that he will use with regard to the Rates Act 1984? Why should the House and, more important, local authorities not be told exactly what criteria he will use? I suspect that it is for the same reason that we have always heard from the Secretaries of State of this Government —the Government want to rig the criteria and to fit them up to get the local authorities that they want for political and other purposes that suit their political ends. There are no legitimate or objective criteria in the right hon. Gentleman's mind.

With regard to what the right hon. Gentleman said about rate limitation—I am grateful to him for giving me a copy of the written reply that he is making today —why has he set a rate limit for Camden that does not allow the authority to raise the revenue to reach the expenditure limit that he set? There seems to be at least a 5p shortfall in what will be required. Similarly, for Hackney there seems to be an even larger shortfall of 11p between the expenditure limit that the right hon. Gentleman is imposing and the rate limit that he is announcing today. What is the explanation of those differences? How does the Secretary of State expect those two boroughs, which are already financially hard pressed, to make up the shortfall? Will the Minister explain that when he replies to the debate?

The right hon. Gentleman's comments about storm damage were far from frank and do not produce the result that he said that he intended. Local authorities will still pay over the odds for reparations that they must make because of the extraordinary storms in October; they will still pay penalty on expenditure. Before explaining the reasons for that, I should remind the House of what the Secretary of State said to the House:

"I would be horrified and astonished if either my Department or the Treasury were to make a profit from any authority as a result of that night."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 611.]

Despite all the right hon. Gentleman's blandishments, that is exactly what will happen. The Treasury will make a profit out of ratepayers, whose local authorities will have to foot the bills for clearing up and making good damage to buildings, roads and parks. I can quote no better authority than the Conservative-controlled London borough of Barnet. I should like to know what the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who represents Barnet, has to say about the matter. It would be interesting to know whether the right hon. Lady supports the view of her Secretary of State for the Environment or the Tory leaders of the London borough of Brent, who worked to get her re-elected in her constituency. In a letter dated 23 November 1987—the right hon. Gentleman has this letter—the chief executive and town clerk of Barnet says:

"For Barnet the scheme requires a local contribution equal to the product of a penny rate, after which the Government will contribute 75 per cent. The effect is that the council will

[Dr. Cunningham]

have to finance the first £612,500 of the costs of rectifying the storm damage, together with 25 per cent. of the balance if the ultimate bill is above that figure. As the council's budget is in excess of its grant-related expenditure assessment, all additional expenditure will bring a grant loss of £70,000 for each further £100,000 spent. Thus, even at a 1p rate level, the effective cost to the council could exceed £1 million."

Of that £1 million, six times the amount of that grant loss — £420,000 — will go to the Treasury in grant penalty. Of course the Treasury will make a profit out of the storm. That is the state of affairs even after the right hon. Gentleman's statement to the House today. They are the facts of the matter. It is true not only in Barnet but in a swathe of Tory-controlled local authorities and in some Labour-controlled London boroughs in inner and outer areas. Nothing that the right hon. Gentleman has said today will change that. The right hon. Gentleman said that he would be horrified if that were to happen, but it will happen. What will he do about it, apart from being horrified? Being horrified will not help the ratepayers of Barnet, Kent, Sussex or Surrey. Being horrified will not help anybody; it will not even help the right hon. Gentleman. I am not sure that we want to help him, but we want to help ratepayers and local authorities.

The right hon. Gentleman's statement—even at the third attempt today—is not candid and honest about Government policy. It is quite the reverse. He is seeking to pull the wool over the eyes of his Back Benchers, which is not too difficult, but I do not know how he has the nerve or gall to try to get away with it. We shall obviously write to the right hon. Member for Finchley, ask her view and see whether she supports him. However, the right hon. Gentleman must do a lot better than his statement today to convince Labour Members that he is horrified about the implications of Government policies. We simply do not believe him.

The miserable Conservative record of misleading ratepayers—this is only the latest example—for reasons of political dogma, to undermine collective provision of public services, to push people into paying more, to push them into opting out and accepting private solutions to their problems, is deplorable. It is a miserable prospect. Local government will be less fair and less accountable and will provide less adequate services if the poll tax and uniform business rate are introduced.

I agree that the right hon. Gentleman was quoting me accurately. We hold no brief for the present ramshackle, contradictory and inefficient system. It is his and the Government's system; it is not ours. We denounce it, just as we denounce the proposed alternative of the poll tax.

5.47 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): One of the benefits of not holding office is that one can fully support one's constituents. My constituency is being unfairly treated by the Government at the present time. Brent was rate-capped in 1987-88, but it is not being rate-capped for 1988-89. According to the figures that I have been given, Brent's expenditure for this year is £183·6 million. Thus, it is not 12·5 per cent. but 11·7 per cent. over grant-related expenditure. If that budget had been more than £183·6 million and had been 12·5 per cent. over GRE, Brent would have been rate-capped. The real expenditure figure in Brent—I have been considering them with my council group and council leader—is £223·6 million, which is well over 12·5 per cent. over GRE. That is £40 million more than the council intended to spend. Of that £40 million, £16 million has already been covered by creative accountancy, funny money or whatever the phrase may be, and £24 million was intended to be covered by the sale of the town hall and the schools. However, the banks that had been thinking of buying those properties and leasing them began to think twice about what they were doing. Therefore, that £24 million was not raised.

There have been some cuts made by the hard Left Labour-controlled authority of Brent.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The right hon. Gentleman wants some more.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The hon. Gentleman is right, I do want some more. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me. Perhaps that is the beginning of salvation on the Opposition Benches. The sensible Opposition Members would also like some more cuts.

That intervention has forced me to mention the fact that there are now two Labour parties in Brent. There is the old Labour party and the new Labour party and there are two leaders. They fight one another when they meet in the council chamber. I would be glad to arrange a party to go and see them at some time.

Mr. Tony Banks: That sounds rather like a description of what takes place in the House between Conservative Members when the ex-Leader of the Conservative party and ex-Prime Minister starts knocking seven bells out of the present Leader of the Conservative party. Why should the right hon. Gentleman be so surprised?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: The difference is that Conservative Members listen to one another. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has never had his seat in the Chamber taken over. When he spoke in the House last week he spoke from his usual seat.

I did not intend to mention what has happened in Brent but Opposition Members desire to know. There was a vote and a new leader was elected for the Labour party in Brent.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): That is democracy.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Yes, that is democracy. There are glimmers of advancement on the Labour Benches. Well done. Perhaps Opposition Members are learning something.

I believe that the vote was 18 to 17, so the new, moderate leader was elected by only one vote. However, at the next council meeting, before the moderates could arrive, the hard Left had arrived along with thousands of others imported along with a man called Ted Knight. I do not know where he comes from but I have seen his name in the newspapers. They arrived with megaphones and took over the bench of the elected Labour leader. The mayor had to adjourn the meeting because it ended in uproar. There is no comparison between that and the cheerful agreements and disagreements among Conservative Members when they are seeking the truth. All Conservative Members, whether on the Left or Right of the party, are seekers of the truth. I may belong to the Left-wing of the party but hon. Gentlemen belong to the Right-wing. We discuss issues.

I must not be distracted because I do not like that sort of thing being published in the newspapers. It does the Labour party no good.

Mr. Morley: The hon. Gentleman is talking about the Government rate support grant, which is putting councils such as Brent all over the country into situations in which they are forced to make a choice. They have to decide whether to increase the burden on ratepayers by increasing the rates to make up for the shortfall in grants or whether to make cuts in services. That is the difficult choice that many councils are facing. If the hon. Gentleman is arguing for cuts and rate-capping, he has a duty to say where he thinks the cuts should fall.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I have no doubt that if Brent was sensibly run it could work within its budget. I can give examples in the House of some of the expenditure that has taken place. Every committee chairman has a full-time political assistant at a cost of £15,000. I could cover the length and breadth of the expenditure in Brent at present.

Before I was misled by the heartiness of Opposition Members, I was saying that Brent has spent £40 million in excess of the £183·6 million. That expenditure is well over the 12·5 per cent. GRE, which would bring it into the category for rate-capping if the right figures were used.

Without rate-capping, the situation in Brent next year will be a nightmare. That has been the case this year in the borough covered by the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). After cuts the budget will be £240 million. That is £50 million over the £190 million settlement expenditure assumption. A total of £16 million of that £50 million will be covered by creative accounting, or funny money, but that will still leave £34 million to be raised from the ratepayers. I believe that the Government grant is £90 million and if the expenditure continues at its present rate Brent will lose £47 million of Government grant. In order to balance its finances, it will need a rate of 420p in the pound for 1988-89. That will mean a rate increase of 60 per cent. That is why I rise to ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister at this late hour to rate-cap Brent for the sake of businesses and people in the area.

Brent is already the fourth highest rated authority in London with a level of 256·8p in the pound. It is higher than Ealing, which will be rate-capped next year and it is higher than seven other London boroughs which will also be rate-capped next year, including Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. There are Conservative voters, Labour voters and even some Liberal voters who have been found in odd places from time to time. Those people do not talk about grant-related expenditure. I have never heard the figure of 12·5 per cent over GRE mentioned in the church halls or pubs. They compare the rates they are paying with those being paid next door. There are seven boroughs, eight, including Ealing, which will be rate-capped and they have rates lower than those in Brent. No man or woman in the street will believe that Brent is being given a fair deal. It is a nightmare.

For the sake of the continuance of business in Brent and for the contentment of ratepayers there, whatever their political view, I ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to rate-cap Brent. We have produced petitions for the rate-capping of Brent and they have been signed by Labour voters on the doorsteps as well as other voters. They do not want to see the rates rise any more than do Conservatives.

The Secretary of State referred to the lull before the storm, the break in the clouds or whatever imagery was used. He was referring to the coming of the community charge. The search for something with which to replace rates has been like the search for the Holy Grail. King Arthur and his knights are still riding looking for a better form of rating system. In fact, the way in which it drops through grant-related expenditure suggests that it is a "holey" system.

I do not believe that the community charge by itself, which is now being proffered as the new Holy Grail, will solve all the problems of the boroughs in London and elsewhere. We need other things as well. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members will have ideas as to what they believe should be done. We should look at the whole question of financing local government in this country and the responsibility of local government. It is time we set up a Royal Commission to study that. For example, responsibility for education is being taken away from local government through the opting out scheme and in certain cases the responsibility for housing and planning is being taken away from local government. The commission could look at the duties of local government and how its money should be used.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I should like to remind my right hon. Friend of the excellent report on local government produced by Lord Redcliffe-Maud. Unfortunately, when a Conservative Government enacted legislation to reform local government they did not go the whole way envisaged in that report. The recommendations in the report might provide a short cut and make unnecessary the Royal Commission, which otherwise my right hon. Friend is right to advocate.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I welcome my hon. Friend's intervention. I have that report at home.

I disagree strongly with the size of local authorities. With the reduction in the responsibilities of local authorities we can bring down their size. Compared with France, with its 37,400 communes, we have almost semi-regional government. The local government reorganisations in 1964 and 1972 were disastrous for Britain. I said so at the time and I still hold that view.

During the war, we took away the names of railway stations in case there was a German invasion. I think that we destroyed the names of places during the reorganisation of local government because we thought that we might be invaded from outer space and we did not want people to know where we lived. If anybody in Brent is asked where he lives, he says Kingsbury, Wembley or Willesden—not Brent.

That local government reorganisation took people away from their organic units, within which they knew people and where they belonged. Both Conservative and Labour Governments were responsible for that. Independents within the parties had less chance when they had to depend upon the party machine to be elected. In many cases, the people elected were not local people.

Those local government reorganisations took place at a time when we worshipped size. The tower blocks were going up along with the big comprehensive schools and the industrial conglomerates. The big tower blocks are now coming down and the big comprehensive schools and conglomerates are being broken up.

We need an enabling Bill, although not for further Government-organised local government reorganisation. The Government always make a mess of whatever they reorganise. They only do something properly by accident.

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. Gentleman has changed his mind.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I have always said that. I can recommend a book of mine to the hon. Gentleman. I shall send it to him tomorrow. I welcome disciples from anywhere, even from the east end of London, where I once taught.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I want to help my right hon. Friend on the matter of the rates that Brent ratepayers are likely to pay as a result of the current settlement. Although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has allocated some grant under the settlement because of its overspend, the Social Democratic and Labour-controlled council in Hertfordshire will probably receive no grant. At present that money will go straight back to the Treasury. I suggest that my hon. Friend asks for that money to go to Brent.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am always delighted to have my hon. Friends helping me. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has heard what was said and that by the end of the debate he will have found a way to make that possible. When I go back to Brent, the people will be waiting in the streets and I shall ride through the streets in a chariot with my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). *[Interruption.]* I must not disagree with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister because he must have time to think. He is obviously in full agreement; he simply has to find the mechanism to make that possible, and I am sure that he will find one in the Department of the Environment in the next three hours.

A commission is needed to look at all the responsibilities of local government. An enabling Bill should then allow those areas that feel that they have a unity of their own to decide for themselves how to organise their local government. As far back as the time of Chadwick and the Poor Law Reform Bill of 1834, when Britain was carved up into poor law unions, which took 34 years because people did not accept it, central reorganisation has been resented.

However, in 1835 the Municipal Corporations Bill allowed areas with a certain population to petition Parliament to define their own boundaries in order to become municipal corporations. The communities decided on their own size. Indeed, at present there is a petition in my part of Brent, in Wembley, for a separation from Brent. I trust that when the boundary commissioners get to work on this, they will not just be the handservants of the Departments or bureaucracy, but that they will recognise people's needs. If they want to know what public opinion is, they should ask the people by means of a referendum. Already, 10,000 people have asked for their own authority. If 95 per cent. of people say in a referendum that they want a particular area, they should be allowed to have it so that the monstrosities that have been created can be broken up.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend will remember that I was elected as an inaugural member of Brent council in 1964. At that time, we fought against amalgamation with Willesden. The strength of the petition then was even greater than the petition to which my hon. Friend has just referred. The Government did not have ears to listen then; I hope that they have ears to listen to what is said today.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: If the Minister has not been stirred by my words, he will doubtless be stirred by those of my hon. Friend, whose knowledge of Brent goes back further than mine.

In conclusion, I am asking for three things. First, I should like Brent to be rate-capped and I would prefer that to be announced today rather than tomorrow — the sooner the better. Secondly, a commission on local government should be set up to consider what local government is doing and how. Thirdly, as soon as possible there should be a move towards smaller units in which people genuinely believe and with which they would be involved.

Dr. Cunningham: Since the right hon. Gentleman is putting forward such profound and far-reaching proposals, is he telling the Government that they should set aside the Second Reading of the poll tax legislation until the matters that he raises have been dealt with?

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I would not say that, but it should be set aside until Brent has been rate-capped. When it has been rate-capped I shall settle for the continuance of the poll tax legislation. If that is not done, I shall have to agitate. It would be much more peaceful for Ministers if Brent were rate-capped so that we could settle down to a peaceful future.

6.6 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): After hearing the speech of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), perhaps we should expect an Order Paper with a new instruction to the appropriate Committee to consider a special procedure for the poll tax legislation next week. There is already one instruction on the Order Paper. Perhaps the right hon. Member for Brent, North will add another.

It was rather paradoxical to listen to comments about disputes between former and present Prime Ministers and former and present leaders of Brent council when there is clearly a large difference of opinion between the former and present Ministers for Local Government.

May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that he and others have an opportunity to begin to argue, as I would with him, for a return to a smaller local government, because the boundary commissioners have asked for submissions by the end of December on the redrawing of boundaries within Greater London. They have extended the deadline. Therefore, there is an opportunity to raise that issue within their consultations and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make his submissions, together with others, by the end of the year, perhaps on Boxing day or some other equally under-occupied occasion.

I tried to table a new clause to the Local Government Bill that has just come out of Committee to permit the setting up of urban parishes in London, but it was ruled to be outside the Bill's long title. Therefore, sadly, this change apparently cannot be debated in the context of that Bill which is shortly to return to the House. However, it is an important question which raises issues that go to the heart of local government accountability.

There is another paradox about the substance of today's debate on the rate support grant settlement. Only last week we were debating the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill. The Government were moving, through the House, to abolish the

parliamentary procedure which controls the upper limit of grant expenditure of urban development corporations. Literally, within a few days, the Government took away Parliament's power to control urban development corporations and continued parliamentary control of a whole range of aspects of local government, including specific controls over the levying of money by rate-capped authorities. It should be the other way round. If anything, controls on democratically elected local government should be reduced and controls on unelected corporations, all appointed by the Secretary of State, should be increased.

The Secretary of State, who is no longer in his place, pretended that today was another generous handout day for local government. There is, in a sense, more money, because things cost more than they did last year. The Minister and the House know well that in reality the Government propose a further real cut in local government funds and services. If the Government carry the day tonight, local government services will be reduced. The Government believe that local authority expenditure next year can be reduced to about £26 billion, even though the assessment of current expenditure is more than £1·5 billion more than that.

The Government say that local authorities next year can cut out £1·5 billion—5 per cent.—of waste. That does not even include the additional £1·5 billion that civil servants and local authority officials agree is needed to retain services at their present level. Therefore, on the smallest estimate, the Government's own, there is at least £1·5 billion difference between what the Government are allowing and what the local authorities will have at their disposal, and on the other estimate there is a difference of about £3 billion. That difference means cuts. Services will be cut and local government will suffer.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The hon. Gentleman has not touched on the cuts in the London fire service. Is he aware of the dispute between the Home Secretary, who sets the maximum expenditure limits for the fire service in London and elsewhere, and the Department of the Environment, which makes grant-related expenditure assessments? Because of the dispute over the Departments' calculations, the fire authority in London will receive no grant whatever. The largest municipal fire authority in the world will receive no Government assistance. Unless the matter is resolved in time for next year's financial contribution, London could be 800 firefighters short. Since July, I have been asking for a meeting to be attended by the Departments' representatives of the area fire services committee and myself. That meeting has been cancelled once and has still not been held, despite promises from both Departments. That is scandalous.

Mr. Hughes: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. If present arrangements continue, the London fire service, like the Inner London education authority and other authorities, may receive no money from the taxpayer. The emergency services in London—the fire and ambulance services and the police force—are all underfunded. They are under great pressure and can only do their job—often well beyond the call of duty—because of their commitment. Unless they get more money, we shall be putting at risk the lives and well-being of the capital city. That is especially true of the ambulance service, as we were reminded in the debate in the early hours of this morning.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is disgraceful — it could be bordering on the hypocritical if one might use that word in the House—for the Prime Minister to go along with the television cameras and be seen walking up the scarred escalator at King's Cross when she is in charge of a Government who have made savage cuts in the very emergency services to which she pays tribute?

Mr. Hughes: I share that view. While it is quite proper for the Prime Minister to pay such visits, they are barely acceptable when one considers that those who have been doing the hard work and going in to try to save lives know that they are being substantially starved of funds. Those in the emergency services are quite clear that they are being asked to do a job with horribly small resources. That should not continue, and a caring, concerned and responsible Government would not allow it to continue. I am afraid that those attributes have long been missing from the Government Front Bench.

The settlement today means cuts and it has not fooled anyone in the know. The county councils — the shire authorities—and the urban councils all say that they are gravely unhappy. If one wants evidence on the suitability or otherwise of the settlement, one should perhaps look to those who will receive—or not receive—the money. Let me deal with them in turn. The Association of County Councils, speaking for the shire authorities, says that it is

"particularly disturbed by ministerial comments which suggest that a 4 per cent. increase proposed for the shire counties represented a standstill in real terms. Quite apart from overwhelming evidence to the contrary from the Expenditure Steering Groups, the Government has itself claimed credit for making special provision, over and above general inflation, for teachers' pay and the police. If these commitments are to be accommodated within the overall figure of 4 per cent., then real reductions elsewhere are inevitable, particularly as the Government's own estimate of inflation for next year now stands at 4·5 per cent.;"

and

"Being labour-intensive, local authorities face higher inflation than the Government's figure, despite the fact that public sector pay awards generally are currently below those in the private sector."

The shire counties are getting the best deal of all, so their comments are very important. They go on:

"Present indications are that over £200 million of shire counties' block grant will be returned to the Treasury. This alone will cost the equivalent of a 5p rate and will necessitate precept increases which, on average, will exceed 10 per cent."

Ministers must recognise that services will be reduced. Ministers should admit it because that is the reality and those are the figures. The Government's so-called extra revenue expenditure represents a shortfall, or a cut—however one likes to term it — of nothing less than billions of pounds.

The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), who has just left the Chamber, also alluded to some ludicrous anomalies. Hertfordshire county council, which happens to be a balanced council, will not be the only county council to lose out. Surrey county council, which is controlled by the Tories, will lose out substantially, as will Oxfordshire, because of the caps and nets—because of the Government's curbs and restrictions. Such restrictions will not disappear under the poll tax system. They will remain, and they are entirely unsatisfactory and unhelpful.

The urban areas have an even worse deal than the shire counties. Overall, the practical effect of the margin of

[Mr. Hughes]

reduction of expenditure is to assist the lower-spending authorities rather than the higher-spending authorities. And it is the urban authorities which spend most because the need and disadvantage are greatest in their areas. I echo in different words the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who said that the rate support grant is the most powerful individual tool that the Government have, in any year, to redress disadvantage. The Government could allocate money in such a way to help remedy disadvantage in our community. They do not do it, and they have not done it again this year. The pretence that they are helping the inner cities and the disadvantaged —even adding in other moneys—is a misrepresentation of the real position. The Government have been taking money out of the inner cities. They have capped rates and prevented local authorities from raising more money, which has meant a reduction in services to the deprived and disadvantaged. I have the figures. The Government want spending next year to be only 4 per cent. above this year's budget for the counties and less for other authorities. The figure for the districts is 2·32 per cent., for metropolitan districts it is 3·49 per cent., for outer London boroughs it is 1·89 per cent. and for inner London boroughs it represents a cut of 2·78 per cent.

I know that the Secretary of State has made one concession and I expressed gratitude for that. Tower Hamlets, which is controlled by my colleagues and desperately needs money, has had its expenditure limit raised—not nearly enough, but we must be grateful for small mercies. However, my borough of Southwark desperately needs resources too. Its social services are strained to breaking point, but it is to get no more money at all. To other authorities in an equivalent position, suffering repeated crises in housing and social services, no extra money is forthcoming either.

Although housing is not dealt with specifically in the allocation, it is a local authority prime service, particularly where most people live in local authority accommodation. The Government announced an extra £25 million capital allocation for dealing with the homeless this year. That, too, is welcome. However, housing capital allocations overall are to be cut by 14 per cent. next year, and many deprived boroughs will receive no extra money—even from the small extra allocation for homelessness. In addition, coming over the horizon is the new dawn that the Secretary of State told us about—the poll tax. The poll tax will mean that the local authorities will need many more staff. The administrative costs will be enormous. My borough, for example, estimates that in the first year it will have a bill for an additional £8 million and thereafter a bill for £5 million annually. I invite the Minister to disprove that.

A non-party political body, the Rating and Valuation Association, together with the Association of District Council Treasurers — officers, not members — have produced a booklet entitled "Community charge—Poll Tax: The Facts", in which they state:

> "Poll tax will require four times as many transactions between the public and town halls as at present. About 300 million additional receipts will have to be issued. Jobs will have to be created for cashiers, typists, rent collectors . . . housing benefit staff and bailiffs."

We are talking about a requirement for massive extra staffing, yet local government Ministers say that local authorities must reduce expenditure above all by cutting staff, and that that is the key. That is completely inconsistent and ludicrous. I should welcome an explanation.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): Has the hon. Gentleman asked the London borough of Southwark for its estimate of the costs of administering a local income tax, which is his party's policy on these matters?

Mr. Hughes: I have not, but I am willing to do so. A local income tax could be incorporated completely with the national income tax system. The computers exist. The difference is that the Minister's poll tax requires a different register and is differently compiled by different staff. It will require additional systems to those at present run by local or national Government. I am happy to take on the Minister on that issue because his Department's recent press release distorted and misrepresented the position. We shall undoubtedly come to this in our debates on the poll tax.

Although this may be the penultimate year for rate support grant statements in their present form, yet again the Government are screwing local government and clamping it in their stranglehold, which after seven years is growing no weaker. Local government is meant to provide local services. This year's rate support grant settlement means that local government will be less able to do what it is meant to do, even according to this Government, which is to serve local people by providing the services which they require. Local government will be less able to do that next year and in many aspects it will not be its fault; it is the Government's fault. The Government insist on running the country according to an economic theory administered by Ministers who do not understand what deprivation is. It means that local authorities are prevented from doing adequately what they are historically, constitutionally and socially required to do, which is to provide services, meet needs and work to serve their local communities. This is an unacceptable settlement and it should be rejected by both sides of the House.

6.22 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): First, I ask the indulgence of the House if I leave shortly after speaking. There is to be a special mass for a distinguished deputy head of Our Lady of the Visitation school in Greenford who is retiring after 41 years and it is important for me to be present.

When my hon. and learned Friend the Minister replies, will he let me know whether the notification of the proposed rate limit set for Ealing for 1988-89 at 125·6p is consistent with the original determination?

Rates are unquestionably an unsatisfactory tax. One matter is certain and that is that the Labour party's proposal to base rates on the current valuation of houses would be extremely damaging to the people of Ealing and the south-east generally, where house prices have risen enormously. That would present them with much higher local taxation than any community charge or any other charge that can be envisaged. The policies of Opposition parties, including the Liberal party's policy of a local income tax, are unsatisfactory.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): My hon. Friend has touched on an interesting point which needs to be

broadcast wider than it is at present and that is the policy of the official Opposition. Does he agree that to base a form of local revenue on capital valuation amounts to nothing less than a wealth tax?

Mr. Greenway: I wholly share my hon. Friend's view that that would be a universal wealth tax. The point being made by my hon. Friend, with his background, is further reinforcement.

My constituents in Ealing have suffered a 65 per cent. domestic rate increase this year which has caused, and continues to cause, immense suffering. In particular, many elderly people are going without food to pay for the increase. Let nobody, whether a Labour supporter or a hard Left Labour supporter, minimise the suffering or be in any doubt about the suffering that that rate increase has caused.

The 58 per cent. industrial increase has also affected my constituents seriously. Factories have closed and jobs have been lost. People who were interested in coming to the borough to set up in business have not come. We have lost jobs because of that appalling, sudden increase. The fact that the borough council did not go through the legal consultation processes required of it with industry makes the position worse. That would have been the burden of the case which my constituents wished to put in the High Court against this excessive rate increase, had it been possible to raise sufficient money to do so. New jobs have not come to the borough and others have been lost on account of this high rate increase.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I have given way once and the hon. Gentleman knows that I am in a hurry to get to my constituency, so I ask him to understand if I do not give way.

The high rate increase also took purchasing power away from the community, so there is less business for the shops which were also faced with high rate increases. Factories, such as the Lyons group, faced a rate increase of £750,000, so prices on porridge, tea, coffee and other products had to be increased to meet the sum required by the council. Some jobs were lost. Therefore, there was a combination of high prices and lost jobs.

Mr. Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: In addition, my constituents faced higher prices for smaller items, such as hair-cuts which increased by 50p. That is a large sum for pensioners, especially on top of increased rates, and their suffering cannot be imagined.

Mr. Banks: Will the hon. Gentleman give way.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has made it clear that he will not give way and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should desist.

Mr. Greenway: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My constituents welcome rate-capping for Ealing and note that Ealing council did not seek redetermination of the rate-capping announced by the Secretary of State in July. What are Ealing's rates likely to be under rate-capping in 1988-89? Can my hon. and learned Friend the Minister give me the estimated reduction in rates from their present level in the coming year, so that my constituents know where they stand? Does he see the need to cap not only rates, but expenditure by councils, such as Ealing and Brent, as a means of stopping their tricks with creative accounting and so on? Will he meet that need?

Already my constituents have on their backs for years to come a negotiated deferred loan of £100,000 million, as well as much more through tricks by which leases have been arranged which will involve future repayments of a high order. We do not want any more of that. By capping council rates the Government are demanding a certain level of expenditure, but are not achieving it because expenditure is not capped. Councils get away with spending more than they are officially allowed to spend by the devices that I have described.

High rates have brought excessive suffering to the elderly and few benefits to Ealing. The council has 143 committees now compared with about 40 under the Conservative administration. I cannot imagine what they all do. A couple were abolished this week: the anti-apartheid committee has been rolled into another race committee, so we shall never again see direct evidence of £12,000 being spent on anti-apartheid activities, as we saw in July this year. But no doubt the new all-purpose race committee that has been set up will find a way to spend the money. The council has also abolished the police committee, which has existed for 18 months, despite the fact that the council is obliged by statute to have a consultative police committee. The committee in Ealing was anti-police, but even it has gone. The council has not had the courage to abolish the gay and lesbian working party, but we shall keep trying to get rid of it.

I understand that the council has doubled allowances to councillors to £16 a time. With 143 committees, some of whose meetings will last for only 30 seconds, councillors could make a great deal of money. Some councillors are making 400 per cent. more than they were. Indeed, I understand that some are making as much as £6,000 a year in expenses, which represents a great deal of money to my constituents.

Cleaning in the borough has been deprivatised, at a cost of £1 million a year to ratepayers, and complaints have increased enormously. People are always writing to me saying, "Our road has not been swept since deprivatisation." Since 15 October, the council has been able to say that it had to divert all labour to deal with the effects of the hurricane. But it is time that that excuse was put aside. It is nearly two months since the hurricane and, in any case, street cleaning must continue whatever happens.

Five Ealing Labour councillors are employed by other Labour-controlled boroughs. In its turn, Ealing council employs five Labour councillors from other boroughs. It seems to be new form of mutual aid. It is pretty deplorable, and my constituents do not think much of it.

Ealing, like all councils which have been rate-capped, will try to blame the Government if it has to reduce expenditure. We are sure that it will not reduce expenditure in the proper areas. It will not get rid of the large office block at the Great Western centre, which is more commonly known as the Kremlin, for obvious reasons——

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Why?

Mr. Greenway: That expenditure of £5 million a year could be ended tomorrow.

Mr. Soames: Why is it called that?

Mr. Greenway: There are good reasons. My hon. Friend must use his imagination. Expenditure could be reduced, although not in sensitive areas such as the provision of home helps. There is no need to reduce home helps or the number of teachers and other staff employed in schools. Rate capping could be met by reductions in areas where so much expenditure is not needed.

The people of Ealing, who have had to endure sudden enormous increases in rates, are worried because they cannot get information about council expenditure in some areas. When the council stopped libraries stocking *The Times* and *The Sun*, it was involved in a legal action which it lost. Costs were awarded against it. The council has spent a large sum of money on that, but, despite my efforts and those of my constituents, we have been unable to discover how much. The council invested £250,000 in the *News on Sunday*—we believe against legal advice—and that money has been lost because the paper has collapsed. My constituents, especially retired people, who will lose money because of that collapse, have not even had the satisfaction of an explanation from the council.

The House must consider ways in which ratepayers can take councils to court if they suddenly impose massive, unjustified rate increases. I helped some of my constituents to set up a fund against excessive rates which aimed to take Ealing council to court because of what we believed to be its illegal imposition of such a massive rates increase. We raised £35,000, and we ran our campaign to raise money alongside the ratepayers of Waltham Forest, who wished to take their council to court after a 62 per cent. rate increase. They lost their case on a technicality, and at that point we found it impossible to raise the full £50,000 that we needed. We had to drop our legal action against Ealing council, but we do not drop the charge that that rates increase was excessive and unreasonable. The fact that we cannot take the council to the High Court, although we have been given permission to do so, is a serious defect in our system of local finance and administration.

Council expenditure as well as rates should be capped. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) that there should be a complete reconsideration of local government expenditure and that teachers' salaries should be taken out of local government expenditure. Sudden sharp increases in rates are unjustified and cause massive hardship to individuals and businesses and they should be prevented.

6.37 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Unlike the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), I shall not spend 20 minutes telling fairy stories. I was delighted to see you take the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, because it meant that I might be called to speak in the debate. Last week, I sat through the debate on the Education Reform Bill for six hours and was dismayed not to be called. But the last time that I was called to speak, it was by you. I am extremely grateful.

Council policies are governed by central Government. Local democracy is almost obsolete. Councils must fit their policies into financially restrictive guidelines laid down by central Government. Councils are given target figures for expenditure which are completely unrealistic. For years, most authorities—of all political persuasions—have accepted that the targets were inadequate. But when targets were increased, even at miserly rates which failed to meet inflation, grant was still cut. With targets increasing and grants decreasing, it is no wonder that local authorities must increase rates even to maintain their present services.

Minister after Minister has blamed local authorities for high spending and condemned rate increases when, in fact, it is the Government who have forced local authorities into impossible positions. It is not local authorities that have forced up the rates, but the Government and their policies. That fact has been substantiated by the Government's own Audit Commission, which clearly stated that it was not councils that were overspending, but that the structure of local government finance was to blame, and was in a shambles.

Even as far back as 1984—to be precise, on 17 January—in an interview on the BBC's "World at One", the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), an enlightened Tory and a former Tory Minister, said:

> "The reason the rates go up every year is because the central Government rate support grant is cut."

Sir Robin Day, that well-known interviewer, responded:

> "That is what the Labour Party says."

The right hon. Gentleman replied:

> "It is not a matter of what the Labour Party says. It is the truth!"

Rates have risen unnecessarily under the Tories, by billions of pounds.

I now wish to be parochial. As the ex-chairman of the finance committee of Durham city council, I wish to make a few observations about my constituency and district council. When block grant was introduced in my constituency in 1981, the city of Durham, which is a small district council, received £2·8 million in rate support grant, in other words, about 52 per cent. of its expenditure. The rates collected were £2·08 million, in other words, about 38 per cent. of the total sum that was spent. By 1986, the rate support grant had been changed to £2·051 million, which was less than 38 per cent. of expenditure, and the rates increased to over £3·5 million, in other words, to over 60 per cent. of expenditure. That was a loss of grant from central Government of over £600,000, which is almost a 25 per cent. cut. That was the equivalent of a rate increase of about 8p.

Furthermore, the cumulative grant loss since 1981 for the city of Durham council is a staggering £2·5 million. I know that it is only a small district council, but when one loses £2·5 million over that time, one cannot take that without increasing the rates.

I ask hon. Members: who has forced up the rates? Labour councils have won, and win, their elections on the strength of imaginative and caring manifestos, but they find it exceedingly difficult to succeed when grant is reducing and penalties are becoming more punitive over the years. Our crazy grant system works against an authority that spends to its approved target because authorities are rewarded for destroying services and spending less money.

Durham city council has always attempted to keep exactly to its targets. The councillors have been very good boys, but it has done them no good at all. They have had no rewards. To spend less would have meant spending below what the Government regard as their correct level of expenditure. In the years since 1981 in Durham, if grant had not literally been stolen from us, there would have been few, and small, rate rises.

The present grant system has forced up the rates nationally by over 150 per cent. and robbed Durham city of over £2·5 million. The 1988-89 rate support grant for Durham city is a disaster, once again. Durham's GREA has increased by only £50,000 from £4·157 million to £4·202 million. The target has been increased by £163,000, from £6·071 million to £6·234 million. Again, its grant has been reduced by a further £165,000, from £2·051 million to £1·886 million. Of that £1·886 million, £1·178 million is safety-netted, leaving the city council's true grant at a meagre £708,000.

A comparison between Durham and Hove in east Sussex, which has a similar population, demonstrates the ludicrous state of the rate support grant. For example, Hove's GREA has increased by £429,000 this year, from £7·524 million to £7·953 million. Its target, for some inexplicable reason, has increased by £2·066 million, from £6·209 million to £8·275 million. Its grant has increased by £1·575 million, from £6·025 million to £7·6 million. Hove gets almost a 100 per cent. grant for its expenditure. In fact, it could easily be 100 per cent.

Hon. Members should not misunderstand me. I do not begrudge Hove what it gets, but how can it be justified? The two district councils have basically the same populations but there is a discrepancy in grant and GREA. How can a grant system be fair and just when a district such as Hove receives such a high percentage of grant through the Minister giving it a favourable multiplier?

Mr. Heddle: Is not the hon. Gentleman making out a case for root-and-branch rate reform? Before he concludes his speech, will he remind the House of what he said at the beginning, that there was little accountability in local government at present? Will he tell the House how he proposes to improve that accountability? Will he explain, particularly to doubters such as me, how the introduction of a wealth tax, combined with a local income tax, which the Labour party proposes, will increase local accountability and make the system fairer for the ratepayers of Hove as well as those in his constituency of City of Durham?

Mr. Steinberg: I do not believe that accountability is in question at present. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The rating and grant systems are absolutely absurd, but the present grant system was introduced in 1981 by the Conservative Government. It is in disarray. If there were a tax on capital values of property, at least that would be a fair distribution of wealth, with regard to those who can pay. It is no good introducing taxation for people who cannot pay. That is what has been happening. We now have an unfair system, which has been clearly proven by two similar district authorities.

I do not suggest for one moment that, in his allocations, the Minister makes political decisions. Hove council has 22 Conservative councillors, four Labour councillors, three Liberals and one independent. I do not suggest that that has anything to do with or any bearing on the allocation——

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): And Hove has a Conservative Member of Parliament.

Mr. Steinberg: I forgot about that. But the system must come into disrepute when power is handed over to one single person—the Minister.

Mr. Tony Banks: There are some other points about Hove that my hon. Friend might not know about. It has high unemployment and, indeed, some of the worst social service provision in the whole of that part of the country. Despite the favourable treatment that this Tory Government are giving to a bunch of Tory stooges in Hove, the council is still not giving the level of services that hard-pressed London boroughs are giving.

Mr. Steinberg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me that information. I did not know that. It is typical and what one would expect.

Although a decision has not yet been made in Durham city this year, it seems certain that its rates may have to rise next year by about 10 per cent., just to stand still. With that 10 per cent., there will be little increase in the provision of services. The rates rise will be purely to compensate for the loss of grant—the same old story.

Rates in Durham city have increased from 24p to 43½p since 1981-82, simply because of the loss of grant and the iniquitous way in which GREA is calculated. That is an 81 per cent. increase, yet actual expenditure in Durham is up by only 11 per cent., while the retail price index has increased by only 33 per cent. Grant-related expenditure assessment components are nonsense and, as an example, I shall again compare Hove with Durham city. Hove receives £7 per head of population for private housing whereas Durham receives £1·37 per head. Hove spends £140,000 a year on concessionary bus fares and receives £13·54 per head of population, yet Durham spends £312,000 a year on concessionary fares and receives only £2·50 per head. That is ridiculous and must be regarded as crazy. Why should the GREA be different for authorities that appear so similar? Surely there must be something wrong with the system.

The Secretary of State recognises that the system is a shambles or he would not have targets, or "expenditure assumptions", as they are now called. The Government have put local government finance in disarray, and the Secretary of State today ridiculed it. Now the Government plan to make it worse by introducing the poll tax. They introduced the block grant, which was a tremendous fiasco. Now the poll tax is to be introduced, which will be an even bigger disaster. It has taken the Government eight years to get local government finance in total chaos, so introducing the poll tax is probably a natural progression for them. The only trouble is that local authorities and residents have been and will continue to be the sufferers —unless, of course, one lives in a £750,000 house in Dulwich or, better still, has two houses, as many Cabinet Ministers have.

6.52 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I shall not take up the points made by the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), especially his comparisons with Hove, which is well represented by a friend and political neighbour of mine. I hope that the hon. Gentleman informed my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) that he would compare the statistics as he did, because that would have been only a courtesy.

I contest the hon. Gentleman's contention that the Conservative Government have been eroding the amount spent on local government. One need only cast one's mind back to the days of runaway inflation at the end of the last Labour Government to see that the value of money given to local government, as to everything else, was eroded dramatically year by year.

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

I emphatically endorse the idea, put forward yet again and most sensibly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) of a reassessment of the role and functions of local government. New methods of financing, however good they may be, are not the whole story. Local government will not be positioned correctly to do the job that it is meant to do for those whom it represents until there is the sort of reassessment advocated by my right hon. Friend.

I warmly welcome in a way that no hon. Member has yet done the statement made yesterday, and confirmed today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in announcing the Government's special help to those parts of the country so devastated by the 15 October storms. Those who have not visited the south of England—the county of my constituency, East Sussex, the neighbouring counties of West Sussex and Kent, north to Surrey and across the waters to Suffolk — cannot appreciate the devastation of that night. Everyone who has visited the area is astounded by the devastation, with trees broken off or blown over and houses damaged. The Government's help is welcome.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am following the hon. Gentleman's remarks closely. I agree with him entirely. I regularly travel to Hastings, and it is depressing to see, as one drives along the roads or travels by railway, how many trees in Kent and Sussex were uprooted by that storm. Is the hon. Gentleman wholly satisfied that Kent and East Sussex are receiving adequate resources from the Government to deal with the problems arising from the storm?

Mr. Rathbone: If the hon. Gentleman held his horses for a moment, he would be all the wiser.

We very much appreciate the ability to charge to revenue building works up to the end of next March without losing grant. I commend my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State because after March the revenue costs of borrowing to repair damage will not incur grant loss for three years and the deadline for Bellwin grants of 75 per cent. has been extended from January to 1 March.

I should like one small aspect of the extension to be considered. Some of the major repairs that must be made cannot be completed within that time scale. The rebuilding of Tideway school in Newhaven, which was devastated, leading to the whole school being evacuated, has meant considerable extra costs in providing temporary rented accommodation for schooling and extra costs in transporting pupils to the school. That will continue until the end of the summer term. The rebuilding will not be completed until some time in the summer, but the extra Bellwin-type cost will continue until the end of the summer term. The cost is estimated to be about £200,000, so we are not talking about small amounts. I ask my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government, who is carefully making a note of this point, to reconsider that expenditure, which is important for a county such as East Sussex.

I should like to correct an impression given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when referring to the first 1p of rate which is paid by councils before the Bellwin formula applies. My right hon. Friend said once again, as he has said before in our positive conversations with him, that that was the amount that a good council would put aside. I wish to cite some figures as background. The 1p rate to be paid by the East Sussex county council produces £1·4 million, and expenditure at that level loses grant of £700,000 even if it is paid for out of a contingency fund. Had that money been notionally spent on such a fund, it would have meant a grant loss when the fund was formed.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State advocated the establishment of a contingency fund, but that would have meant the county council losing grant — mainly because of mistreatment in previous years—of £700,000 from the beginning of the year, whether or not it had spent that fund. The council will now lose grant from the moment that it expends from the contingency fund that must be established. The fact is that at no time since the Bellwin rules were introduced has the East Sussex penalty been lower than it is now, so that setting up such a contingency fund would have been even more costly to the ratepayers. I want to put that point on the record.

We are talking about huge amounts of money. The total expenditure envisaged by East Sussex is estimated to be £12 million—that is the financial measurement of the devastation caused by the storm. Under the new rules, the council can expect a grant from the Government of £3·5 million, decreasing the amount to be found by the council to £8·5 million. To that, however, must be added the loss of £700,000 grant, so that the total to be found by the council will be £9·2 million. I cite those figures to give the House an idea of the enormous damage in my part of the country.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the way that East Sussex is being treated this year, compared with previous years. Nevertheless, it is a low threshold of praise, because I am really thanking him only for no further suffering. Nothing has been done to put right the sufferings of previous years — although following them, even the status quo is a more comfortable state for the council.

In a year's time, when the last rate support grant is announced, as a grand finale — a form of fireworks, perhaps — some of the moneys owed to East Sussex should be returned as a recognition of its being one of the best-run counties, if not the best run. That would be some recompense for its good housekeeping.

I fear that yet again this year I must join in what has become an annual bashing of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I must raise the problem of the rate support grant settlement for Lewes district council, the major district council in my constituency. When grant-related expenditure was announced, it showed an increase of 0·83 per cent. compared with 1987-88. That caused enormous concern and I wrote to the Secretary of State about it in the middle of last month. I have not yet received a reply, but I appreciate the burden of work on his Department in recent times.

When the rate support grant was announced, we found that it was £311,000 below the figure for 1987-88. We were told that the methodology for calculating GRE was to be generally the same as for 1987-88. It is expected that between 1987-88 and 1988-89 the population of Lewes will increase by 2,642, or 3·1 per cent. The estimated increase in net committed expenditure — net of expenditure by towns and parishes — for 1988-89 compared with 1987-88 is £211,000, or 5·4 per cent. That is an interesting comparison with the increase of 5·75 per cent. in rate support grant nationally that was announced by my right hon. Friend.

The 5·4 per cent. increase in expenditure is within the suggested rate rise limit, especially if we discount the allowance for a 3·1 per cent. increase in population. However, the loss of £311,000 rate support grant will raise the estimated increase in expenditure from £211,000 to £522,000.

After allowing for inflation of 4 per cent., the 5·4 per cent. estimated increase means, in fact, only a 1·4 per cent. increase in growth, which is more than accounted for by the expected 3·1 per cent. increase in population. That shows that Lewes is an extremely efficient council, in stark contrast to some of the councils to which my hon. Friends referred earlier.

I shall write to my hon. and learned Friend the Minister setting out those details, and asking whether he will meet a delegation from the council, when I hope that he and his officials will explain the mathematics. I hope that he will reconsider the grant in view of the extremely efficient way in which the council is run.

It is, perhaps, almost an historic occasion to be participating in the wake for rate support grant, grant-related expenditure, rate capping and so on. I am somewhat less sanguine than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the planned community charge —a subject which will be tackled in debate next week.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to raise important, if local, points.

7.7 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I have some sympathy with the points made by the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) about the halcyon days of local government before the introduction of legislation that rather aptly came into effect on April fool's day in 1974.

At that time, the system of rate support grant allowed local government to operate on a firm and sensible basis, and it is vital that we return to that position. An excellent urban district council in my constituency was abolished by the Local Government Act 1974. It fought rigorously for the interests of its people in Clay Cross. At that time, there was a "moderate" Government under the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The position in the area has worsened considerably and a strong fighting policy needs to be adopted.

The Clay Cross urban district council was replaced by the moderate North-East Derbyshire district council. Its modesty has been shown by one of its leaders defecting to the SDP-Liberal alliance, following which there was a Conservative council, and then its last leader defecting to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the "moderate" Labour party. He was then soundly defeated at a by-election in Clay Cross.

A council with that tradition—it now has a collective leadership to avoid such problems—will not be seen to be too excessive. In the Prime Minister's terms, it will be seen to be prudent and reasonable. Yet the prudent and reasonable authority is being dealt with in a most harsh fashion by the rate support grant arrangements and by the Government's failure to respond to the problems that it faces. In their context, its problems are as serious as the gale damage problems that are faced by authorities in the south of England.

In north-east Derbyshire, there has been an underground fire in Callywhite lane in Dronfield. It is on a private estate, although the district council has been obliged to take action to rectify it. At the moment, costs amount to £500,000. Various losses, legal and other charges will also be involved. This year, the council will be obliged to instigate a 25 per cent. rate increase to rectify the problem. There has been no movement on the part of the Government, despite repeated requests by the North-East Derbyshire council and hon. Members.

Furthermore, north-east Derbyshire faces the threatened closure of Renishaw Park pit. The closure of the pit and other businesses within the region will reduce the rateable value of the area. Subsequent job losses will mean that the local economy will suffer and less money will be available for local government purposes.

When I first came to the House, I tabled an early-day motion to attempt to get the Department of the Environment to meet a delegation about the Dronfield fire. We have heard that the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) hopes that a delegation from his district council will meet the Minister. It was only after considerable pressure and the signing of early-day motions and other measures and actions that the Minister agreed to meet the Dronfield delegation. We were given tea and sympathy. When the Minister asked what was sought, a delegate told the Minister, "We want sympathy and support." The Minister's reply was, "You have certainly got sympathy." We have always had a smiling face and smiling responses but we have had no support or assistance.

In my maiden speech to the House, I referred to the details of the fire and the seriousness of the problems involved. Consequently, court action obliged the council, rather than the firms concerned, to take action. Funding has been sought to handle the crisis. That was the subject of an Adjournment debate, and there was a subsequent response from the Under-Secretary of State. We were told that we could not use the derelict land legislation to find funds. However, I suggested other measures to the Minister. He did not respond to them. I have elicited a "no" response from the Minister to a written question. One avenue for funds is the Bellwin scheme. It does not refer only to gales. It states:

> "To provide special financial assistance to local authorities who, as a consequence of an emergency, would otherwise incur an undue financial burden in providing relief and carrying out immediate works to safeguard life or property or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience to affected communities."

Those provisions apply exactly to this case and other cases that hon. Members could put forward. There have been deputations from Strabane about the floods on Northern Ireland. They were united deputations, involving Ulster Unionists and Sinn Fein members coming to the House to state their position. The Government should respond to that sort of unity and concern. There is a common interest whether there is gale, flood, or fire damage. Such matters should be responded to.

I also suggested that the Government could set up an emergency fund additional to the Bellwin scheme arrangements so that the entire amounts could be recovered. There could be some alteration to the public health legislation, under which councils are obliged, when there are safety problems, to take action to cause firms to act. Such firms may be driven into bankruptcy because they cannot handle a matter. The council must then take action and carry the costs. Adjustments of that nature must be responded to and seriously considered.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

I asked a written question of the Secretary of State to find out the situation in respect of funding, since various points were not answered in the Adjournment debate. The Secretary of State replied:

"As I have told the House, it would not be appropriate to make central Government financial assistance available to help fund the remedial works necessary to put out the fire.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, has considered North-East Derbyshire district council's request that unrecovered expenditure it incurs in dealing with the fire should be excluded from the definition of total expenditure, and has decided not to include it."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1987; Vol. 1430, c. 629.]

That means that, apart from using this opportunity, I have now had to present a ten-minute Bill that will refer not only to the underground fire at Dronfield but to other underground fires and disasters to show that there should be funding provided.

In addition to my constituents having to face a high rate increase to handle the emergency, they also face wider problems that affect the whole of Derbyshire. Derbyshire now faces grant capping, which will seriously affect it. The object of the grant cap is supposed to be to limit grant charges from year to year. In other words, an authority's proper grant entitlement is calculated and then a separate factor is applied to reduce that grant entitlement to an arbitrary limit that is set by the Secretary of State. The benefit of the reduction in grant is then shared out in small measure between all other authorities in the country who are not subject to a cap. By next year, the cap will cost Derbyshire ratepayers almost £70 million. It was introduced as a transitional measure in 1986-87, following the Government's abolition of the targets and grant penalty system. The important point to understand about the grant cap issue is that it is completely unrelated to the council's spending policy and that there is nothing that the council can do to eliminate the cap. No cuts that it may impose, nor other action that it may take, will eliminate the measure.

Should Derbyshire ratepayers continue to be penalised at a rate of £20 million a year so that a small benefit can then be provided for other authorities? The annual national value of the cap is equivalent to around only 0·5 per cent. of the block grant pool that is available to other authorities. Its continued use can no longer be justified.

North-east Derbyshire residents are additionally in a difficult position in regard to the fire. The barrier that the council provided at considerable expense seems to have been breached in one area. The fire is extending towards gas supplies in south Yorkshire. The crisis still exists and funding is still required. I ask the Government to look seriously at the position to see whether assistance can be given, and to consider the other points raised on the grant cap in Derbyshire.

7.19 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North:) Unfortunately, the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) is no longer in the Chamber, but I was interested in his remarks about the past and the possible future of local government, particularly as I served on an urban district council in the early 1970s, which has now gone the way of many of those bodies since the Local Government Act 1974. I look back on those days with rosy and warm feelings, no doubt in the same way as other hon. Members do, but it strikes me that the reduction of the size of local government would be a major undertaking and not quite as simple as the right hon. Member for Brent, North, even with his vast experience, might imagine.

For example, what would we do with education? Would we move it up or down a level? Other considerations would make the changes somewhat more complicated than the characteristically populist solution described by the right hon. Member. Nevertheless, I am sure that his sentiments were genuine. While I empathise with his looking back to the rosy days before 1974, it is not as simple as that. The time is approaching when we should look at the functions and size of local government, although I am not sure whether now is the right time.

The rate support grant settlement will affect urban areas, particularly Merseyside and my constituency. The Government, with their much trumpeted initiatives on the inner city and urban areas—I hope that that includes outer areas—have made a small but significant shift in the settlement away from metropolitan districts, where most stress areas are. Those stress areas will have an increase in funding of 7·4 per cent. The Government have taken a slightly meaner approach to metropolitan districts than to the rest of the country, which is somewhat strange when the Government claim to be helping urban and stress areas. It is strange that metropolitan districts should be under attack.

Currently, about four of the 36 metropolitan districts are spending less than the grant-related expenditure assessments, which means that 32 are spending more. Are the Government saying that those 32 have got it wrong and the four have got it right? If so, that is a strange way of approaching relations with local government, and the matter should be reconciled.

The rate support grant settlement for Merseyside will be increased by 6·7 per cent., which is significantly less than for the rest of the country, which will receive an increase of 7·5 per cent. Whatever may have taken place in the past to affect the Government's relationship with some constituent authorities in Merseyside may not have had any bearing on the changes, but I think that all hon. Members would concede that Merseyside has major problems caused by the demographic and industrial changes which have taken place over several decades and longer.

Successive Ministers, including the Prime Minister on one or two occasions, have been to Merseyside to look at the problems. The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) has taken a great interest in Merseyside. Most people have accepted the evidence of their own eyes. There is considerable decay and many problems.

I do not go along with the school of thought that we should whinge about everything on Merseyside because everything is so bad. There are many good things on Merseyside. There are some good things in local government and good things caused by local government having allowed the voluntary sector to undertake certain functions. I do not agree that we should always bleat about Merseyside, but anyone looking at the problems would have to concede that the solution must involve the central Government directing resources into stress areas of Merseyside, including parts of Liverpool, Knowsley and Birkenhead. The stark truth is that anyone looking at the problems of urban dereliction and inner cities must concede that point.

I concede that local government must sometimes take different and radical approaches to tackle problems. In Knowsley, the settlement is slightly more than 7·9 per cent., which is higher than that for the rest of the country and more than the rate support grant settlement for Merseyside. At first glance, I thought that I should have to congratulate the Secretary of State—until I started to analyse the changes that the Government expect local government to take on board and how those changes will affect the settlement.

First, the administration of changes to the housing benefit, recently passed with some opposition from Opposition Benches, will cost my local authority some £300,000. That is a considerable sum of money, which is necessary if the changes are to be administered humanely and decently. We are still waiting for the debate on the rights and wrongs of the poll tax, but it is estimated that my local authority will have to employ 90 staff to deal with its introduction, which will cost approximately £1·5 million for additional accommodation, administration and staff.

The introduction of competition is another factor. As recently as yesterday, the borough of Wirral, which was controlled by the Conservatives, re-let the privatisation of cleaning services. An in-house tender from local authority staff has succeeded in replacing the private contractors who have been doing the work for two or three years. The Minister may say that that is competition and that the Government do not object to local authorities winning tenders, provided they are competing with private enterprise. *The Liverpool Daily Post* reported this morning that the Conservative leader attributed the success of the in-house tender to the changes in the way in which local authority officers had done their jobs and had prepared the in-house tender so that it would be acceptable.

That confirms a problem in my constituency. The preparations for the introduction of competition are estimated in next year's budget to cost something like £220,000. The local authorities used consultants to do that. Local authorities will have to cover those additional costs which result from measures that the Government have introduced, and which will not be met by the rate support grant settlement.

Another problem which is common to all local authorities is that of pay awards. I do not object to the various pay awards—far from it. In my local authority, two thirds of the costs of all services involve salaries and pay. They vary from the administrative and technical grades which were given about 7 per cent. to the pay award to manual workers which was about 10 per cent. In regard to the teachers' pay award, there is a residual amount to be paid from a previous award and the current year's pay award still has to be settled, but it appears that the overall increase in the cost of teachers' pay will be over 10 per cent. That means that there will be a settlement of 7 or 8 per cent. If we add up all those problems, and the cost of pay awards, we see that the Government proposal is likely to be inadequate, even in my borough which does comparatively well compared with others on Merseyside.

Another of my worries is that the grant at GREA level will be £48·6 million. If we assume that we will spend something like 8 per cent. above GREA, the grant will be reduced to £46·2 million, a loss of £2·4 million. I know that the Government have accepted the inconsistencies and problems, and have promised to change the system, but, having accepted the need for change, why will they not change the system straight away, this year? Why do they not say, "We will make the change now, and we will set the level of expenditure at GREA and we will not penalise those who are on the threshold, or just on one side of it"?

All those problems, and their financial consequences, do not mean much until we examine the problem on the ground, and what it means to live in an urban area. We have heard some graphic illustrations of the effects of storm damage, with which I have some sympathy. I travelled in south-east England and I was moved by the fact that lots of trees were lying beside the road. I sympathise with hon. Members who have such problems. The truth is that in areas such as Knowsley, urban and industrial decay are facts of life. They were not created by the people who live there. They are the result of structural changes in the economy, the recession, regional policy and the lack of industry being directed into such areas. Industrial and urban decay are common everyday experiences.

We need to improve education. I do not think that the education system is wonderful. I do not agree with the Government's proposals, but I believe that changes can be made in the education system in Britain and in my constituency, which will not necessarily cost a lot of money. If young people who live in my constituency are to have an equal chance in life, more money needs to be spent on their education. That will not happen under the present proposals.

We also need extra resources to improve the environment. Nothing is so impoverishing as to drive around some of the housing estates in constituencies such as mine and look at the problems, some of which have been created by local authorities. Those problems involve the design of the estates and the resources that are available to improve and maintain them. It is an impoverishing experience to live in an area where the environment is poor and getting worse. As a result of the RSG settlement there will be no additional resources to deal with those problems.

I accept that there are many things wrong in the country. However, the malicious attitude that the Secretary of State has adopted towards local government will do more harm than good. I accept that things go wrong in the management of local authorities. I spent 14 years working on a local authority and such organisations employ many people and are involved in the operation of complicated procedures, some of which have been introduced by legislation. It is inevitable that, in those circumstances, local authorities occasionally get things wrong. I believe that there is always scope for increased efficiency within a local authority. I do not believe that there is anything anti-Socialist or anti-citizen in saying that —certainly most of my constituents would agree.

Things are not improved by the bashing approach that has been adopted by the Secretary of State. Improvements are made as a result of consent and discussion and by respecting the fact that local authorities represent the true, elected voice in their communities. I believe that the Secretary of State is mistakenly—the RSG settlement reflects that—managing the whole national process of local government with a mixture of malice and, on occasions—as demonstrated in this debate—incompetence. I find that breathtaking, but, more to the point, I find it deeply disappointing.

7.36 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I make no apology for being parochial because I believe that I am correct in saying that I am the only hon. Member who speaks for an entire county council.

All the political parties on the Isle of Wight have recognised the problems caused to that island by the rate support grant. That consensus goes back to the days of my predecessor but one, Mark Woodnutt. Certainly, in the days when the constituency was represented by Stephen Ross—yesterday he was ennobled in another place—he did a considerable amount of work in endeavouring to convince the Association of County Councils of the merit of the island's case. Indeed, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was Secretary of State for the Environment he agreed to take up the island's case. It is a matter of much sadness to the island that, at that time, the ACC refused to allow adjustments to be made that would have benefited the island.

The island is unique in a number of instances. Over the years the council has continually made applications for assisted area status, but has failed to convince the Government that the island should be such an area. I believe that the stumbling block may be that the decision is judged on a regional basis. Despite our high unemployment, our infrastructure and local government difficulties, the problem is that the island is judged against the backdrop of one of the most prosperous regions in the United Kingdom.

As a result of the Council for Small Industries in Rural Areas and the Development Commission, the island enjoys rural development area status. I believe that that is unique for an entire county. The county is also designated as a travel-to-work area by the Department of Employment. I am not an expert, but I venture to suggest that that is rather remarkable when one considers that the island is 60 miles wide. I do not believe that many travel-to-work areas in the country cover such a distance.

The island suffers considerable difficulties because it is an island. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment should consider that, under the present RSG settlement, the Isles of Scilly are given special treatment. That treatment reflects the consideration given to the finance of those islands, the small population and the dislocation caused by that archipelago. Although we have consistently failed to persuade the Department of the Environment of the merits of our case, we should receive similar treatment to that afforded to the Isles of Scilly and to the Scottish islands.

Plant and machinery costs a great deal more, as do materials, because they must come across to the island by ferry. Although the island is only 88 miles from London as the crow flies, it has been estimated that that round trip is equivalent to a journey of 300 miles when the time on the ferry is taken into consideration.

Let me give my right hon. Friend an illustration of the difficulties faced by local government on that island and the increased costs that we must bear as a result. I especially direct my right hon. Friend's attention to a serious fire that occurred last night on the island. Unfortunately, that fire has led to the temporary loss of 60 jobs. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will appreciate that, when such a fire occurs, there is no way in which a fire engine can board a ferry—the journey takes some 40 minutes and that assumes that the fire engine would be waiting for that ferry when the fire broke out. As it is impossible for the island to rely on back-up facilities from other counties, the authority has the extra cost of supplying additional fire appliances.

There is a well-known joke about being a long-distance lorry driver on the Isle of Wight. We do not have any motorways or trunk roads—it can be argued that our roads lead to nowhere. The island loses out substantially because of our transportation difficulties.

Hon. Members will be aware that this year the ACC made a representation to my right hon. Friend for the abolition of the safety net. I believe that I am correct in saying that if the net were abolished only three county authorities would lose as a result. Yet again, the Isle of Wight would be one of those authorities. Therefore, we are delighted that my right hon. Friend has decided to keep that safety net. It offers a considerable advantage to the island.

I received a letter today from my right hon. Friend about a matter that I had previously raised with him regarding the short-sightedness of the Treasury valuer in not asking for a reduction in the rates on an area covered by the prison that is currently unoccupied—in fact, that part of the prison is uninhabitable at the moment—and for those prison officers' houses that have been sold either to the local authority or on the open market. The amount that is required to be repaid to the Treasury dates back to 1982-83. In the normal course of events, when such an amount is discovered on a year-on-year basis, an adjustment is made to the rate support grant. I drew my right hon. Friend's attention to the matter because, if the sum must be repaid in the current year—we very much hope that we may find a way around that—it will be equivalent to a charge of £2 per head of population of the island. It is a substantial sum of money for our local government to find.

I am anxious about the longer term because the measure may have an effect on the base level of our community charge, although I welcome that charge. The unified business rate in both boroughs will drop substantially, by over 7 per cent. in one borough and by 4 per cent. in the other. We must not incur any extraneous expenditure that might have a detrimental effect on the base level for the community charge.

We have had the promise of a payment of some £55,000 for the storm damage caused by the hurricane. If we judge this on the sum per head of population, we see that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has treated the Isle of Wight generously. I am delighted that he should have done so because our county motto is, "All this beauty is of God" and we are looking forward to restoring that beauty. My right hon. Friend visited Osborne house earlier this year. He will appreciate the devastation caused by the severe weather and he saw the island at its best.

When we made our annual deputation to my right hon. Friend to discuss our rate support grant, we discussed the storm damage and asked whether a form was available to make application for compensation. We were told that there was not, but that we should write and request additional capital allocation. We did and were told by the Department of the Environment that we should fill in the appropriate form. We received a letter on 20 November, telling us that a form was available. In the reformation of rate support grant, which we all welcome, perhaps the Isle

of Wight will have played a tiny part in history as it made the Department of the Environment invent a form to apply for compensation for storm damage.

7.47 pm

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) may represent a whole county, but several hon. Members can speak on behalf of their counties. I can speak about issues affecting the five districts which make up the area of west Yorkshire. He referred to several issues regarding local authority administration on the Isle of Wight. We share his concern, particularly about the fire service.

The hon. Member said that the Isle of Wight had assisted area status. We wish that we could obtain such assistance for areas of industrial dereliction where unemployment is high, yet Wakefield, which is in my constituency, is denied assisted area status. The hon. Member is fortunate to have such Government assistance. However, I am disappointed that local government has little to look forward to in the rate support grant report presented today by the Secretary of State.

When I look at the report and the detail of what is quite an extensive document, I see that it is signed by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Secretary of State for Transport and has the consent of two of the Lords Commissioners to Her Majesty's Treasury. I am disappointed that there is no reference to anyone from the Home Office. When it comes to fire service and civil defence provision, the Home Office has the responsibility for setting standards, as it has for police forces. The Department of Health and Social Security is involved in provision for joint financing between local authorities and health authorities. Then there are community services: a good many people have been transferred from Health Service provision to local authority provision, but there are no extra resources of any significance in this document to assist either community services or joint financing. It means that in many cases the local authority must carry the full burden of schemes which had originally been jointly financed between it and the health authority. The fact that councils now have to make total provision for these jointly financed schemes means a tremendous call on local resources.

If the Secretary of State is to judge the worth of those schemes, we must have services that give value for money. To do that, local authorities must be helped. There must be some examination of the level of local authority expenditure which will allow them to provide the services that people demand, in my area as in other areas.

In my area there is a great demand for the services that the local authority provides. Every weekend I am approached by constituents who have problems arising from social services, and from housing, particularly for the elderly and disabled. People look forward to meeting their local authority representatives so that they can put their case for better services. Yet because of the restrictions applied by the Secretary of State to local authorities, my constituents and those of other hon. Members are denied the services to which they are entitled.

What gives me the greatest cause for concern is the provision of fire cover in the west Yorkshire area. This area covers five district councils — Leeds, Bradford, Kirklees, Wakefield and Calderdale. Special provision must be made to ensure that we get a proper fire cover to the standard laid down, in the main, by the Home Office. The Home Secretary lays down certain standards of fire cover which are then passed on to the fire services in west Yorkshire and to the joint committee that administers them, yet we have the ridiculous situation in which the Secretary of State for the Environment decides what the level of expenditure must be, thereby making it very difficult for the fire services to provide the necessary cover to the correct standard.

In February 1985 the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council published a report entitled "Report of the Joint Committee on Standards of Fire Cover". Among its conclusions and recommendations, the report said:

"We emphasise the importance of proper categorisation of risk for the operation of meaningful recommended standards of fire cover, and recommend that fire authorities should, on receipt of revised composition guidance from the Home Departments, review the categorisation of risk in their area in the light of it".

In other words, fire services were requested to examine areas of fire risk and to build up to the recommended cover.

In west Yorkshire in 1988-89 the amount required to reach the required standard of cover is £39·2 million. The initial expenditure limit announced by the Department of the Environment is £36·4 million, so when it comes to providing the necessary service in west Yorkshire we have a shortfall of £2·8 million. There are areas in west Yorkshire where the fire risk is exceptional and where the resources of the fire service are so stretched that it is difficult to ensure that the necessary standards are achieved and maintained. The fire services' authority is faced with such a dilemma that representations have been made to the Home Office, asking it to approve the maximum possible amount to ensure that proper standards of service are achieved.

An initial expenditure has been announced at £36·4 million. Yet the amount required just to stand still, taking into account inflation and so on, for the west Yorkshire civil defence and fire authorities is £37·8 million, so we have a shortfall of £1·4 million, even though we are just standing still. This is a devastating situation where, to meet the standards of fire cover laid down by an advisory body which was established to make recommendations and advise authorities, it will cost £39·2 million. Yet the difference between that figure and the initial expenditure limit that has been announced is £2·73 million.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will my hon. Friend take into account the fact that the south Yorkshire fire service, which also made recommendations to the Home Office and to the Secretary of State, is in a similar position? It is in danger of having to take appliances off the road. The problem is compounded by the fact that the adjacent services in each area cover for one another in the event of a major fire. This means that someone has to decide whether that cover can be given, because, if it is, it tends to dilute the fire cover that it is possible to give in an individual force's area.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) for drawing attention to the fact that south Yorkshire is facing similar problems as those of west Yorkshire on fire cover. My hon. Friend is correct with regard to the cross-boundary service that supplements fire cover on the boundaries.

If something is not done to help fire authorities in west and south Yorkshire, the service that people are entitled

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to will deteriorate. When a catastrophe occurs there will be no point in the Prime Minister or any other Minister coming to the area to offer condolences. The Government have a responsibility to ensure that an adequate level of service is maintained.

The standards of the service are set not by the fire service in west Yorkshire or by the joint committee but by an official, established body, which ensures that in a high fire risk area there is proper cover. We in west Yorkshire are concerned—I am sure that the same applies to south Yorkshire — that there are areas of high fire risk in which there is doubt about the level of cover.

I hope that the Secretary of State will note the problems facing local fire and civil defence authorities. In west Yorkshire, six special appliances have had to be demanned. A further reduction in financial resources to that extent is equivalent to the demanning of five pumping appliances, 12 specials or a combination of either. If the expenditure levels that are needed to provide proper fire cover are not agreed by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Home Secretary there will be a further reduction in fire cover in the area.

For the service to stand still in the coming year it would require an additional £1·3 million, or a 3·8 per cent. increase over and above the announced limit. The base budget for 1987-88—I hope that the Secretary of State is noting these figures; I notice that he is doing some jottings, but I shall supply him with them if he wishes—is £34·6 million. The commitment for increases in pay up until March 1989 will require a further £2·3 million. The services pension commitment will require £274,000. Expenditure over and above the influence of the authority —loan charges—amounts to a further £120,000. Phased recruitment, which will take into consideration wastage, will cost £278,000, and the increment for public holidays will cost £221,000. Total expenditure for the service to stand still is £37·8 million.

Provision must be made for the appointment of uniformed personnel, in accordance with the establishment scheme. That scheme is reflected in the standard of cover that has been suggested and laid down by the body that I referred to earlier. In accordance with the establishment scheme, the total cost of appointed uniformed personnel is £792,000.

Loan charges on capital plant are inescapable and will amount to £261,000 for 1988-89. The maintenance of buildings to prevent further deterioration will cost £300,000.

Taking those figures into consideration, the service requirement to ensure that the standard of cover is adequate to meet the recommendations laid down by the authority is £39·2 million. As I said earlier, there is a shortfall of £2·7 million. A 7·5 per cent. increase is required to maintain the standard of cover to which people are entitled.

With regard to capital expenditure, there are a number of issues that the fire service cannot ignore, such as fire appliances and equipment, which cost £912,000. Other vehicles must be replaced to ensure that the standard of service is maintained. The authority must undertake major refits of equipment. New pumping stations must be established, because where there is development and an extension of local authority services they are a necessity. North-west Leeds is scheduled for a new pumping station.

With regard to the provision of water supply and hydrants, there must be capital expenditure of £60,000 by the west Yorkshire fire authority to maintain these services. I have grave reservations that unless assurances are given in the Public Utility Transfers and Water Charges Bill, which we are considering in Committee, or unless provision is made in that legislation that will give proper and adequate cover for fire services, problems could develop. If the Secretary of State runs true to form, we shall have to pay for water and services for fire cover. If that happens, the West Yorkshire fire service and the joint committee will have burdens placed on them over and above the matters to which I have referred.

The energy conservation programme for west Yorkshire has cost £100,000. There is a wealth of evidence that the authority is doing all that it possibly can to obtain value for money. The report on the standard of cover makes it clear that a detailed review of fire risk categories must be carried out for the entire area. The west Yorkshire fire authority has undertaken an extensive exercise in that regard. Certain areas in west Yorkshire have been identified as being in an high-risk category. I plead with the Secretary of State to take note of the position and to ensure that we have adequate fire cover to meet the problems that our fire services committee envisaged. This district audit service is supportive of the authority's case. In its report on the accounts of west Yorkshire it concludes:

"Though the failure to meet Home Office standards and guidelines on attendance at incidents has no direct financial cost to the Authority, there is, nevertheless, potentially a cost to the community if, by such failures, life and property is needlessly and avoidably lost. The Fire Authority should, therefore,

(a) continue to press the Home Office to approve the proposed established plan, and

(b) seek redetermination of its expenditure limits based on the approved plan."

That is the purpose of my appeal to the Secretary of State this evening. When he is dealing with rate support grant he should bear in mind the protection of life and property in west Yorkshire. The standards that are set by the Home Office should be given some serious thought. The Secretary of State and his officials should be considering the representations made by west Yorkshire and should lift the expenditure limit to the £39 million for which it is asking.

Again in its report, the audit office said:

"Any reduction from the redetermination bid submitted by the authority means that the recommended standards of service cannot be implemented in West Yorkshire."

I want to put that on record in the House. If the Secretary of State does not take into consideration some of the important issues that are being reflected by the Home Office, the people who audit the accounts of west Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority and the joint committee, I want to ensure that the responsibility for any failure that may occur in west Yorkshire because of the lack of resources is the clear responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Everyone involved in fire cover in west Yorkshire believes that there should be some redetermination of the level of expenditure. Anything less than that redetermination is the responsibility of the Secretary of State and the consequences that follow will also be his responsibility.

I referred earlier to the search for value for money. The authority has been trying to become more efficient and effective. Pumping appliances have been reduced from 94

to 79. Special appliances have been reduced from 43 to 38. Control room personnel have been reduced from 90 to 58 and the proposals put forward in the current year to try to obtain value for money suggest a further reduction in pumping appliances from 79 to 77 and in special appliances from 38 to 36.

Many other initiatives have been pursued vigorously which have resulted in reduced resources employment. The reserve appliances have been reduced from 20 to 16. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone said, we have reserves so that if there is a call from a neighbouring authority the vehicles and equipment are ready. However, the authority in west Yorkshire has said that a saving of £250,000 can be made by reducing the reserve appliances from 20 to 16.

There is also the question of increased efficiency. There is a reduction in the premises available. The capital investment in energy conservation is an effort to increase efficiency and obtain better value for money. There is a training school in west Yorkshire which has increased the fees charged to external clients with a view to increasing the income by a further £250,000. Therefore, there is extensive involvement by the people in the west Yorkshire area and those on the joint committee, which, as I have said, comprises representatives from the five authorities I have mentioned.

Having taken all that into consideration, there is the question of the shortfall of £2·7 million from the requirement to ensure that the standard of cover is maintained. There is also the question of the provision that has been made in the budget we are considering now. If the Secretary of State is not prepared to redetermine the expenditure level of the fire cover in west Yorkshire, I fear for some of the people who depend upon that fire cover.

There is also the problem of the reduction of the services provided by the health authorities. There has been a reduction in the provision of resources from the regional health authority to the Wakefield and Pontefract area health authorities. As a result, there are now additional calls upon the local community services. Unless there is additional funding for those community services there will be a further fall in the services provided by the Wakefield local authority. I ask the Minister and the Secretary of State to redetermine the expenditure level of local authorities and to redetermine the grants being made available, particularly the rate support grant. Let us have some realism back in local government.

I served in local government for over 30 years before coming to the House. At no time has morale been as low as it is now. I ask the Minister to realise that. The Government should take into consideration the work being done in providing services more so now than ever before. They should ensure that the resources are provided so that the services can be maintained. I would consider anything less than that to be a criminal act against the people who depend upon the local services.

I appeal to the Minister and the Secretary of State to give some careful consideration to the provisions in the Local Government Bill. Anything less than that would not be in the best interests of the communities we all serve.

8.19 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said when he opened the debate that this would be the penultimate debate on the rate support grant. Everyone who has been in local government will say amen to that. It has been said that the Schleswig-Holstein question was once understood by three people, one of whom was dead, one of whom had gone mad and the third of whom had forgotten all about it. It would be fair to say that the rate support grant is equally well understood.

I was chairman of a local government finance committee when the rate support grant system was introduced. It seemed to me then, and subsequent events have confirmed, that this system is unfair to different local authorities. It was based on the assumption that expenditure in a particular base year bore the same relationship to need in different local authorities, but that is untrue. Certain local authorities, such as Barnet under the energetic leadership of councillor Leslie Pym, heeded the advice of Socialist Secretaries of State of the Environment that the party was now over. But many other local authorities completely ignored that advice and continued to spend, spend, spend.

Within London, a number of local authorities, such as Wandsworth, Ealing and Hillingdon, had changed control in 1978, and there was still a substantial amount of fat to be taken out of the system, as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State did with such conspicuous success in Wandsworth. When I was chairman of the finance committee in Ealing, we found that we could make a substantial reduction and still provide adequate services which would give the ratepayers a good deal. The success of our policy is confirmed by the fact that the Leader of the Opposition was happy to live in Ealing during those years, enjoying the services that we provided and paying the rates that we charged.

As the system has developed, it has become difficult for authorities such as Barnet, which had economised over the years and had got rid of the fat in the late 1970s, while others still had a substantial reservoir of excess cost that could be taken out of the system.

The grant-related expenditure assessment system is based on many variants and manages to cover its subjective approach by a veneer of precision. To tell local authorities that a figure is going up by 9·1 per cent. rather than 9 per cent. implies a spurious accuracy. However sophisticated computers may be, and however large the variables may be, we cannot be as accurate as that. To Conservatives, it is an alien philosophy that the Government should tell a local authority, of whatever political persuasion, that its expenditure should go up by a certain percentage. That implies a knowledge of the local scene which the bureaucrats in Marsham street will never have.

We are discussing tonight the rate support grant for 1988-89. Whatever decisions local authorities may take in the light of that grant will have only a limited impact upon expenditure in the financial year 1988-89. If, as a result of these grant decisions, the London borough of Barnet were to recommend the closure of a school, by the time the consultative procedure had been completed, it would make no difference to expenditure in 1988-89. At best, it would make only a limited difference.

Parents would have to be consulted and the Secretary of State for Education and Science would have to make a decision, and by the time all that procedure had gone through the next year's rates would not be affected. One must remember that decisions taken in local government will have a limited impact in the next financial year and

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the real benefit will come somewhat later in the local authority's life. The system did not take that into consideration either.

All Conservative Members will look forward with relish and enthusiasm to the Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill next Wednesday and Thursday because that Bill will get rid of much of the nonsense that has affected local government for too long.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Gentleman is rather anticipating what we shall be debating next week. We have not yet had the business statement.

Mr. Marshall: I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, but certain rumours are going round the House, which may be right or wrong, that we shall be debating that legislation next week. I think that in his opening remarks my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that it was likely that we would be debating the subject next week. Therefore, I was merely showing the great care with which I listened to what my right hon. Friend said so brilliantly when he opened the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I shall listen with great care to what the Leader of the House has to say tomorrow.

Mr. Marshall: Shall we take a wager about whether I am right or wrong?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not a gambling woman.

Mr. Marshall: I am glad to hear it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Let me deal now with certain factors affecting the London borough of Barnet. My right hon. Friend referred to the Bromley case. That case affects several London boroughs, of which Barnet is one. As a result of the Bromley case, we in Barnet have been deprived of grant which it is, and always was, the Government's intention should come to Barnet. It would be helpful if, when my hon. Friend replies, we could be told what percentage of the Bromley error will be made good before rate fixing in 1988. Clearly that is an important factor in determining the Barnet rate next year.

Barnet has had an actuarial valuation of its superannuation fund which shows that the fund is already heavily overfunded. We do not see why we should be encouraged to put even more money into that next year. Currently, superannuation funds are subject to quinquennial review. But the stock market, even with the recent downturn, has been so buoyant in recent years that more frequent reviews might well be justified to ensure that funds are not overfunded. I hope that when my hon. Friend replies he will be able to give us an assurance that within the next few months the Government will be able to make a statement on that matter.

On behalf of the London borough of Barnet, I welcome the comments made about storm damage. We should now suffer less than we might otherwise have done, so we welcome that statement.

Let me deal now with competitive tendering in local government. I may be anticipating the debate which I now understand will take place next Monday night, of which we have had due notice, but it is fair to say that in looking at the rate support grant report one must consider the way in which local government spends our money. In all my 17 years in local government I have always been convinced that competitive tendering between the private and public sector gives the ratepayers a much better bargain than they would otherwise get.

I well remember being a member of Aberdeen town council at the same time as the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond). At that time, we had a debate about whether the old police station should be knocked down by direct labour or by a firm selected through competitive tendering. I voted for competitive tendering. Needless to say, the hon. Gentleman voted for direct labour. We had a vote in committee, which I won, and we went out to tender. The private contractor offered to do the work for 20 per cent. less than the in-house organisation. However, by then the hon. Gentleman's party had a majority and it voted for the acceptance of the in-house tender.

I am glad to say that the then Labour Secretary of State for Scotland ordered Aberdeen town council to give the work not to the in-house organisation but to the private contractor. I was glad to see that even a Socialist Secretary of State could opt for a private contractor. Since then, in the London borough of Wandsworth, under the energetic leadership of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary, we have seen how competitive tendering can work well.

The experience of the London borough of Ealing was similar. For example, we found that our school meals service could run much more efficiently with an outside contractor, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds. One day my son came home from school and said, "Daddy, why are the meals so much better now?" I said, "My boy, you are learning a basic political truth. The meals are now provided by an outside contractor. It is saving the ratepayers money and you, the consumer, have told me that you are getting better meals." I suspect that a similar story could be told right across the country.

We know that competitive tendering has saved the Health Service £100 million a year. When the Local Government Bill receives the Royal Assent, we shall save the local authorities just as much. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) said that it would cost his authority £220,000 to prepare for that Bill becoming law. I suspect that the savings will be out of all proportion to that small additional cost. He told us about the Wirral case, in which the in-house tender had been successful. I listened with interest to what the hon. Gentleman said, and what he did not tell us was whether the in-house tender had been less than it would have been before competitive tendering was introduced. The fact that he did not tell us leads me to suspect that there has been a saving to the ratepayers in the Wirral, which everyone must welcome.

It is not just by competitive tendering that local government can get better value for money and produce a more cost-effective service. The Audit Commission has produced many examples of savings that local authorities can make—particularly in education. Throughout local authority areas in England and Wales — it was confirmed at Scottish Question Time today that the same applies in Scotland — far more school places are provided than are needed. That is bad both educationally and economically. It means that we have a large number of schools providing an inadequate range of choices. Pupils cannot get the fully comprehensive education that a comprehensive school should offer if the number of children entering the school is very small. It is bad

economics to keep open schools in which the ratios tend to be wrong and to heat classrooms that few pupils will use. That is the economics of the madhouse.

I hope that I have demonstrated that there is scope for local government to save substantial sums and produce better services for ratepayers. I look forward to that process continuing as a result of the Local Government Bill and to reasonable rate increases across the country this year as a result of the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89.

8.33 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): I shall address most of my remarks to the difficulties of Bradford metropolitan district council, which I understand are shared by only four other local authorities—Birmingham, Sunderland, Cleveland and a local authority in Derbyshire. Before I deal with that problem, which arises from the Government's use of the so-called multiplier, I should like to take a general look at the background against which this debate is taking place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) estimated that, since 1979, the percentage of local authority expenditure accounted for by rate support grant has fallen from 61 per cent. to 46 per cent. According to an excellent document produced by the local government officers, the figure in London has fallen from 65 per cent. to 40 per cent. The penalty imposed for so-called overspending over that period has now reached a staggering £29 billion.

All this has taken place at a time of growth in unemployment, hitting urban and inner-city areas in particular. The consequence of the economic facts after eight years of Conservative government has been a massive increase in the problems associated with social deprivation. About 43 per cent. of our population would be classified as poor by any civilised standards. This process has placed increased burdens on many local authorities. While there is a desperate need for increased provision of social services, housing and urban renewal, the Government continue their attack on the rate support grant and thus on local authorities' ability to grapple with the problems.

The so-called beneficiaries of Thatcherite popular capitalism have not escaped, either. In a desperate attempt to maintain services, councils have resorted to massive increases in rates. The more prosperous 53 per cent. of our community, as well as many of the poorest, have had to make their contribution by finding the money for those increases. Contrary to Conservative Members' propaganda, high rates also represent a reduction in living standards. The Government have forced local authorities into a terrible dilemma. They have to choose between adding to the already appalling unemployment figures and cutting services to desperately needy families, and cutting people's living standards by increasing rates above the cost of living or the average increase in earnings.

The Government boast of an increase of £750 million for the coming financial year, yet the local authorities estimate that they need £1·2 billion if they are to stand still. That will mean even further reductions in the standard of services over the coming 12 months.

The debate takes place against the background of attacks on local government arising out of other legislation to be introduced by the Government. Howard Davies, the controller of the Audit Commission, estimates that if all the Government's legislation on education, housing, social services and privatisation goes through, local authority expenditure will drop from around £30 billion to £20·9 billion and that manpower requirements will fall by 37 per cent. That figure represents 500,000 employees.

When I hear Conservative Members and irate ratepayers say, "Sack some of those idiots at the town hall," I must ask them to consider the problem in human terms. In most areas, the local authority is the largest employer. When one talks about making cuts by reducing the number of staff in local government, one is talking about sacking one's neighbour. A teacher talking in those terms would be talking about sacking fellow teachers. It is like going into a pub and saying to someone employed in the accounts department of a local authority, "Your job should go; otherwise my rates will be increased." If we consider the problem in those human terms, we see what nonsense such remarks are. The report estimates that less than half of those 500,000 employees will find a job in the private sector. That means adding 250,000 people to the unemployment figures.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Gentleman says that people will not get jobs in the private sector. How does he know? On what facts are his remarks based? What report does he have?

Mr. Wall: I have used the figures cited by Howard Davies, the controller of the Audit Commission. He should have a fairly good insight—certainly more than the hon. Gentleman or me — into local government manpower and the effects on it of privatisation of education and housing as well as direct privatisation in local authorities.

Mr. John Marshall: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those figures can be true only if there is substantial overmanning in local government? Why should other industries which have ceased to be overmanned still pay for the overmanning of certain local authorities?

Mr. Wall: The hon. Gentleman is assuming that under this process the services will remain as good as they are today, but my hon. Friends and I feel that they will deteriorate enormously, as have services to British Telecom customers, and the cleaning and canteen services in hospitals. The poorest in our society — hospital cleaners and catering workers—were forced to bargain their pitiful wages against the prospect of losing their jobs. If that is the sort of society that the hon. Gentleman wishes to justify in order to cut costs, he can justify it. I want no part of it; nor do my colleagues.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wall: No, it is getting late and other hon. Members wish to speak. It would be most unfair of me to take up the remaining time that is available to them.

The whole object of this process, even of those who get a job afterwards, is to drive down the average level of wages.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Wall: Let me finish.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy estimates that, under the Government's housing proposals, rents will increase by between 20 and 30 per cent. The report estimates that rents will increase in the City of London by 125 per cent., in Hackney by 160

[Mr. Wall]

per cent. and in Camden by 220 per cent. Yet in Hackney, where homelessness has increased 600 per cent. since 1979, Government cuts have meant that the council can employ only two extra members of staff to deal with that growing problem.

Cuts have had other effects. The average earnings of street sweepers in Southwark have been reduced from £140 to £80 a week because of the abolition of bonuses. In Birmingham, the privatisation of direct labour organisations has reduced the number employed from 715 to 452.

Earlier I pointed out that, in many areas, the local authority is the largest single employer. Even in the Greater London area, only 500,000 manufacturing jobs are left. The reason why local government has become the biggest employer is not because it has employed additional people, but because manufacturing industry has declined seriously during the past 10 years. In only two Greater London local authorities is the council not the largest employer of labour. That is around Heathrow airport and in Dagenham, where the Ford Motor Company employs the largest number of workers.

Jack Layden, chairman of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, said recently:

"Authorities stand to lose over £600 million in grants as a result of not being able to reach the Government's set figures. This will result in rate increases well above the forecast."

The preliminaries to the community charge will also be most vicious and will hit the poorest most with the ending of the 100 per cent. rate rebate from April next year.

I said that I wished to speak about Bradford, as I represent a Bradford constituency. Bradford has its share of the social and structural problems which abound in the north and many other inner-city areas. The European Community Commission in its recent report on the economic position of our area has shown that 35 per cent. of the working population continue to be employed in manufacturing, which is above the national average of 27 per cent. In services, our proportion is the opposite: 56 per cent. compared with the national average of 61 per cent. Even in our traditional manufacturing area, there has been a shift in employment from manufacturing to the service sector. That is due, not to any large increase in job opportunities in services, but to the catastrophic drop in total employment, amounting in the old Yorkshire heavy wool industry, which is part of Bradford and the surrounding area, to 15,000 people in 1979-81, which is 7·9 per cent. of the working population. Over the 10 years to 1981, textiles and engineering lost 17,000 jobs, and mechanical engineering lost 4,600 jobs.

More than 30 per cent. of Bradford's schools were built before 1906. Forty per cent. of Bradford's sewers are more than 100 years old and we have constant problems of collapsing sewers which require renovation or renewal. Our backlog of housing repairs amounts to some £130 million, representing the sum that we would receive in 10 years from the total housing investment programme for our city. We are saddled with numerous ancient and outdated industrial buildings, mostly on sites now too small for modern development, yet we are one of the worst supported in terms of urban aid grants.

Unusually, we have an increasing population, and thus increasing needs in education, housing and other areas. We have a large immigrant population, mainly of Asian origin, and we urgently need measures to improve the facilities in which they live. We have 8,000 people on our housing waiting list. That is a formidable list of our needs, yet we are only one of five local authorities which face the maximum reduction under the Government's so-called multiplier, with a factor of 1·1.

The Government's GRE works on the cosy assumption that rates will be equalised throughout the country if every local authority spends to the grant-related expenditure figure. That makes the broad assumption that all areas have similar problems and all have similar resources to finance the meeting of those needs.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): My hon. Friend has spoken about matters of deep human concern. Is he aware that many local authorities now have to choose, not which of their discretionary powers to use in favour of disabled people, but even which of their legal duties to fulfil?

Mr. Wall: I am well aware of that. My right hon. Friend will recall that, when he first stood for Parliament, I was a teenage constituency secretary. I think that some of his interest comes from a meeting at that time with my sister, who happens to be handicapped. I know from the number of letters that I receive that people need showers, baths and all sorts of things, and I know of the incredible waiting lists. We are not fulfilling our obligations.

Government cuts in rate support grants are to force down expenditure on staff and services in local government. The more an authority spends above GRE, the more it loses. The greater its efficiency on GRE, the more grant aid it gains. Because of the unfairness of that system, the Government then introduced the target system, supposedly based on historical spending patterns. For most local authorities, that figure was similar to, or a little above, GRE. For Bradford, it was considerably less. Therefore, the authority spent below GRE and was still penalised.

We estimate that the authority has lost some £38 million since 1986-87 which has led to high and entirely unfair rate increases. The abolition of the target system last year led to great expectations, but the Government then introduced the multiplier, which meant that last year we received only part of the shortfall, further reduced following the revolt of the shire counties and the sympathetic hearing given to them by the Secretary of State.

In answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on last week's statement on the rate support grant, the Minister said that Bradford had received £60 million extra. That received some publicity in the local press. I am assured by the local authority finance department that the figure was not £60 million but £16 million. The fact remains that we have lost £38 million over three years and we are still being penalised, even when spending below GRE.

We are morally entitled to that money, and we are entitled to a fair evaluation of the needs of our metropolitan district. That £38 million is not merely an arithmetical device, or a theoretical nicety; it means that we must set a rate 10 per cent. above that of our neighbours—for example, those in Leeds—to achieve the same level of services. I am certain that my hon. Friends from the Leeds area do not think that they are particularly well treated. An extra £38 million will have

been collected from Bradford ratepayers over what would have been the case had we received our full entitlement to rate support grant. That is equivalent to a rate of 87p in the pound.

It means that, over three years, Bradford ratepayers will have paid the following extra rates: £32 for a terraced house with a rateable value of £37; £146 for a pre-war semi-detached with a rateable value of £168; £174 for a post-war semi-detached house with a rateable value of £200; £348 for a detached house with a rateable value of £400; and £522 for a large detached house with a rateable value of £600.

That represents an average for all domestic dwellings in the metropolitan district of £110 per ratepayer—this in the West Riding, which is No. 9 in the list of nine industrial areas which have the lowest rates of pay. Those are actual sums paid by ratepayers, so we can quantify the cost of Toryism and the Tory Government to ratepayers in Bradford. There are many more hidden costs in social deprivation, cuts in services and the sacking of people employed in local government. Over the years, more people are beginning to realise that, and more of them will see the need to change the Government.

8.50 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am rather sorry to be following the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall). Had his predecessor been here, he would have been sitting on this side of the House and I would have had to follow someone else. We valued the contribution made by his predecessor, and I hope that he will return to the House before too long.

If the electorate of Bradford, North stopped to think about some of the things that the hon. Gentleman said, they would be glad to change back to the former Member. His statement that earnings have been driven down because of privatisation does not square with the facts. Average earnings have increased at a record rate under this Government during the process of privatisation, and much faster than they did during the nationalisation from which we suffered when the Labour Government were in power. The hon. Gentleman talked about the catastrophic drop in manufacturing employment, but we must ask how much of that was due to the massive increases in rates that were imposed upon those companies.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to know that, in reply to a recent question from me, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that rates for industrial companies represent less than 1 per cent. of total costs. That must answer his question.

Mr. Thurnham: That serves to illustrate the complete ignorance of Opposition Members about the importance of costs. The hon. Gentleman talked about 1 per cent., but over 10 years that would represent 10 per cent. of costs. No company could manage that burden year after year.

Mr. Holland: The hon. Gentleman is talking about taking privatisation in the economy as a whole and the rate of wage increases in the economy as a whole. He should realise — I do not know whether he is a trained economist—that he cannot do that. It is a non sequitur. Even his arithmetic is wrong. He said that 1 per cent. a year over 10 years comes to 10 per cent. But less than 1 per cent. is less than 1 per cent.—that is less than the accounting errors of our best-managed companies. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to give strictures to the Opposition, he should address himself to the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and not make such flatulent statements.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman is driving himself further into a hole. If a company accumulates costs over a period, they become a substantial burden. The point cannot be escaped.

I am delighted that we can say that this is the penultimate occasion on which we shall work our way through the machinations of rate support grant. It is some years since I was in local government, and I cannot say that I follow the basis of the calculations any more easily now than I did then. It is pleasing to know that the settlement is generous and will allow non rate-capped authorities to hold their spending broadly steady in real terms. The generalisation will allow some authorities to do better than others.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for his reassurance that the error in relation to students in further education will be adjusted. Perhaps it will go down as the Bolton error. We have heard a great deal about the Bromley error—of which I was previously unaware—but when we have our ultimate debate next year, we may refer to the Bolton error. I suspect that there may be some knock-on recalculations in respect of other authorities.

It is a great delight to know that the era of capping, netting, holdbacks, targets, grant forefeits, slopes and thresholds will be relegated to the dustbin and that we can move to the much simpler and more beneficial system about which we may hear more next week if we have the debate that we all expect. Today's debate may not be terribly exciting, but the debate next week may provide the excitement that has been lacking today.

The RSG provision allows for an increase in spending of 7·45 per cent., but my local authority discovered that its allocation was only 6·8 per cent. Even after allowing for the increase in the provision for the further education of students, Bolton's increase will be only about 7·1 per cent., so it will still have a shortfall. The authority believes that the highways budget is short by £470,000. It is admitted that the change in the method of calculating the highways grant has meant a reduction of £257,000, which is still far short of the sum which the local authority sought. Would it be possible to reconsider the provision of a safety net for that item? As my local authority is being penalised, compared with the average rate of increase for all authorities, a safety net may help.

The authority was also worried that further adjustment may be needed in the calculation of the education component, especially in relation to teachers' wages. I am grateful that the Under-Secretary will meet a delegation from my council next week, when the points will be discussed in more detail.

I hope that that visit will enable my hon. Friend to point out the great benefits of putting services out to tender. A reduction of more than 10 per cent. on those services could save £300 million a year nationally. On that basis, in my authority, putting services out to competitive tender would mean a saving of about £1 million a year. It has always surprised me that local authorities were not keener to follow the private sector, which has put services out to private tender as much as possible.

For instance, a company as well known as Marks and Spencer in the high street does not manufacture any of the

[Mr. Thurnham]

goods that it sells. All those goods are put out to competitive tender. If ever there was a firm that could say, "Why don't we make all these things ourselves?" it would be a firm such as that. In some cases, it takes the whole of the output of a supplier. If it is wise for Marks and Spencer to put all its products out to competitive tender, surely it is wise for all local authorities to do exactly that. It is extraordinary that so many weird and wonderful arguments are produced about why it should not be necessary. Someone once said that it should not be necessary because these things are necessities. What could be more necessary than food and clothing?

I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for giving us the opportunity to come to see him next week, and I hope that at that meeting we shall be able to explore some of the points that I have made.

8.59 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) described the rate support grant as being understood by three people—one dead, one mad and one who had forgotten all about it. That sounded like the Department of the Environment team who are responsible for the rate support grant report. One cannot call them the good, the bad and the ugly because there is nothing good about the report, but there is plenty that is bad and ugly that will flow from it. There will be further cuts on a wide scale and at all levels in the public services.

I have been speaking to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) who is the Labour spokesman for the disabled. He told me that local authorities will be forced to break the law by the Government. They cannot even choose between the discretionary duties that they wish to perform for the disabled. They have to choose between which legal duties they will carry out. Thus the Government are forcing the local authorities to break the law, which is a scandal. Waiting lists for help for the disabled will be made worse under the report.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is my hon. Friend aware that the advice given to me as Minister for the Disabled was that waiting lists are illegal? To keep people who are severely disabled waiting for help, is really outside the law if they have been assessed as to their needs. It is a very serious matter if local authorities have to choose not just which of their discretionary powers to use, but even which of their legal duties to fulfil.

Mr. Cohen: That is exactly the point. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. It should be the Government who are before the courts when that law is broken, not the local authorities.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities described the effect of the report. It stated that the aggregate Exchequer grant

"will represent just over 46 per cent. of relevant expenditure in 1988-89."

That compares with 61 per cent. in 1979-80 when the Government came to office. Had that 1979-80 grant percentage been maintained for next year, the aggregate Exchequer grant would have been £4·4 billion higher than is now proposed. Rate bills up and down the country would now be 25 per cent. lower had it not been for the reduction in Government grant to the local authorities. The AMA states further:

"To meet the Government's target local authorities would be required to reduce the level of services by 5 per cent. or increase rates well above the rate of inflation. Such reductions in service levels are unachievable in one year even if they were desirable."

In London, the Government are also forcing a downward spiral in public services in borough after borough. The Association of London Authorities says about the report and Government policy:

"The Government's main aim appears still to be a reduction in the level of local authority services despite the growing needs of the communities they serve."

That is particularly so for authorities with the greatest deprivation.

The ALA also talks about the need for decent housing, and comprehensive social services, improving the quality of life, and giving an equal chance in life for the disadvantaged, but it says:

"The Government consistently underestimates the level of service provision needed, and compounds that with savage grant penalties for any spending above the Government-assumed levels. Some of the most deprived authorities are rate capped as well, and no attempt is made to link the level of spending allowed by such authorities to what is needed to provide decent services for the most oppressed sections of the community."

With this report and all their previous measures the Government are increasing poverty.

They talk about rejuvenating the inner cities, where there are the greatest problems and the greatest poverty, but the report will increase the plight of inner cities and areas with inner-city problems in London. My authority has been rate-capped for the first time and the council's budget for next year will be based on a rate set by the Government. It will be limited to £142 million, which is a cut of one sixth. But the services have not diminished by one sixth; the community's need has increased in recent years. The Government have imposed a £30 million cut on Waltham Forest—equivalent to the whole social services budget for the area. Social services—the Government's supposed policy of community care will be a policy of community neglect because of these cuts — will be affected. Every service will be affected, but especially social services and education.

Last year there was a rates rise of 62 per cent., caused by the neglect of the previous council—which was Tory-controlled, with Liberal support—and the £40 million stolen by the Government including penalties. Ratepayers were charged £1·63 for every £1 spent. That was a scandal. That was a Tory rates rise. It was a deliberate manipulative move to punish all those who had voted out Tory council members in a previous local election. It was made also for party political reasons connected with the general election. I believe that the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who made a big fuss and was a member of the Government who stole the £40 million from my borough, was never asked by the Waltham Forest ratepayers association about that money. If he was asked, his comments have not appeared in the columns of the local press. The right hon. Gentleman should have been made to answer.

The Waltham Forest ratepayers association has been well financed, the Tories being among its main contributors, for their own manipulative reasons. The ratepayers association's case was thrown out of court. Its

lawyer accepted that a rates increase of more than 30 per cent. would be needed simply to stand still. What an indictment of the Tory Government's policy towards Waltham Forest, and what proof that they were responsible for the rates rise.

Another reason for the Tory rates increase was to pave the way for Tory cuts. That is what the rate-capping robbery is all about. The rates will decrease next year, but so will the value for money for Waltham Forest ratepayers as more money is taken from the borough to be put directly into the hands of the Exchequer.

I shall give examples to show how the Tories do not care a fig about Waltham Forest ratepayers. There is the poll tax, about which we shall hear much more in the House. Waltham Forest was cited as an exemption which would have to run two systems—rates and poll tax—for four to five years. When I asked who would pay the administrative costs of running two systems, last week the Government said, "The ratepayers of Waltham Forest." That shows that the Government do not care a fig for those ratepayers.

What is happening about the storm damage? It is estimated that the storm damage will cost £2·1 million, but the Government grant will be only £700,000—a shortfall of £1·4 million to be found by the ratepayers. Even worse, the penalty imposed by the Government of £1·63 for every £1 spent will cost the ratepayers another £880,000.

Mr. Holland: The Tories say it was an act of God.

Mr. Cohen: The penalty is not an act of God; it is an act of the Tory Government.

Rate capping will hammer the voluntary organisations. They have already suffered from the abolition of the GLC, which helped councils with grants. They are also being hammered because the Government have taken away the traditional urban aid. A small amount of money given to voluntary organisations produces enormous value for the community as a whole. It is pump-priming; it is self-help — something that the Government are supposed to want. It is all about providing local services that ease the burden on the National Health Service and the social services. The voluntary organisations help people to cope with the misery in the community. Age Concern, Dial-a-Ride and play groups for the under-fives will be hammered by rate capping. Education and social services will also suffer, but I will not mention those in detail tonight; I shall save that for a future occasion.

Housing in my area is among the worst 2·5 per cent. in the country. There are enormous waiting lists and a serious homelessness problem. The general state of disrepair needs to be tackled. Yet for every £1 that the council spends on repairs, the Government charge it £1·63. The Government are the Rachmans in housing. There are thousands of jobs at risk, so it is no wonder that nine trade unions held a public protest, which affected every council department, against rate capping. The Government's policy in Waltham Forest is one of private payment for public squalor. I warn them that there will be increased public protest against rate capping, which is a bad and ugly policy that does nothing to help provide essential services.

9.13 pm

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Members for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) have explained everything to the House. The hon. Member for Bradford, North pointed out that since 1979 the sewers have collapsed, schools need major repairs — and on and on went his litany. The hon. Member for Leyton offered no alternative policy; he simply wanted more money, but with no improved efficiency, no changes and no value for money. He wants his council to continue with its old ways.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that this is the last but one rate support grant debate. When the new system is introduced in 1990 the level of local authority spending will be clearly and directly reflected in the level of community charges.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): What about services?

Mr. Patnick: The hon. Gentleman seems to enjoy making such interventions. We cannot determine services until the system is introduced in 1990. However, I assure him that what happened in Liverpool will not happen in other cities.

Mr. Heffer: What happened in Liverpool?

Mr. Patnick: I leave that for the history books.

The ratepayers in Sheffield want a rate freeze for the next two years and do not understand why the city has not been rate capped for 1988-89.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman referred to Liverpool. The Liverpool district council built 5,000 houses, seven sports centres, a new park, and kept rents down. It kept rates down to 9 per cent. It also provided 4,000 new places for nursery school kids. It did more than any council in the country, and we are proud of it.

Mr. Patnick: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for regaling us with the story of how Liverpool went bankrupt.

If Sheffield city council decides to put services out to tender before the local government legislation becomes law, it will save ratepayers' cash. It does not need to wait for the enactment of the legislation. It can do it now. The council seems to disregard the fact that more staff equals higher rates. Its payroll increased from 30,000 employees in 1980 to 33,000 in 1985. That was before the abolition of county councils.

Sheffield council and others should have examined ways of reducing their rates bills. The level of rates will depend on the budget decisions made by each authority. All authorities owe it to ratepayers and to prospective community charge payers to do all that they can to keep spending down. This year, Opposition Members brought out a consultative paper called "Local Government Reform in England and Wales". It can be summed up in a few words. The policy was to end surcharges, disqualification of councillors and rate capping. It added up to more profligacy and extremist behaviour by Left-wing councils.

The rate support grant will provide Sheffield with a block grant of over £114 million, if it keeps its expenditure broadly constant. It has been estimated that, in real terms, it will enable the council to reduce local rates by at least 80 per cent. next April.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"if they"——

that is, local authorities—

"do not spend more than the realistic provision that I have announced that we propose, the average increase in rate bills

[Mr. Patnick]

for non-rate-capped authorities should be around the rate of inflation, though as always there will inevitably be considerable variations around that average." — [*Official Report*, 23 July 1987; Vol. 120, c. 498.]

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is a much maligned person. When he rate-caps cities such as Sheffield, some people think that he is wonderful. But when he does not do so, they think that he does not care about them.

It has been obvious for a considerable time that something needs to be done about rates. The rate base needs to be widened so that the burden is not unfairly concentrated on too few shoulders. We must ensure that a substantial proportion of electors have a direct financial interest in their local authority's decisions. There should be a clear link between changes in expenditure and changes in local tax bills. At present, rate bills are a poor indicator of what is happening to local authority spending.

This is the third time that I have enjoyed listening to a debate in the House. Sadly, for reasons best known to other people, I have not been called upon to speak previously. I have enjoyed listening to the fight. It would appear that everything that the Conservative Government have done is wrong. Opposition Members have rubbished every proposal, but no alternatives have been put forward. No thought has been given to the matter.

How would Opposition Members cope with the matter except by spending more money? I have heard no alternative to the community charge. No great solution has been offered by any Opposition Member. It has been a yah-boo situation. The party of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has explained no policy on the matter. Opposition Members rubbish the Government, but do not put forward any alternatives because they want to enjoy the debate for sport. I should have loved to hear one solitary suggestion from Opposition Members that would enable a Conservative Member to say, "What a good idea. Why didn't we think of that?"

9.19 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) would probably disagree with me——

Mr. Patnick: It is not about Sheffield?

Mr. Rooker: No, it is not about Sheffield. It was agreed between the Department of the Environment's civil servants and the local authorities associations' civil servants that local government in the next financial year would have to spend not less than £29 billion to maintain services at their present level. The Secretary of State has fixed that expenditure at £27·538 billion. There is a shortfall, which I raised with him when he made his statement about a week ago, of £1·47 billion. Nobody disputes those figures.

Mr. Ridley: I do.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister disputes them. That is fine; I will be glad to hear what he says when he winds up the debate.

The Government will cut by 5 per cent. the amount they should spend to maintain the present local government services for the next financial year. The Secretary of State stated that local government services were spending too much, but central Government will not decide what services should be cut. The Minister offered no examples today of where services should be cut.

Many of my hon. Friends referred in their excellent speeches to local authority social services, which, unlike the police services, do not receive special treatment in their budgets. The cuts in the National Health Service place a greater burden on local authority social service budgets than on any other sector of local government. The cuts affect people who must be cared for by their family, relatives or neighbours, who require home help services, and tuck-you-in and get-you-up services. People who are unable to have operations and have to stay in their own homes need more services, but they are unavailable because the Government have imposed further cuts on local authority social services. The Secretary of State can say only that it is not very exciting stuff. It is not exciting to Conservative Ministers because they neither understand nor care about the consequences of their policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to the effect on housing benefit and the penalties imposed by the Government on the provision of housing benefit services by local government. From April 1988, the 100 per cent. rent rebate system will disappear for everyone who currently enjoys it because their income is so low. Questions asked by hon. Members about where the income support will come from for people on the lowest incomes are fobbed off to the DHSS, and the shortfall as from 1 April next year, when the cuts will come in, has not been explained.

The present rating system—this must be repeated ad nauseam so that there can be no misunderstanding—is not the one inherited by the Government from the Labour Government. It is not the system that operated from 1974 to 1979—the one that has been wholly discredited by the Government, who seek to rubbish it and make it more complicated at every opportunity so that they can make their alternatives seem more popular. The present system is of the Government's own making. They have made a mess of the present rating system. Any fool, even those fools, have shown that income tax can be cut — [GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: "Fools?"] Yes, the Government are fools. Anyone can cut income tax by placing a burden on the ratepayers.

The nation is more highly taxed than ever before. The tax burden on the British people has never been higher under any Government that any hon. Member cares to name. One of the reasons for this is the direct effect of trying to cut tax on one section of the community and shifting the burden onto another, the ratepayers. As one of my hon. Friends said, the average rate increase in England since the Tories came to power is 13·6 per cent. per year. The direct effect of central Government withdrawing the rate support grant to local authorities has been, whatever the Secretary of State might argue, £21 billion.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: Not at the moment.

The direct effect this year is that the average rates bill for dwellings in England is £5 a week higher than it need be. That £5 a week is a direct result of the Government rigging the rate support system during their years in power. The Government show that they have no understanding of the issues in larger cities. The inner-city

areas and the outer estates of those large conurbations have suffered more than the rest of the country from the withdrawal of central Government support. Ministers boast about getting the private sector to invest by bribing them with public money, but that cannot stand up as a policy. It will not work. The private sector will not invest unless it can see some strategy. It will not invest on a scale that will replace the withdrawal of public money by Government diktat unless there is a strategy for those areas. That strategy can come only from the elected local authorities. No business man in his right mind will invest money, even if he is bribed to do so by Government grants, unless he can see a plan for the area where his investments are to take place—not just for the road or the few acres of his investment.

The Government have a specific aim — the rate support grant adds to it — to drive local government away from dealing with our larger cities. We know that that is the case. It is the stated position, not necessarily of the Department of the Environment, but of the Department of Trade and Industry. Ministers have said that the Government cannot afford to waste time on Labour-led local authorities. When Cabinet Ministers say that they will not waste their time simply because local authorities are Labour-led, we know that that is re-buttressing the Prime Minister's avowed public pledge to attempt to snuff out of existence a political party which she happens to dislike. In a democracy, the Prime Minister has publicly voiced her intention to snuff out a political party simply because she does not like it. It happens to hold more local power than the party in government.

When that publicly voiced intention of the Prime Minister is repeated by members of her Cabinet, it is little wonder that bodies such as the CBI, which is led by someone who knows a thing or two about local government, say that we cannot ignore the local authorities. Mr. Banham has often been quoted as saying that the councils were efficient and effective in many respects. He said:

"The answer is not to bypass councils, but to make them work properly."

The Government seek simply to ignore them because they are Labour-led.

We have had many references to the effects of storm damage, first from my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland and repeated by many hon. Members, and to the effect on local authorities. The Secretary of State thinks that he has moved to meet some of the demand. Indeed, the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who sought to intervene, welcomed the Secretary of State's statement today, in so far as it affected the London borough of Barnet. I am not certain whether the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber when my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland opened the debate. If he was present, he must have been reminded of his own local authority chief executive's letter to the Secretary of State on 23 November.

That letter made it absolutely clear that the London borough of Barnet was, in effect, going to be fined £420,000 simply because of its efforts to deal with the storm damage. The letter said that the penny rate in Barnet is £612,500. However, that authority does not have a piggy bank. The Secretary of State seems to believe that local authorities should have such a bank of contingencies. He is penalising those authorities that do not have such a piggy bank. He has penalised Barnet and made a profit from that borough of £420,000. The Prime Minister will remain silent about this matter, but why on earth is the hon. Member for Hendon, South welcoming such a statement?

Mr. John Marshall: Did the hon. Gentleman not hear my right hon. Friend say that, where storm damage is capitalised—the London borough of Barnet will be able to do that: indeed, the leader of that council confirmed that this morning—no penalty will be charged on the interest relating to that capitalisation? Will the hon. Gentleman tell me how he squares his statement that we are now more heavily taxed than ever before with his oft-repeated statement that we spend far too little money on every social service?

Mr. Rooker: I will send the hon. Gentleman his own Government's parliamentary answers about the rise in the tax burden. In real terms, the average tax burden on the British people was £30 billion higher this year than it was in the last year of the previous Labour Government—the so-called "high-taxing" Labour Government. I can give the hon. Gentleman chapter and verse on exactly how that figure is made up.

Mr. Ridley: What about a cut?

Mr. Rooker: The London borough of Barnet will suffer a cut in expenditure. What the hon. Member for Hendon, South fails to realise is that the product of the penny rate in Barnet must be spent before any assistance is given. The borough must spend £612,500 and the effect of spending that penny rate will result in a penalty of £420,000.

If the hon. Member for Hendon, South wants any further examples, we only have to turn to east Sussex. In an effective speech, the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) pointed out that his local authority reckoned that it would have to spend £12 million—the estimated cost of storm damage. The authority would receive assistance, over and above the base set out in the Bellwin rules, of £3·5 million, leaving a sum £8·5 million. The hon. Gentleman said that the consequences of spending the £8·5 million would result in that authority suffering a grant loss of £750,000. That means that the authority must spend £9·2 million. The Secretary of State told his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow):

"I would be horrified and astonished if either my Department or the Treasury were to make a profit" — [*Official Report*, 30 November 1987; Vol. 123, c. 611.]

But the Treasury will make a profit of £750,000 out of the ratepayers of East Sussex county council as a result of one night's storm damage. That cannot be justified. The hon. Member for Hendon, South may seek to justify that in Barnet, but I do not see how he can seek to justify that in East Sussex. The statement that has been made by the Secretary of State does not meet the claims of local authorities, and amounts to nothing less than deception.

Many of my hon. Friends made interesting speeches, but before I mention some of them in detail I shall mention a couple of speeches from the Conservative Benches. The hon. Member for Ealing North (Mr. Greenway) — he has apologised for his present absence—referred to the problems of the price of a haircut due to the rate increase in Ealing. If he thinks that is a problem now, he should wait until the revaluation of barber shops is carried out as a result of the unified business rate. I am afraid that there will be many long-haired people in Ealing as a result of the unified business rate.

[Mr. Rooker]

The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) made a typical speech—all his speeches are the same whether he is on the Front Bench or the Back Benches——

Sir Rhodes Boyson: They are all good.

Mr. Rooker: Yes, indeed — they are always entertaining. I only wish that the right hon. Gentleman had said the same things when he was a Minister. Today he called for smaller units of local government. In many ways that is a valuable suggestion. There is no question but that the units of local government are too big. Let us consider the right hon. Gentleman's borough of Brent. I always work out the size of a borough by the number of Members of Parliament it has and Brent is a three-Member constituency. The city of which I have the honour to represent part is a 12 Member constituency so the right hon. Gentleman will see that I share some of his views.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) raised the important issue of the Dronfield fire. I ask the Minister to take my hon. Friend's representations more seriously than hitherto. Underground fires are a serious matter and local authorities cannot provide the necessary funding to cope with them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) drew attention to the massive sum of money required to start up the poll tax. We shall consider that matter in detail next week and I do not intend to deploy the arguments tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) said that insufficient money was provided to give ratepayers in West Yorkshire adequate fire coverage. If Ministers do not take account of these speeches, it will be no good councils queuing up to get back into the black as soon as possible after the next fire, because another fire will surely occur and result in deaths if the fire service is inadequate.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) made excellent speeches. The cuts in social services in Bradford are without parallel.

We ask Ministers to listen to us. We know that they do not understand. They do not represent these areas, and they do not visit them sufficiently often. We ask them to listen to the voices of the people who represent those areas, to get away from the idea that local authorities are wasting their pot of gold and to consider the need for more money to maintain existing services. None of my hon. Friends has called for more money or for expanded services. They are simply seeking to defend the status quo. This requires £1·4 billion extra public expenditure. We must raise that money before we can spend it. That is why we disagree with the rate support grant settlement, and why we shall vote against it.

9.37 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): This is the last but one debate on the rate support grant settlement. I doubt whether these debates will be much mourned or much missed. They were described by my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Education and Science as occasions when the disgruntled speak to the disenchanted in front of the disbelieving.

The complexity, indeed the incomprehensibility, of the system is accepted on both sides of the House. It is difficult enough for local authorities to understand how their grant entitlement is made up and it is virtually impossible for the ratepayer to arrive at any real understanding of why he pays what he does.

However, this year, relief is at hand. The days of the present system are numbered. We are seeking to put in place a new system which will get rid of all the worst features that have bedevilled local government finance for so long. We shall put an end to resource equalisation, that bizarre concept which seeks to equalise not what people pay in different parts of the country—that is what the new system will seek to achieve—but the rate poundage levied by local authorities in different parts of the country. We shall put an end to slopes, penalties and all those devices that have made the present system so complicated and the results of which have been described so vividly in some of the contributions to the debate. We shall restore the link between those who vote, those who benefit from the services provided by local authorities and those who pay for those services. Meanwhile, we must make do with what we have and make the best of it. That is what we have done.

Within the constraints of the present system, the RSG settlement is, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, a generous one. The aggregate Exchequer grant is increased by £750 million or 5·75 per cent. on 1987-88. It means that rate bills need, on average, to increase by no more than the rate of inflation. The fact that Opposition Members persist in describing the settlement as a cut says more about their use — or misuse — of language than about the facts.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why is it then that, whatever their party, the spokespeople for the Association of County Councils and for district councils and metropolitan authorities, through their representative associations, unanimously say that the net result of the settlement is that there is a shortfall or cut—it comes to the same thing—of at least £1 billion and possibly more, even excluding some of the high wage settlements? How can they all agree? If the Minister is right, they must be wrong. Or are they right and the Minister wrong? That is more like it.

Mr. Howard: It is in the nature of such associations of that kind that they will rarely, if ever, be content with a settlement. To describe this settlement as a cut is accurate only in the sense that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State defined a cut when he announced the settlement just a few days ago: if someone asks for an increase of 100 per cent. and is given an increase of only 50 per cent. it is described as a cut of 50 per cent.

Dr. Cunningham: Is it true that the Minister's officials from the Department of the Environment, working with the secretariat of the local authorities' associations, came to a figure necessary to maintain services which is £1·4 billion higher than the settlement announced by the Secretary of State? Is that true or not?

Mr. Howard: No, it is not true.

Dr. Cunningham: It is true.

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman will listen and wait, instead of expostulating, he will have the answer.

It is not true. The figure of £1·4 billion, to which both the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referred, is not a figure which emerged from that working group. The figure of £1·4 billion emerged from the local authorities' associations themselves.

Dr. Cunningham: So you agree with them?

Mr. Howard: No, I do not agree with them. A lower figure emerged from that group. The group considered the matter on the basis that present policies were to be considered. We think that there are many areas in which present policies should not be considered and in which savings can be obtained.

The hon. Member for Copeland in the course of his remarks——

Mr. Steinberg *rose*——

Mr. Howard: No, I will not give way because I want to deal with the remarks of the hon. Member for Copeland. He has raised a number of points and asked for answers, and I will do my best to provide them. He asked, first, whether Ministers would meet rate-capped authorities to discuss rate limits. It is now for authorities to consider proposed rate limits and to decide whether to accept them. If individual authorities wish to discuss their limits with Ministers, we shall do our best to accommodate them.

The hon. Member suggested that the rate limits for Camden and Hackney were too low by, I think, 5p in relation to Camden and 11p in relation to Hackney. We believe that he has used a mistaken calculation to arrive at those figures. We think that our figures are perfectly correct. Perhaps I can write to the hon. Member and tell him where we think he has gone wrong.

The hon. Member also raised the reform of the housing benefit system which, from next April, will provide local authorities with adequate support for expenditure properly incurred, while giving the greater incentive for prudent administration. The change in the housing benefit grant-related expenditure reflects the change being made in the housing benefit system generally. In general, authorities that lose GRE from the new arrangement will gain from the corresponding increase in subsidy, and those that lose subsidy will gain in GRE.

About 97 per cent. of housing benefit is financed directly by central Government. Only the residual 3 per cent. and administration fall to be met by local government, and an allowance is made for that expenditure in GREs. This year's settlement makes full allowance for costs expected to fall on local authorities. The change to the GREs this year, discused with the local authority associations, is designed to provide incentives to local authorities to operate the system efficiently.

The hon. Member for Copeland also mentioned Ealing and its expenditure limit. Ealing had the opportunity, like all other rate-capped authorities, to ask for a re-determination of its expenditure limit. As the hon. Member knows, two authorities made applications for redetermination.

Mr. Cohen: One authority received nothing. The other authority received some money but strict conditions were imposed and it must report back to the Minister.

Mr. Howard: Very reasonable conditions were imposed on the redetermination that was granted to the London borough of Tower Hamlets. It is odd that the hon. Gentleman should say that those who applied received nothing, because that is manifestly not the case.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the Minister for responding to the questions that I put to him on a number of detailed matters. It is extraordinary that what he said a few moments ago seems to repudiate the basis of the work of the joint working party between his Department's officials and the local authority associations.

Mr. Ridley: It is a house of cards

Dr. Cunningham: From a sedentary position, the Secretary of State says that it is a house of cards. What he is saying is that it is a total waste of time for local authorities to bother to talk to the Goverment and their officials.

My question concerns the Minister's comments about housing benefit. Is he giving the House an assurance—a guarantee—that if local authorities have to spend more on housing benefit than the Government are allowing for, that expenditure will be exempt from penalty?

Mr. Howard No, of course, I am not giving that guarantee, and I have not said that such a guarantee would be appropriate. Local authorities will not incur any penalty with regard to spending on housing benefit unless they exceed the GRE, which is specifically provided in the settlement for housing benefit. *[Interruption.]* The settlement is based on the proposition that reasonable provision is made for those expenses, and that matter was discussed with the local authority associations.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) raised some interesting matters. I can well understand his passionate views about Brent council. I share his frustration that I must disappoint him about the rate-capping of that council. Following his meeting with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, he knows why Brent was not selected in July, and that decision cannot be changed now. All I can say to my right hon. Friend is that Brent will have to watch its step. If it increases its spending to the extent that he has prophesied it may return to the sector for selection in 1989-90, although I cannot speculate on what the criteria might be.

My right hon. Friend made a number of interesting suggestions. He will understand that, in the light of the legislative burden that faces the Department, his suggestion of an enabling Act was particularly attractive, and I wish that we could readily accede to it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who explained why he would be unable to be present during the wind-up speeches, asked specifically about Ealing's rate limit. It is based on the original expenditure level that was proposed in July. The proposed limit means that there will be a 43·5 per cent. reduction on 1987-88, which I am sure will be welcomed by the ratepayers of Ealing.

I am sorry that I missed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). He asked about the Bromley error and whether Barnet would know, before it sets its rate, what percentage of lost grant would be returned during 1988-89. We shall be correcting the effects of the error for 1987-88 and 1988-89 as soon as Parliament has approved the supplementary reports. The

[Mr. Howard]

final year, 1986-87, will be implemented in 1988-89, so Barnet will receive roughly two thirds of what is due next year and my Department will be sending local authorities full details shortly. I have written to my hon. Friend about the revaluation of superannuation funds. We are discussing whether there is a case for changing the existing rules, which require quinquennial revaluation.

If confirmation was required of the generosity of the settlement, it was provided by the speech of the hon. Member for Perry Barr who waxed eloquent, as is his wont, about a number of matters but devoted a relatively small proportion of his speech to the settlement. I cannot think of a more eloquent testimony to the soundness and generosity of the settlement.

At the outset I referred to the fact that the new system, which we hope to be debating shortly, will avoid all the worst features of the present system. Under the new system, local authorities will know before the start of the financial year exactly how much money they can expect from central Government. They will be able to plan the amount they propose to spend, secure in the knowledge that the money they receive from central Government will not be affected by their spending decisions and also in the knowledge that they will ultimately be accountable for their spending decisions to those who have to pay the community charge.

Of course, local authorities do not need to wait until the new system of financing local government is in place in order to increase their efficiency, reduce waste and improve the value for money that they offer their residents. They do not even need to wait for the enactment of the Local Government Bill, which completed its Committee stage yesterday, in order to secure those improvements. A total of £3 billion of expenditure will be subject to competition under the provisions of that Bill. There are other services where large savings are available and other areas that offer great scope for extra efficiency.

Take, for example, the level of rent arrears. The 20 worst local authorities have together a debt burden of over £100 million arising out of rent arrears. The disparity between authorities with similar problems is enormous. In London, south of the river, Southwark's rent arrears amount to no less than 24 per cent. of its rent roll. Lambeth's are a similar proportion, while in Wandsworth next door the percentage is 6·8 per cent.

The district auditor for Southwark has identified a number of areas where savings could be obtained. Changes in the way in which its vehicle fleet is managed could, for example, save £1 million a year. Southwark's response to this information was somewhat cautious. Its treasurer has said that with maximum co-operation and agreement with the work force it would probably take two or three years to achieve the majority of the savings. He was no doubt right to be cautious.

Southwark's record leaves a great deal to be desired. Its leader has said:

"The Town Hall is on the verge of collapse. Money spent in many areas is wasted. The services are demonstrably poor and give no reason why people in Southwark should trust the Labour Party to run the council".

It is against that background of Labour local government — "Labour government in practice and action", in the time-honoured phrase of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) — that we approach the contributions to the debate made by the Opposition Members. They have made several different claims about the additional money they say should be available to local authorities from the taxpayer.

One of the most beloved statistics, certainly of the hon. Member for Perry Barr, is the £4·4 billion that he said local authorities would have had available to them if the grant percentage had remained at 1978-79 levels. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already made it clear that the difference in cash terms is much more relevant and that is a much smaller sum.

Let us consider the figure of £4·4 billion used by the hon. Member for Perry Barr. It is a figure which begs many questions. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Labour party would have increased grant by that amount had it been in a position to do so? If not, it is difficult to see what relevance there is in that point.

If, on the other hand, the Labour party would have increased grant by that amount, it is a pity that it did not say so at the time of the general election. That alone would have added an extra 3p to the standard rate of income tax — over and above the doubling of income tax that would have been needed to make good the Labour party's other spending pledges.

It is no use the Labour party coming to the House day after day, night after night, calling for extra spending for everything under the sun while the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) claims at the same time that the Labour party is not a high-tax party.

Early this year the Labour party produced a discussion document on those matters. It suggested that all controls on local government spending should be removed. Is that the Labour party's policy? Is that what the hon. Member for Copeland would have done if, perish the thought, he had been entrusted with these matters?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Dr. Cunningham: I am more than happy to answer that question, not least because we have answered it many times before. I shall try to speak in English, although I understand that gentlemen from public schools in the south have difficulty understanding someone with my origins.

Of course, a Labour Government would cash-limit its grants to local authorities. We have made no secret of that. But nor have we made a secret of the fact that what local authorities raise on their own account should be free from central control. That is the fundamental difference between us and the Government.

Mr. Howard: I am delighted to hear that. At its face value, it appears to show that the Labour party has some semblance of a policy for at least that aspect of local authority affairs.

The hon. Gentleman has been his party's spokesman on these matters for four years. But when the hon. Member for Perry Barr was appointed to his present position in June, he told the newspapers that he had asked what was his party's policy on local government and was told, "We haven't got one." The hon. Gentleman has an engaging turn of phrase. He was reported in *The Independent* on 24 September as saying:

"Putting it at its baldest, we haven't got a policy. That is the actual truth."

That is the truth about the Labour party's condition. That is the basis on which it approaches these matters. That is why the hon. Gentleman, entirely understandably, spent so little time on the settlement.

Small wonder no one takes the hon. Gentleman or his party seriously on these matters. Small wonder that the Opposition are a sterile Opposition, entirely negative in their contribution to the debate.

However, I must not do the Opposition an injustice, because the hon. Member for Copeland made one revealing remark. I think that he intended it as a promise to local authorities. He said that he was prepared to promise that, if the Labour party was ever in government, the growth in Government grant to local authorities would keep pace with the growth in the economy. I have a strong suspicion that, given the likely growth in the economy under any future Labour Government, that cannot be taken as much of a promise by local authorities. If that is the best that the hon. Gentleman can do, local authorities will not be very impressed.

The settlement is far from perfect, but it is the product of a system which is in its death throes and we can look forward with hope to the new system that is appearing over the horizon and that will at long last restore to local government the clarity, fairness and accountability that it has for so long been lacking.

I commend the settlement to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 220.

Division No. 198] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bigg-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ls)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Ms Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hn Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knox, David
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
MacGregor, John
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alan Howarth and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1988-89 (House of Commons Paper No. 163), a copy of which was laid before this House on 30th November, be approved.

Fisheries

10.17 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the un-numbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 30th November and 3rd December 1987 on total allowable catches and quotas for 1988 and on 2nd December 1987 on the European Community — Norway Fisheries Agreement, European Community Documents Nos. 6388/87 on the common organisation of the market in fishery products and 9585/87 on fish guide prices for 1988, and of the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1988 consistent with the requirements of conservation of stocks.

I am grateful to the Select Committee on European Legislation both for its recommendation that the House should debate the documents referred to in the motion and for carrying out its scrutiny without access to the full set of Community documents, which has only just become available. That enables us to have a timely debate because it will enable my right hon. Friend and me to take full account of the views of the House when we consider these matters at the Fisheries Council next week.

It is a short debate so I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if I speak briefly on the key issues, giving sufficient time for hon. Members on both sides of the House to raise their own points in the debate, to which my right hon. Friend will respond in the winding-up speech.

This has been the fifth year of the common fisheries policy and has been an excellent one for the United Kingdom industry. The value of landings for the first three quarters of this year was £55 million up on last year, an increase of 22 per cent. that reflected a 9 per cent. increase in the overall tonnage landed and an average increase in prices of 11 per cent. as a result of the continuing buoyant demand for fish.

Although there have been some problems of management in certain fisheries, fishermen all over the country will have seen a substantial increase in real earnings and, thanks to the common fisheries policy, will be looking forward with confidence to a future of stability and continuing prosperity.

Let me refer first to the proposals relating to the total allowable catches and quotas for 1988, which will determine the level of opportunities available to our fishermen. I recognise that some of the quota management decisions that had to be taken in 1987 created temporary problems for certain sectors of the industry. But the whole purpose of TACs and quotas is to keep catches within safe biological limits and when fisheries have been over-exploited, as some of our main fisheries regrettably have, quota restrictions will inevitably bite. It must be in the long-term interests of the industry to recognise this—I think that that is understood by hon. Members—and to manage its affairs so as to operate profitably within the inevitable constraints.

The Government are firmly committed to the conservation and efficient management of all the fish stocks on which our industry depends.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. MacGregor: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I think that it will be better if I set the scene and give the Government's position on the proposals so that as many hon. Members as possible can contribute. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will respond to the points made.

We believe that it is right to take the long view of the benefits of a conservation policy and not to sacrifice these for short-term gains. In general, therefore, we welcome the Commission's proposals where these are based on firm scientific advice by the responsible international scientific bodies. But where TACs are set on a precautionary basis only, in the absence of adequate scientific information we believe that it is right to be more flexible and to avoid unduly restrictive quota levels.

The TACs for the main white fish stocks in the North sea have, as usual, been provisionally agreed with Norway by the Commission following the annual consultations. The proposed TAC for North sea cod is 160,000 tonnes. This will be a disappointment to the industry which, following revision of the 1987 TAC from 125,000 tonnes to 175,000 tonnes, had been hoping for a further increase. In 1988 this stock will be heavily dependent on the 1985 year class, which, on the basis of further survey data, the scientists now believe to be less strong than they did earlier this year. The proposed TAC, although within the range of safe biological limits, is none the less somewhat above what the scientists would have liked to see.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacGregor: It will be better if I do not. If I give way to one hon. Member, I shall have to give way to others.

It is therefore important to note that the Commission has proposed retaining the box in the south-eastern corner of the North sea in which a higher mesh size is required, to protect the young cod. Last year, against a great deal of opposition, the Commission's proposal on this was adopted, largely at our insistence, and we shall be pressing for its continuation, preferably with the increased minimum mesh size of 120 mm now proposed.

Finally, on cod, during 1987 we achieved a mid-year adjustment to the TAC, in the light of revised scientific advice and we shall press for a similar review during 1988 should the latest scientific assessments for this or any other stock of importance to the United Kingdom suggest that an upward revision of the TAC would be appropriate.

On North sea haddock, the prospects are more encouraging with the proposed TAC increased to 185,000 tonnes from 140,000 tonnes this year. The proposed North sea plaice TAC is up to 175,000 tonnes from 150,000 tonnes, reflecting the signs of continued healthy recruitment to the stock. For North sea sole, which is not a stock jointly managed with Norway, the Commission is proposing a further decrease in the TAC to 11,000 tonnes from 14,000 tonnes, in line with the scientific advice. I shall be exploring the possibility of increasing our quota through a swap with another member state.

Turning to the west coast of Scotland, area VI, the Commission is proposing no changes in the TACs for haddock, whiting, plaice, megrim and anglerfish, a very welcome increase in the TAC for saithe to 35,000 tonnes from 27,800 tonnes, but a decrease for cod to 18,430 tonnes from 22,000 tonnes. I know that the latter will be

[Mr. MacGregor]

a disappointment, especially to Scottish fishermen, but the proposal represents the most favourable interpretation of the scientific advice.

In area VII, covering the Irish sea, the south-west and the English Channel, plaice and sole are of particular concern. For plaice, the total proposed availability of the various stocks for the United Kingdom is 5,430 tonnes, compared with 5,530 tonnes in the 1987 regulation. There may be scope for upward adjustment of some of the figures without damage to stocks. We shall explore that as well as the possibility of increasing our availabilities by swaps, as we have done before.

The position with sole in area VII is rather similar, with the United Kingdom availability proposed for 1988 at 2,130 tonnes, compared with 2,430 tonnes in 1987 before swaps. We shall endeavour to seek some improvement on that.

On area VII cod, the Commission's proposal retains the increased TAC of 19,000 tonnes, which we obtained during the course of 1987. An increase is also proposed for area VII saithe, on which we had problems this year.

The pelagic stocks are of particular, but not exclusive concern to the Scottish industry. The pelagic sector, which has had a particularly successful year in 1987, will face a small measure of restraint in 1988 along with the white fish sector. In the North sea, the TAC for herring agreed with Norway totals 530,000 tonnes. That is a reduction from 600,000 tonnes this year, and reflects scientific advice. I should emphasise that that results from a reassessment by the scientists of the absolute size of the stock. They are still confident that the stock is growing and will continue to grow, given prudent management.

Norway will receive a zonal attachment share of 153,700 tonnes and it is proposed, as in 1987, to transfer an additional 50,000 tonnes to Norway to balance the important transfers of whitefish from Norway. Although the United Kingdom quota will be correspondingly lower than this year, we have some hopes of obtaining additional quantities through swaps.

The Commission is proposing that off the west coast of Scotland, the herring TAC should be reduced to 46,000 tonnes from 49,700 tonnes. The Commission, in agreeing with Norway a slight increase in Norway's availability of herring in that area, seemed to be taking a rather different view of the fishery from that reflected in its proposal for the TAC. We will be exploring that point further at the Council.

For Clyde herring, the proposal is for a TAC of 3,200 tonnes, down from 3,500 tonnes, and the science is quite clear on that. In the Irish sea, the proposed TAC is going up to 8,000 tonnes from 4,500 tonnes. That will be very welcome, especially to fishermen in Northern Ireland.

On the Commission's proposals on western mackerel, many hon. Members will know that the Scottish pelagic fleet has faced difficulty in taking its western mackerel quota in some recent years, mainly because the migratory pattern of the stock has changed and the shoals have been slow to cross the 4 deg line that divides the western area from the North sea. The solution proposed by my noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office was to permit a measure of flexibility to take western mackerel east of the 4 deg W line.

We were therefore pleased to note that the recent agreement between the Commission and Norway for 1988 accepted the principle of flexibility around that line. For 1988, the agreement provides that a quantity of 62,000 tonnes of the Community's western mackerel quota could be taken in the northern part of the North sea—that is east of 4 deg W—should the Community decide that it wished to do so. The Government regard that as an important step forward. We therefore regret that the Commission's proposals on western mackerel do not include the exercise of this flexibility.

We shall be pressing hard for such an element of flexibility to be included in any compromise package presented to the Council next week, though this will not be easy, given the strongly held view of some other member states that to tamper with the 4 deg W line amounts to unpicking the 1983 settlement. The Commission's proposals for this stock envisages a TAC of 360,000 tonnes, a reduction from the 1987 level of 400,000 tonnes. However, there is room for a range of view as to the exact biological state of this stock and the Council will be looking at this closely.

I have already referred to the most important aspects of the EC-Norway agreement for 1988. If hon. Members wish to raise other aspects my right hon. Friend will deal with them in his response. But let me add just one general point. I am glad to say that the negotiations under this agreement are now much more satisfactory both in the procedures and the outcome.

I turn now to the Commission's proposals for changes in the guide prices for the 1988 marketing year. The proposals are broadly neutral as far as the United Kingdom species are concerned, suggesting either no change or an increase of only 1 per cent. for cod, haddock and plaice. But there would be reductions for herring and mackerel of 10 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively to take account of the current market position. After preliminary discussions, the Commission has produced a revised proposal which would involve a 9 per cent. reduction in the herring guide price.

The proposed price changes achieve a reasonable balance between the needs of processors, consumers and producers, and take account of the need for budgetary restraint. They should also be seen in the context of green currency changes, which will take effect on 1 January, under which United Kingdom producers will benefit from an additional 4·7 per cent. increase in guide prices.

I have attempted to be brief in setting the scene and stating the Government's position on the proposals to enable the House to express a view. To summarise. The common fisheries policy continues to serve us well, and, despite problems in one area or another at various times of the year, our industry has had an excellent year. The prospects for next year are for reductions in some quotas and increases in others, with a sizeable number unchanged. We will do our best at the Council next week to improve upon the Commission proposals where it would be safe to do so, but we need to ensure that stocks are conserved in the interest of maintaining the industry's present prosperity. I hope that this approach will have the support of the House.

10.32 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I welcome the Minister's speech. Hon. Members have a jumble of documents, some of which are unnumbered memoranda. I agree with that part of the Government's motion which states that it is the

"Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom fishing industry for 1988 consistent with the requirements of conservation of stocks."

No hon. Member can disagree with such an object, but I am deeply concerned that we should deal with next year's guide prices, total allowable catches and quotas so late in the year. Similar dissatisfaction was expressed by the Select Committee on European Legislation under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Given the importance of the proposals to the United Kingdom fishing industry—I do not say that the blame rests with the Minister—it is a disgraceful state of affairs. Will the Minister be in a position to make a statement on the negotiations to the House next week?

I shall offer a comment on the Government's explanatory memoranda and the EEC documents. With regard to document No. 9585/87, on fish guide prices for 1988, I shall briefly mention the reform of the Community aid system for tuna fishing. I said "briefly" because not many British fishermen catch tuna. The Commissioners and the Community deserve our praise for their insistence upon fisheries agreements vis-a-vis that species with Lomé coastal nations. It is right and proper that the fisheries agreements should stipulate that part of the tuna catch must be landed in the littoral states near where it is caught. The fish, when canned, is often sold to the Community and, as Commissioner Sutherland pointed out in a letter to the President of the Council, the proceeds of the sales form a very important source of export income for those countries along the west African and Caribbean coasts.

It is rare for me to compliment the European Commissioners, but they deserve a word of praise for the establishment of the fisheries agreement. Regrettably, I now move from praise to criticism. I have some questions for the Minister on guide prices. I am concerned about the 10 per cent. reduction in the guide price for herring. I would like to know how this will be affected by the change in the United Kingdom green rate, as mentioned by the Minister. The change in the rate will lead to an automatic increase of 4·75 per cent. in the sterling equivalent of guide prices, but how will it affect the reduction in the guide price for herring? It is desirable for the gaps between the guide price, withdrawal price and the average market price to be kept to a realistic level. I believe that the change in the United Kingdom representative rate is important.

As everyone knows, the over-fishing of herring in the North Sea in the 1970s led to that fishery's closure for about a decade. During that closure, the United Kingdom herring market almost disappeared. However, the Danes continue to fish for herring in the Baltic sea and this, among other things, enabled them to secure a dominant position in supplying the West German market, which is the biggest herring market in the EEC.

The United Kingdom herring producers are placed at a serious disadvantage vis-a-vis the Danes. The geographical location of the major herring ports in the United Kingdom—Fraserburgh and Ullapool—means that the producers have to meet major transport costs to send herring and herring products to the major consumer centres in West Germany, whereas the Danes can transport their herring catches to Germany within 24 hours of the fish being landed in Esbjerg and elsewhere.

The prices structure should provide some compensation for those producers who exist on the periphery of the United Kingdom. We must have regional withdrawal price schemes for herring. The United Kingdom herring industry can be re-established in West German markets only if the current disadvantage of the equal withdrawal price scheme in the European Community is set aside. United Kingdom producers should be allowed this intervention. It is essential that this be achieved, as the United Kingdom herring fishermen are seriously handicapped. That formidable handicap means that our fishermen are almost wholly dependent on Eastern bloc markets to sell their herring. We know that from the experience of Cornwall, Ullapool and Peterhead. Our fishermen must regain access to the Community markets. That can be done if exorbitant transport costs are partially met by implementation of the regional withdrawal price scheme.

The same could perhaps be achieved by a carry-over premium scheme which would enable producers to freeze herring which would otherwise be sold below the minimum price. There is nothing worse than seeing fine herring being sent to fishmeal plants. Such steps would allow our producers to compete more effectively in the frozen product market.

As for mackerel, is it necessary to maintain price differentials between the east and west coasts of Britain? The floating Eastern bloc market—it floats in large ships—follows the fish. The klondikers follow the fishing vessels from coast to coast. Perhaps the time has come to eliminate the regional variations. I ask the Minister to give that proposal serious consideration, although I know that it cannot be achieved next week in Brussels.

Will the Minister give an assurance that imported fish sells at prices which correspond to the appropriate reference price? Reference price schemes must be updated more efficiently and effectively if United Kingdom fishermen are not to suffer. Ideally, the scheme should be replaced by a minimum import price scheme. Is it not the case that such a scheme operates for the majority of imported agricultural products? If so, why should one not apply to fisheries?

The unnumbered explanatory memoranda deal with the division of TACs between the EEC and Norway and the share-out of species among the EEC's fishing nations. I should like to ask for the Minister's help in this respect. It would be helpful if his officials attached to the explanatory memoranda on quotas and the rest lists of figures for the past two or three years. The Minister may think that I am a lazy researcher, but I am sure that it would be much easier, when reading these dreadful documents—if the officials will forgive that description—to check what has happened recently, if the figures were attached. Such a change would surely not be very costly, and it would greatly help lazy researchers such as me.

I accept the need to strike a sensible balance between the amount of fish caught and the retention or conservation of stocks. I come from a fishing family, and I support the Minister in that respect. Moreover, I have just dined with the president of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, Mr. Willie Hay. I might add that I picked up the bill. He will not mind my saying that.

United Kingdom fishermen have a good record on conservation. They appear to stick to the rules much better than some of their continental colleagues. I am not being chauvinistic. When fishing in Norwegian waters, they have

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

no choice but to obey the rules, as failure to do so leads to harsh penalties. The skipper of a German stern trawler has recently been fined £200,000 by a Norwegian court. Our enforcement policy should be as tough as that of the Norwegians.

Talking of Norway, I am deeply concerned about the proposed EEC-Norway agreement. The North sea herring TAC, as the Minister has pointed out, is to be reduced from 600,000 tonnes to approximately 530,000 tonnes. The United Kingdom share will go down from approximately 78,000 tonnes to 69,000 tonnes, yet the Norwegians, as the Minister pointed out, on a reduced TAC, have contrived to retain the transfer of 50,000 tonnes of herring. In addition, Norway has managed to hold on to the right to harvest the same amount of fish from the EEC sector of the North sea, where the quality is superior, in 1988 as in 1987, approximately 55,000 tonnes. Surely these should have been reduced in line with the overall TAC reductions.

Of considerable concern to many fishermen in England — from ports such as Scarborough, Whitby and Bridlington, and even the Channel fishing ports, as well as Lowestoft, Grimsby and elsewhere—is the reduction in the TAC for North sea cod. That is a matter for regret. The United Kingdom fishermen will be allowed to catch approximately 71,000 tonnes. I know that in the explanatory memorandum there is some comment on the inadequacy of scientific data. Perhaps I can quote from one of the unnumbered memoranda:

> "In making its proposals, the Commission has been hampered by the increasing deterioration in the adequacy of the scientific advice resulting from lack of data and inaccurate statistics".

Why is that?

Fishermen, too, are deeply concerned about the scientific advice relating to this stock. I mean by this that the TAC came down, as the Minister said, from 176,000 tonnes in 1986 to 125,000 tonnes at the beginning of 1987; and then the latter figure was increased in the middle of the year to 175,000 tonnes. Not surprisingly, this increase encouraged the hope among fishermen that the TAC for cod would be increased in 1988. It is absolutely essential that much more stability be applied to the fixing of total allowable catches. I told the right hon. Gentleman the Minister of State, who is to reply, some time ago that I look forward to the day when the TACs are set for two or three years: the fishing industry needs that kind of stability.

So, curiously enough, we have a reduction in cod and an increase in haddock; yet fishermen claim that this year the former have been plentiful and the latter scarce. It is a curious business. Many of our small fishing boats on the east coasts of England and Scotland—and North sea cod is more important to England than to Scotland—work close to the land, where only cod is to be found in adequate quantities. Some of these vessels do not have the capability to sail to and fish the haddock grounds; so it is a very important quota change in cod. I am sure that the Minister agrees.

English fishermen this year, right down the coast, from the border to the Channel, found such an abundance of cod that they quickly fished out their quotas. That presented them with a formidable problem, given this lack of capability to go elsewhere. So it is a matter for serious regret that the cod quota is to be reduced.

I wish the Minister well on this matter. He must dismantle any obstacles that are put in the way of the implementation of the west-east flexibile approach on western mackerel.

I support everything that the Minister has said this evening, but I suspect—as I said to him recently with regard to the common agricultural policy—that other member states will seek to wreck these negotiations on precisely this issue. He must be tough and formidable, as I am sure he will be.

I should like to make a plea for two small fisheries in the west of Scotland—the west of Scotland nephrops and the Clyde herring. The TAC for the nephrops is to be reduced. In 1987 the figure was 16,000 tonnes, but in 1988 it will be 4,800 tonnes. That will present a major problem for the fishermen of the Western Isles and elsewhere.

The recommendation for the Clyde herring is for a TAC of 3,200 tonnes, as opposed to this year's TAC of 3,500 tonnes. Will the Minister note that I believe that those TACs should remain at their 1987 levels? The TAC for the nephrops is precautionary — this is where I disagree with the Minister—and not scientifically based. I do not believe that the stock of Clyde herring has been over-fished. I should declare an interest, because I am the honorary president of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, whose members fish for the Clyde herring.

My last words to the Minister are a reminder. The Minister's predecessor gave a commitment in April to undertake discussions with the industry on further licencing proposals. Those discussions were to follow his Department's proposed study of the measurement of catching capacity. If that study has been completed, will the Minister give an assurance—if not this evening, in the near future—that those discussions on licensing will soon resume?

I hope that hon. Members will not think that I am imbued with the Christmas spirit, but I wish the Minister and his officials well in Brussels next week.

10.52 pm

Sir Michael Shaw (Scarborough): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who made a reasonable and well-considered speech. My sympathy was enhanced when he mentioned the problems of fishermen in my constituency. I am mainly interested in the fishing fleets of Whitby and Scarborough. The hon. Gentleman rightly mentioned cod quotas and their future.

There is no doubt that the two fleets in my constituency have a greater dependence on catching cod than other fleets. They must travel to catch other fish, whereas other fleets can alternate their catches. Therefore they are greatly dependent on this main source of supply of fish.

There is no doubt that we have experienced hardships this year. One of those hardships has been caused by the lateness of the plan. I hope that, whatever plans are made, they will be announced as soon as possible.

The way that we are going places too much emphasis on quotas. It is not the best way of seeking to do what we all want—to preserve the fish in the North sea. The increase in mesh sizes will be, in the long term, the right way to go. I was sorry to hear that the experiment with the

bigger net size in the cod box on the Danish-German coast does not appear to be working as well as it could. In other words, it is not properly policed.

That brings us back to the major problem. Some people say that we are responsible for all the trouble because we joined the Common Market. We had to join the Common Market. We had to have an agreement between all the states bordering on the North sea if we were to conserve stock. I believe that policing must go hand in hand with changes such as increased mesh size.

I have talked to both fleets in my constituency and the fishermen are adamant that that is the only way, in the long-term, to obtain a satisfactory conservation arrangement and, at the same time, obtain a proper catch of good-sized fish. I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Minister goes to the meeting next week with his colleagues he will press as hard as he can for the increased mesh sizes. I am glad to hear that he is prepared to have a review——

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Does my hon. Friend agree that the size of the fish landed is important as well as the mesh size?

Sir Michael Shaw: Absolutely. We should catch good-sized fish and let the others go so that they will be there for the future. That must be the right thing to do.

I realise that the debate is short and I shall speak briefly on the size of the TAC. I have been told many times that scientific advice is responsible for the level of the TAC. I can say only that during my many years in Scarborough and Whitby I have never known my fishermen to be wrong in their assessment of what goes on in the coastal waters offshore, whether it is the oil rigs that have been put in the wrong spot or, much more importantly in this case, what is happening to the fish stock. One has only to look at their advice with regard to herring stocks. That advice was resisted for so long by the so-called scientific advisers. In the end, my fishermen were proved right. Therefore, I believe that they are making a strong case when they say that there are more fish in the sea and that the scientific advisers have over-stated the case, causing a greater reduction than ought to have been made. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will take the advice of the scientific advisers with a certain measure of scepticism and will listen also to the voice of the practical fisherman.

I believe that, over the years, our Ministers have defended the cause of the British fishermen very well indeed in Europe and in the agreements that have been reached. I wish them every possible success in their negotiations and for the future of the livelihoods of our fishermen.

10.58 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I will not follow the hon. Member for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw) in his praise for the Ministers. However, it must be one of their few pleasures in life to attend fisheries debates, which are in such contrast with agriculture debates because the reception is so much warmer, the situation is so much better, and the mood is so much lighter. I do not begrudge them the pleasure of coming to these debates.

Basically, Ministers are telling us that the status quo has been prolonged. For large sections of the industry that status quo has been fairly satisfactory. Grimsby has had a better year, but it has to be emphasised that that is a better year starting from a fairly low level.

The industry in Grimsby has been depressed to such an extent that its survival is conjectural and it really needs to be built up. It has been a better year but an improvement is still needed. The cod quota is not encouraging. That is a problem for the east coast and a particular problem for Grimsby. We are a cod port and the reduction in cod catches will hit us severely. Haddock cannot be a substitute. Haddock quotas have been increased, but not to the extent that cod quotas have been reduced. In any case, haddock is found further north.

Given the reduction in the cod quota, the industry must be confident that the scientific advice on which it is based is binding and cannot be questioned. The papers do not convince one that that is true. They cast doubt on the scientific advice on which the cut in the cod quota is based. Like the hon. Member for Scarborough, I have had fishermen pointing out that in their view the scientific advice is wrong. They say that cod is doing reasonably well this year and that haddock is down. Yet we find that on the basis of the projections, haddock is increased and cod is cut. That, combined with the explanatory memorandum, which comments on "inadequate scientific advice" and the "unreliability of the data", shows that the case is not convincing to an industry that depends so heavily on cod.

How much confidence does the Minister have in the scientific advice? Why has that scientific advice become so imperative now, when the industry wants an increase in the cod quota and when in the past allowable catches have taken more account of the social and industrial needs that are so strong in Grimsby? I welcome the Minister's commitment to a mid-year review. If we can adjust the figures upwards mid-year that will be welcome. I hope that he concentrates on that point and redresses the problems that will be caused for Grimsby.

The Minister commented on the improvement in catches and prices this year, but I must emphasise that that is mainly a feature of the Scottish industry, rather than the English industry. The balance of the industry has shifted to Scotland.

I am surprised that my hon. Friend the Member for Greeenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) should have gone out for a meal with the president of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and had to pay the bill. Only the Scottish fishermen are in a position to pay bills. Had he gone with the president of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisation, he would have had to pay the bill.

We need to redress the balance that has shifted so heavily towards Scotland. We are just at, and possibly just below, the size at which the English industry is viable. There is a concentration of facilities at Grimsby which needs bigger catches and more catches. There is ground to be made up in Grimsby and it is time to make a start.

Grimsby faces problems because the fleet is too small and is not producing the return on investment for the new investment. It is difficult to get new funds. We have just had a severe problem with the landing company which I am glad to tell the Minister has today been solved. We now have a new landing company which employs half the labour force, because 30 of them have taken redundancy. On that basis we can be viable, but we must build on that.

We now need some improvement in the quotas and in our ability to attract new vessels, and to get those vessels

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

a quota. It has been increasingly difficult to fit new vessels into Grimsby. We are well poised for expansion and we need the ability to improve the situation.

On the long view there is a need for an increase in mesh size. I talk about taking the long view, but I should like an immediate increase in mesh size. As other hon. Members have said, an increase in mesh size represents the best form of conservation — indeed, the only proper conservation. In Grimsby we have always had a bigger mesh size and we should like that to be made universal. It is silly to restrict catches, because that leads to fish being thrown overboard. They are dead and that is a blow to conservation. I am disappointed that Ministers are not pushing for an immediate and substantial increase in mesh size. Why cannot we have the mesh sizes that apply in Icelandic and Norwegian waters?

Why can we not also have the tough policing that applies in Norwegian waters? The one factor that could increase confidence in the common fisheries policy is proper policing. Our fishermen still do not have confidence in that policy because they feel that other industries are not being policed as tightly as ours. If we had adequate overall policing and the confidence that others could not overfish and fiddle the quotas and get away with it, Grimsby would find the situation much easier to accept.

The inadequacy of policing is the fundamental flaw. We need tough policing such as that applying in Norwegian waters, which would certainly be welcomed by the British industry. Every fisherman fiddles to some extent, but our fishermen are far more law-abiding and far better policed than their competitors, who get away with things that we are not allowed to do. Only when we have absolute equality and absolute faith in the system will we be able to accept the measure as an adequate basis for progress.

11.6 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am happy to follow the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and to maintain the pleasant pre-Christmas spirit of unity that has pervaded this debate.

I begin by giving my personal thanks to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food because they have championed the cause of British fishermen and have acted with great fairness when conflicts have arisen between, for example, my fishermen and fishermen who come to my part of the world from rather more northern waters.

I entirely agree with what hon. Members from all around our coast have said about cod. The sudden stop on cod in the Channel severely affected fishermen from the south-west, who also say with absolute conviction that they have rarely seen so much cod about. I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend the Minister's opening remarks, in which I understood him to say that we need to look much more carefully at the precautionary total allowable catches—TACs that are not based on scientific evidence but are intended as a precaution. We can be more flexible with such TACs. I also echo all that the Minister said about the need to make conservation paramount in the fishing industry.

Undoubtedly we have enjoyed much greater prosperity in the past year. Some of my fishermen have even been honest enough — in their weaker moments — to admit that they have done pretty well. The port of Newlyn in my constituency is probably flourishing now as never before. It is certainly doing much better than it has done in recent years. However, there is the constant worry, illustrated in a Channel 4 programme on Sunday night, about the danger of overfishing and the pressure on certain types of stock. Only yesterday, a number of boats were preparing to go out of the port of Newlyn—they were provisioned and iced up and just about to sail—when the skippers were told by the Ministry, "Sorry. There is now a complete stop in certain areas on hake, sole and megrim". Can hon. Members imagine the effect that had on those skippers who were ready to sail? Without warning they were informed of the instrument from Brussels. I have already had a word with my right hon. Friend who will reply to the debate and I hope that he will comment on that.

Two matters arise from that incident. First, it cannot make sense for there to be no warning to fishermen. That is unacceptable. Secondly, in so far as I can piece the mystery together, the reason for the sudden stop was once again the ex-Spanish boats which sail on the British register but, in my opinion, remain completely Spanish boats. Over the years we have warned and warned again that those boats record some of their catches when they return to Spain against our quota, to the detriment of our fishermen.

The Ministers, the officials and I, know perfectly well, and I hope one day that the Commission will realise, that it is the easiest thing in the world for Spanish boats arriving in Spain to record some of their landings against our quota when they have been caught by Spanish boats which are not even on our register. How on earth can we check that that is not happening? It is a genuine problem. Again I pay full tribute to our Ministers for ensuring that action will be taken in the Merchant Shipping Bill, now in another place, but which before long will be here, against this wretched business of flag of convenience fishing and quota hopping which has done so much damage to our genuine shipping interests.

I know that the House will do everything that it can to pass that legislation on to the statute book as quickly as possible, and once there it must be enforced. Those bogus boats must be removed from our register so that we never again have boats in the ownership of and working in the interests of another country, fishing in our waters against our quotas to the detriment of our fishermen.

11.12 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): It is music, indeed, to the ears of somebody who looks after the interests of the Scottish fishing fleet to hear the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) so philosophical this evening. In the past, properly defending the fishermen of Newlyn, he has been acerbic, if that is not a euphemism, about some activities of boats from northern parts. That is a measure of the consensus in this debate.

The demersal fishing TACs, especially for cod, and the recent uncertainties about the lists of TACs as a result of scientific advice have been causing genuine uncertainty and anxiety north of the border. I subscribe to the view of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) who said that it was time to try to move towards rolling TACs over a two or three-year period. I wonder whether that is on the agenda in Brussels at any of these Fisheries Council meetings. What is the state of play on that? Are some other member states also actively

considering that? That is the only way to achieve real stability and a long-term framework of prosperity. A great deal of anxiety and uncertainty is caused by the present position.

The fishing industry knows that it is in its best interests to have proper conservation, and no one suggests that the Scottish fleet is interested in a rapacious policy that will destroy stocks. But it is almost unscientific to have the fluctuations that have occurred in the cod TACs, as reflected in the fluctuations in the haddock quotas for 1986, 1987 and 1988. It may be a scientific fact that the biomass fluctuates as widely as the TACs demonstrate, but that is not borne out by the fishermen's experience. Some of them have been in the industry for many years, and their instinct is almost as good a measure as the scientific methods that are used by the Government's advisers.

Balancing all the conflicting interests, we must try to improve management in the future and, as the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said, try to give more notice at the beginning of each calendar year of what the TACs will be.

I welcome the possibility of a mid-year adjustment. I do not know whether it should be written in now, but it was a feature of last year's cod TAC. If it has to be written in at the Fisheries Council meeting next week, I hope that the whole House will encourage the Minister to do it.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow spoke eloquently about the mackerel fishery. We must get the Commission to accept the element of flexibility in the western stock east of 4 deg. west. It is a welcome recognition of the practice that has continued for many years. It is a sign of real progress that the Government have accepted that practice and introduced their proposals. They will ease much of the anxiety in the pelagic sector. I urge the Minister to resist Danish, or any other, pretensions to muscle in on that fishery. They have no right to stake a claim. It is a piece of poker-playing which the Government could face down if they played their cards properly.

On herring and guide prices, the proposals are broadly neutral and acceptable to the industry and are, therefore, welcome.

I agree with the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow about the licensing review. It would be in the interests of the industry to bring forward the review, if it could be done without prejudicing the results, because it has caused some anxiety. I wish the ministerial team good luck. It is basically on the right lines, and I hope that Ministers do not have too many late nights before they get away for their Christmas holidays.

11.18 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I do not often agree with everything that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) says, but I did tonight, especially with his comment that, under my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), the balance had swung too far in favour of the Scots. We look to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to make sure that it swings back again.

There is no doubt that the announcement of a reduction in the TAC for North sea cod will be disastrous for my constituency. The boats at Bridlington depend for 90 per cent. of their catch on one species—North sea cod—and if there is none, they can do nothing else. Last April, 1,000 tonnes were removed unilaterally from their quota. This year, the cut is from a quota which, despite being managed by the Yorkshire and Anglia Fish Producers Organisation Ltd, was exhausted by September. Indeed, 90 per cent. had been used up by the end of July, and since then the fleet has been able to have merely a by-catch of 5 per cent. of cod.

On numerous occasions, I have brought the problems of the fishermen this year in my constituency to the attention of the Minister and the Ministry. There seems to be something wrong with the way in which quota is organised. Without disrespect to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, Grimsby fishermen have been able to free-fish all this year without restriction, while the Bridlington fishermen have been restricted, yet they ran out of quota by September.

We in Bridlington believe in conservation, but we do not accept that quotas are the way to deal with it, and to achieve a growth in fish stocks. As has been mentioned, fish caught in excess of quota and thrown back into the sea are nearly always destroyed. The real way to conserve fish is to stop the catching of immature fish. That is done by increasing the mesh sizes. The EEC has moved far too slowly, and we have moved too slowly as well. This year in our area, our fishermen unilaterally increased the mesh size above the EEC level. It would be only fair if areas that do that were given some consideration in the allocation of quota, and given extra quota.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) said that we should have minimum fish landing sizes and prohibition of fishing in areas where there are significant concentrations of spawning or immature fish. Our fishermen were perturbed about the recent meeting with Government scientists about North sea cod. At the meeting, the scientists admitted that the cod box off the Danish, German and Dutch coasts, where the minimum mesh size was increased for six months last year to 100 mm because of immature fish, is not being observed by the continental fleets. That is appalling, at a time when our boats are virtually tied up.

The scientists also admit that the main requirement for a healthy future for North sea cod is to stop catching so many young fish, but their only solution is the cod box. The fishing industry wants closure of the fishing grounds where there is spawning in February and March, so that the fish can shoot their roe before being caught. It is unbelievable that the scientists will not support that suggestion. After all, no good farmer kills his cows while they are in calf.

The EEC proposals could spell disaster for my fishermen in Bridlington. The Government must reassess the basis of allocation of quota in the coming year and bring it in line with what is reasonable and sensible. They should press the EEC for larger mesh sizes. If we have the same situation next year as this year—with the proposed reduction it could be even worse—the Government will have to think about providing some financial help to fishermen whose boats are tied up. We hear that the EEC will increase the size of its social fund. I cannot think of any better use of that fund than to help fishermen who are not allowed to carry on their work.

11.23 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): My constituency is, by any standards, a substantial centre of the fishing industry, whether in its catching capacity, its marketing or its fish processing. The message from my constituents that

[Mr. Frank Doran]

I want to give the Minister is that we expect him to get the best possible deal for them and the rest of the United Kingdom fishing industry, at next week's meeting.

I should like to make three brief points, the first of which has already been made. We want a fair agreement on the North sea shoals between the EEC and Norway, which will allow a fair measure of United Kingdom involvement in those waters. My second point, about better policing, has been made fairly strongly. In discussions with my fisherman, I find that there is a tremendous sense of frustration at the fact that they know that their fishing quota is being used by other European countries.

For example, earlier this year I was approached by some of the processing organisations, which said that the saithe quota had been exhausted. They knew that they had not processed that quota and the fishing boats knew that they had not caught that quota, but the quota was exhausted. There is a sense of frustration. The plea for better policing comes from both sides of the House.

Thirdly, I make a plea for forward planning so that there is stability in the industry. That point has been echoed on both sides of the House. But the comments have been on behalf of fish catchers. I should like to make a plea on behalf of not only fish catchers but fish processors. There is a substantial processing industry in Aberdeen. In some respects it is very advanced, but in others it is fairly primitive. It spans the spectrum from the one-man business to the multi-million pound business.

Investment is needed. Because of the industrial position and the lack of grants, the small fish processor who wants to develop his business faces a greater difficulty than a normal small business man. There are fluctuations in the processing market and one cannot plan on a certain number of fish being available. Forward planning is crucial to the fish processing industry. I make a plea specifically on my constituents' behalf for stability in the market and for forward planning. I support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

As a tailpiece, to inject some small controversy into a fairly amicable debate—I am pre-empting the point to be made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond)—it must be said that about 75 per cent. of the fish landed in United Kingdom waters is landed in the north-east of Scotland. It is a little mystifying that the Scottish Office is responsible for forests in the United Kingdom yet, despite the high proportion of the fishing industry in Scotland, is not also responsible for the fisheries aspect covered by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I ask the Minister to consider the departmental responsibilities.

11·26 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): Representing the constituency that includes Lowestoft—the premier fish town of England—a port that employs one man at sea for every nine men employed on shore, and a port whose fishing industry was all but decimated a short time ago, I certainly want to associate myself with hon. Members who wish the Government Front-Bench team good luck next week. I shall align my remarks with those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) when I say that the proposed cod quota reduction would be a disaster for the port of Lowestoft. Equally, I wish to associate myself, and have it on the record that I have done so, with YAFPO's remarks. The organisation's objections about the cod box and other matters are valid, and I hope the Minister will address them.

The debate has hinged on the scientific argument versus the more anecdotal argument fom the fishermen. Both groups are represented in my constituency. I live just a mile from the Lowestoft fish laboratory, so I have received representations equally from the scientists, with their professionalism and expertise and the fishermen.

There is no doubt that the documents which we are asked to consider cast doubt on the validity of the statistical evidence. I hope that the Government Front-Bench team will bear that very much in mind. If Ministers consider that reduced catch limits are often necessary to protect the future viability of North sea cod, can they not see that they must carry the industry with them, especially in Lowestoft?

The scientists can justify their findings—that is their business—but it is not fair to put them in the firing line. Government must find the median line. It is a matter of judgment, of how far the Government accept what the fishermen report on other matters, such as on what the Belgians, Danes or Dutch did that led to action. The fishermen's reports are surely worth much weight.

Certain parts of the industry may well be prosperous, and with fish prices remaining high and fuel prices low, that can continue. But it does not take much to upset the fine balance—it would not take much to rock the boat. The documents do nothing to push the industry forward; they do nothing to address the transfer of quotas or insufficient by-catches; they leave intact the blatant absurdity of dead fish having to be thrown overboard.

I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will accept my remarks in the spirit in which they were intended, and also that the Lowestoft fishing industry is looking for something that inspires confidence. It does not want cold comfort — it wants assurance that the Government recognise that a UK fisherman's life is his fishing and that economic fish caught and landed legally in Britain are part of the fabric of our way of life. Next week, Lowestoft will be looking for something that will give its fishermen a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

11.30 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): I want first to tell the anti-Scottish cross-party alliance, especially the hon. Members for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) that the success of the Scottish fishing fleet might well owe something to the courage and skill of Scottish fishermen rather than to Government policy. That may not be the way it is seen south of the border, but the distribution of the UK quota between the Scottish and English fleets is set on a historical rather than a current basis, and is biased towards the English fleet. A cynic might say that current policy is that the Humber fleet, having been paid to decommission, is now being paid to recommission and reinvest I ask hon. Members not to look at the industry from the limited basis of only the English ports — the success of the Scottish fleet is a tribute to the skill of the Scottish fishermen, who contribute to the overall prosperity of the industry.

The Minister was right to identify flexibility around the 4 deg. line as being critical to the negotiations. It would

be absurd if the Commission cannot be made to realise that mackerel movements have changed. The cod quota is disappointing. It is reasonable for hon. Members to make the point that it is difficult for fishermen to have confidence in these allocations when even the documents before us show a severe question mark over much of the scientific data.

Once again, the Norwegians have obtained a superb deal from the EEC fishery negotiations. I do not know about the transfers of fish between Norway and the EEC, but I would not mind transferring some of the Norwegian negotiators to the EEC. Once again, they have walked away with an excellent deal.

My final point refers to something that has already been raised in the debate — the inherent tendency towards instability in the fishing industry. In a good year, the industry has high investment both in catching and processing. Therefore, if there is a severe shock after that, whether due to quota reductions or lower prices, the effects can be very severe. The common fisheries policy does not provide a framework for medium-term planning in the industry, a point which I think hon. Members on both sides would accept.

I wish to push the Minister on the setting of annual quotas on a single species basis. Annual quotas only encourage and reinforce instability in the industry. Would it not be possible to have a three-year review, so that quotas could be set for three years and provide a framework for planning? Hon. Members would not then have to come to the House, late in the year, with incomplete information, documents from the Select Committee that show a question mark about parliamentary scrutiny, and documents from negotiations between the EEC and Norway that show grave doubts about the adequacy of scientific evidence. With a three-year review, we could consider the needs of industry on a proper basis and provide a reasonable time scale for the industry to plan ahead.

11.35 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): First, I wish to thank the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for many of his comments. I support especially his remarks about the need to ensure that the Community's fishery arrangements with other countries, and particularly with Africa, are fair and properly policed. If we do not police them effectively, we shall not gain the opportunities that should be open to us. It is of considerable interest to our fishermen that there should be sufficient opportunities elsewhere should our fishing grounds become overcrowded. I agree with the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow that there is a strong moral consideration. In addition, there are practical reasons that should cause us to be concerned.

I associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow about the need for fairness. It is true that most fishermen are prepared to put up with a great deal if they feel that the system is fair. One of the difficulties that is associated with the fishing industry is that it is thought by those within it that the foreigner does better than the home fisherman. It is felt also that the neighbours of fishermen are doing better than the home fishermen. That applies to neighbouring Scottish and English fishermen and to fishermen just down the road. It is felt by fishermen that their neighbours are likely to get something that they will not enjoy.

That is natural in an industry that consists of hunting. There is a feeling of competition and a desire to ensure that one's neighbours do not do better than oneself. I understand that, but it is something that makes it difficult for Governments and Oppositions to be clear about the balance that should be achieved when listening to the anecdotal evidence, as my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) would say, that is presented by fishermen on how we should proceed.

This means that we must depend on scientific evidence on the basis that there is no better evidence available to us. First, however, we must try to improve our scientific evidence. Those who have referred to the passages in the documents about the lack of scientific evidence have drawn attention to the failure of some countries to provide information that they should have made available to others. The provision of information is improving, and it will be unusual, but proper, to say in this place that the personal efforts of Dutch Fisheries Minister, Mr Braks, to ensure considerably better policing of the Dutch fleet and better reporting, are something that we wish to support. We have been extremely rude to Mr. Braks's predecessors and we must recognise that he has made great efforts to improve matters. That is something that we must support because there are others who could follow his good example.

Secondly, there should be updating on the basis of more recent scientific advice. I apologise to the House for the time limit which meant that the documents had to be submitted so quickly. The Commission has not done badly because the meetings of the scientists took place in late November. The evidence on which the documentation is based has to be as recent as possible so that decisions are made in the light of the most recent information. It would be sad if the House felt that the Commission had done other than its best. I hope that the House will accept that I am one of those who are likely to be quite tough with the Commission when things go wrong. On this occasion I must say that it has done as well as could be expected of it. However, if we get further and better evidence in the middle of the season, we should be prepared to use it and to change the quotas.

Thirdly, there is obviously a difference between precautionary quotas or TACs and those that are based on direct scientific evidence. I accept the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on that score. There are many specific issues that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow raised, and I hope that he will recognise that there is a shortage of time and accept that I should answer them in detail after the debate. I shall be happy to respond in that way. We are still investigating the way in which the system works and examining ways in which we can improve it. When this work has been completed we shall be talking to representatives of the industry. I understand that the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow has dined with the Scottish chairman. When I last had lunch with him, the chairman paid for the meal. I understand that that is slightly political. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that we try to enter into discussions with all sections of the fishing industry. That is why it is extremely difficult to make any such decisions in terms that the whole fishing industry wants. That is the difficulty about the problems of mesh sizes. Many parts of

[Mr. John Selwyn Gummer]

the fishing industry do not share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend). *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) may be right, but there are some things about Grimsby that are wrong, such as the national dock labour scheme. It has done more harm to that industry than any other.

Mr. Austin Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman should not shout in such a way from a seated position.

Mr. Mitchell: I am not seated.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman must accept that there is disagreement on the matter. When there is a mixed fishery and many different species——

Mr. Mitchell: Will the right hon. Member give way?

Mr. Gummer: No, I shall not give way. I have only a few moments left in which to conclude my remarks. The hon. Gentleman tempted me into making that statement. I would not have done it otherwise, as he knows. I am a mild-mannered person, though I am easily tempted.

I accept that, with a mixed fishery, it is more difficult to get fishermen to agree to a change in mesh sizes. In principle, I agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Bridlington and for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw). The measure is not a substitution for quotas and TACs. It should be additional and, once seen to be effective, should enable greater flexibility with TACs and quotas in future. I wholly agree with the view that we should have both systems and many other conservation measures, but, unfortunately, in the interim, until we have made them more effective, we shall have to stick to the system of TACs and quotas which, in a real sense is beginning to work. We should not overlook that fact.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby pointed out his lack of confidence in scientific advice and the problems that arise. I wish that there were better advice but I do not know on what else we should base our decision making. Therefore, we have to take what advice we can. The hon. Gentleman was unfair in regard to policing. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in improving policing.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I have already refused to give way. I have exactly six minutes left. I wish to answer the question. I promised that I would.

Mr. Field: I shall be extremely brief.

Mr. Gummer: On the basis of fairness, it would be wrong if I were to give way.

We have carried out a tough policing policy. We first got the Commission and the Council to agree to an international policing system. It was violently opposed not only by other countries but by our own fishermen in many areas. Then we got the Council to get the Commission to do a type of league table about how well the policing was done, and pointing out what was wrong. Surprisingly enough, the United Kingdom came top of the list. That was extremely good. It meant that we could point the finger at others. We were also able to put right the things that we had got wrong. We did that so that we could push the others. Then we got an increase in the number of police. More important, we got the right for the Community policing system to look at things without a vast plethora of red tape which meant that everybody knew that the authorities were coming before they arrived. All the changes were achieved in the teeth of opposition from many of those who objected. The effect has been significant.

I have travelled around almost every fishing port in the country. I have also been to many fishing ports in Scotland with the Scottish Office Fisheries Minister. He has also given me reports. In every such port fishermen have told me that things are still not right but that they are much better than they were in respect of policing. They specifically mentioned the improvements in Dutch control and the fact that the Danes have also begun to improve on their past performance.

I inform my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives that I, too, am furious at the wholly unacceptable situation in which foreign boats can masquerade as British boats and gain fish from the quotas that have fairly been given to British fishermen. We are determined to stop that. It is the major undermining factor in the common fisheries policy, and it is the one thing that makes the CFP unacceptable to fishermen—that is, that someone pinches that which is not his.

We have a basic agreement, which we have accepted and which is not unfair to the United Kingdom, but it will become unfair if somebody else cheats; and it is a cheat to pretend that a boat is British when clearly it is not. That is why we are doing something about it and why we are unhappy that the Commission so far has done nothing. It ought to be even more concerned about this than we are, because the system will be acceptable to all nations only if it is fair.

The points made by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) are understandable. We shall fight as hard as it is humanly possible to do something about the movement of the mackerel fishery. The hon. Member ought not to underestimate those who are opposed to this, because some of the opposition is based upon the principle that they, too, find the current fisheries policy sacrosanct, and they would not want to give others the opportunity to make changes that would undermine the basic agreement that was so hard won. I do not believe that they need be worried, but I understand why they are.

We have to reassure them that it is no use trying to renegotiate that which we have negotiated; it is merely a matter on which they may have a problem in the future because they may find that the fish have not swum exactly as the Commission thought they should. It is not easy, and I hope the hon. Member will support us in trying to understand it as well as in trying to win the battle.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bridlington and for Waveney talked about the quota for YAFPO. The problem is that YAFPO did not manage its quota properly. It got exactly its fair share of the quota, and if the share is changed other people will get less. When YAFPO went to the industry, the industry kindly gave it more than its fair share. We have done everything in our power to help YAFPO, which has assured me that this will not happen next year because it will run its quota better. Even if there are fewer fish than there is an ability to catch, if more fish are taken from one place, some will have to be taken from somewhere else. The Government should

not be faced with that problem, otherwise the hon. Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) will say that their fishermen are disadvantaged. There are other points——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business).*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the un-numbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 30th November and 3rd December 1987 on total allowable catches and quotas for 1988 and on 2nd December 1987 on the European Community — Norway Fisheries Agreement, European Community Documents Nos 6388/87 on the common organisation of the market in fishery products and 9585/87 on fish guide prices for 1988, and of the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities for the United Kingdom's fishing industry for 1988 consistent with the requirements of conservation of stocks.

PETITIONS

The Arts

11.48 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I have pleasure in presenting a petition on the arts, signed by 76,000 men and women. I associate myself with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), who will present similar petitions. The petition shows that the arts in Britain have long been undervalued, and prays that

the House will bring forward urgent measures to improve the public practice, understanding and support of our theatres and orchestras, dance and opera companies, art centres and cinemas, museums and galleries, artists, writers and performers.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I wish to present a petition in similar terms to the one enunciated by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). In doing so, I indicate the cross-party support for the value of the arts in the quality of life in our society and say we wish the House to give proper support to the many and varied forms of art.

I beg leave to present the petition to the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Gillian Smallwood

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

11.49 pm

Mr. Jim Callaghan (Heywood and Middleton): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to Mr. Speaker for granting me this debate so quickly after I made my application.

I applied for the debate because I am deeply disturbed about the circumstances surrounding the death of Gillian Smallwood, aged five, while undergoing dental treatment at a clinic in my constituency. The Rochdale community health council is equally worried, as are senior medical staff at the Booth Hall hospital, Blackley, in Manchester. Requests have been made to the Rochdale health authority for an inquiry into the case to find out what went wrong, with a view to preventing similar tragedies in future.

Such requests were turned down locally and, in reply to my letter of 23 July, the Minister of State also turned down my request for a formal inquiry under section 84 of the National Health Service Act 1946. I believe that the Minister and the local health authority are both wrong. I hope that this debate will help to make them reconsider their earlier decision and agree to an inquiry to establish what went wrong in the Gillian Smallwood case and thus help to prevent any other child's death in similar circumstances.

The facts are these. On 21 August 1986, Gillian Smallwood, aged five, attended the Langley clinic, accompanied by her mother, for the extraction of three deciduous molar teeth. Mrs. Smallwood was informed that an additional tooth would need to be removed because it was mobile. Gillian was anaesthetised and had four teeth removed but, during the recovery period, she collapsed. Measures were instituted to resuscitate her. They were not successful and Gillian was transferred to the Booth Hall hospital, Blackley, where she was pronounced dead later that day.

An inquest was held by the Manchester city coroner, Mr. L. Gorodkin on 29 January 1987. He concluded that the cause of death was cardio-respiratory failure, hypoxia, dental anaesthesia, and tracheo-bronchitis, and that Gillian died of the aforesaid, sustained when she was having an anaesthetic for teeth extraction at the dental clinic, Borrowdale road, Langley, Middleton on 21 August 1986, when she had cardiac arrest, She was conveyed by ambulance to Booth Hall hospital, Blackley, where she died shortly after arrival.

Almost one year later, on 17 July 1987, Mr. A. J. Doyle, the district dental officer for Rochdale, wrote a long report defending the staff and the equipment used in the Langley clinic, but he concluded:

> "Despite all the enquiries I have made, it has not been demonstrated that anything untoward happened which led to the death of this little girl, and the sad events of that day remain inexplicable."

His findings were submitted to the regional health authority meeting on 28 July 1987 as item No. 2.

I have given only the briefest of facts surrounding Gillian's death. However, the Rochdale community health council was so concerned about all the facts surrounding the death of this child that it wrote to the Rochdale area health authority asking for an inquiry into the events surrounding the case. There was a similar request from the child's parents, made through their solicitor. Unfortunately, the Rochdale health authority appears to have treated the receipt of a solicitor's letter as a major reason for discounting holding an inquiry, despite the fact that the letter related to the parents' wishes for a full inquiry and not to any prospect of legal action. This is a great pity, because the purpose of any inquiry is not simply to determine the cause of death. It can enable people to learn from an event and to take steps to try to prevent such tragedies recurring.

It is most regrettable that the health authority and the Minister appear uninterested in learning from this case. While I am aware that the health authority is almost certainly correct to assert that deaths from anaesthetics are rare, it misses the vital point—whether such rarities are preventable.

I have been told by an eminent doctor that such events are, at least in part, preventable. Dr. T. David, senior lecturer in child health and honorary consultant paediatrician at Booth Hall children's hospital, Blackley, Manchester—a man whom I salute as a dedicated and caring doctor—tells me that it is well known that all general anaesthetics, for whatever reason, carry a small risk of disaster and death. Some such events could be due to errors on the part of the medical staff and some represent unexpected adverse reactions to agents used in anaesthesia. In the latter context, it should be pointed out that Gillian had had several general anaesthetics previously, suggesting that her death was not for this reason.

Despite the smallness of the risk, it is a basic principle that one should plan for disasters and assume that the worst will happen. Yet general anaesthetics in dental surgeries outside hospitals are used not on this basis but on the premise that things rarely go wrong, and, when they do, it is bad luck.

Hospitals are geared up for emergencies such as cardiac arrest. To give an example, at Booth Hall children's hospital, as in any other hospital, cardiac arrests are an everyday event, with the result that all the medical and nursing staff have become well practised in all the procedures. Furthermore, plenty of staff are available.

At a cardiac arrest, the following staff are always called: the medical senior house officer on call, the two surgical SHOs on call, and the medical registrar on call. In addition to these six doctors, extra nursing staff are summoned, as is a porter. Not all these staff are required for efficient treatment, but one will usually need a couple of doctors for a cardiac massage, a doctor to intubate the patient and provide manual ventilation, a doctor to set up an intravenous line, and at least two nurses to assist with the intravenous line and drugs.

The situation in a dental surgery is quite different: a dentist, a dental nurse and an anaesthetist are there. The former may have had some training in resuscitation at some time in the past, but neither is likely ever to have dealt with such events. So there is little comparison with a trained, experienced and practised team.

Thus, there are two aspects of this case. One is the competence of the staff involved, but far more important is the principle whether it is any longer acceptable for children to have treatment under a general anaesthetic in a dental surgery. It is not easy for me to see the justification for such risky procedures in a dental surgery when proper facilities are available in hospitals.

This same Dr. T. J. David wrote to me about these matters, and also about the specific case of Gillian

Smallwood on 17 July 1987. He told me that he first saw Gillian soon after her birth at the North Manchester general hospital because of the instability of her hip joint, and that he followed her up at Booth Hall hospital, where she subsequently required surgery to the hip and where she was also treated, under his care, for recurrent respiratory infections. By chance, he was the consultant paediatrician on call the day she died, and, with a consultant anaesthetist at Booth Hall, he supervised an unsuccessful attempt to revive her.

Dr. David told me:

"I think it is most regrettable that a request for an inquiry has been resisted by the Rochdale Health Authority. Their grounds appear to be twofold, that the Coroner has already examined the matter fully, and that deaths from dental general anaesthetics are rare."

He went on to say:

"It is questionable as to how detailed the Coroner's inquiries were. I submitted a short report, in the anticipation that as the Consultant in charge I would be called upon to give evidence, but I was never asked to attend".

On 3 December 1987 Dr. David also sent me a copy of a letter that he had sent to the hon. Lady, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, in which he expressed his concern that the Minister had told me in her recent letter:

"You can be sure that the case was carefully studied to see if new lessons could be learned".

Dr. David's concern about the Gillian Smallwood case is precisely that it has never been carefully studied, and that he thinks it likely that there will be further, similar deaths unless it is studied.

Remembering that Dr. David was the consultant paediatrician looking after Gillian Smallwood from her birth and that he was the consultant in charge of the unsuccessful attempt to revive Gillian when she was brought from the dental surgery to Booth Hall hospital on the day of her death, I quote what he said:

"The fact is that at no time has anyone from Rochdale Health Authority or the Regional Health Authority, carefully studying Gillian's death, ever contacted me about her pre-existing medical or surgical condition, her previous operations and anaesthetics or to obtain details of her final demise."

The consultant anaesthetist at Booth Hall hospital, who was assisting our attempts, has similarly never been contacted. The only people whom I have heard from are the Rochdale community health council, which has expressed its concern, and the parents' solicitors who, on behalf of the parents, have been pressing unsuccessfully for a full investigation. Thus, the suggestion that "careful inquiries" have been made is incorrect. The lack of desire to prevent a similar tragedy is the most depressing aspect of the case.

Having listened to Dr. David, I believe that any anaesthetic carries the risk of a serious adverse event, and possibly death.

It is self-evident that, if a disaster occurs and somebody sustains a cardiac arrest during anaesthetic, the facilities and staff are likely to be better in a hospital than in a dentist's surgery or in a community dental clinic, and if cardiac arrest occurs the patient stands a better chance of survival if the procedure is undertaken in hospital.

I draw attention to an editorial in *Anaesthesia* in 1979 —volume 34, pages 523-525—which makes it clear that anaesthetics in dental premises should be urgently phased out, and certainly should not be taking place in 1987.

I believe that Gillian's death was potentially avoidable, and I should like steps to be taken to bring about a rapid halt to general anaesthetics performed for dentistry on children outside hospitals.

I am sure that it will be appreciated that I am deeply concerned about the tragic death of Gillian Smallwood and am anxious to do all that can be done to establish, as quickly as possible, what happened to her and what measures need to be taken to prevent a similar tragedy.

I call on the Minister, and I am supported by Dr. David, the Rochdale community health council and Gillian's parents, to set up an inquiry into this sad and tragic case to see what lessons can be learned from it.

12.1 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan) on his success in the ballot.

I should start with an apology for not responding to the hon. Gentleman's letter of 23 July 1987, which has never turned up. The delays since he wrote to me on 17 September were unsatisfactory, and I have expressed my dissatisfaction to officials. I expect that the muddle was in part due to confusing him with his illustrious and noble Friend, who had left the House at the time that my officials were trying to contact him. At the time, the office was dealing with about 1,000 letters a week. However, the hon. Gentleman drew attention to the non-reply on 26 November and received an answer the next day. He has my unreserved apology for the delay.

Mr. Callaghan: I thank the Minister for those comments.

Mrs. Currie: On 21 August 1986, Gillian Smallwood, a little girl of five and a half years, attended the Langley clinic at Middleton in Rochdale for the extraction of three teeth under general anaesthesia. She had previously attended the clinic in February 1986, when five deciduous teeth were extracted under general anaesthesia.

Gillian was generally well, but had suffered from a congenital dislocation of the hip and had been an in-patient at Booth Hall children's hospital during July 1986 for the removal of pins.

The anaesthetic history was that Gillian came into the surgery at approximately 2.25 pm, accompanied by her mother, who stayed during the induction. It was agreed that a mobile deciduous incisor would be extracted in addition to the three already designated. The anaesthetic was administered by Dr. Padmanabhan, who holds a consultant appointment with the Rochdale health authority. One hundred per cent. oxygen was administered for between one and two minutes before nitrous oxide at 6 litres per minute was turned on. The oxygen flow was reduced to 2·5 litres a minute and Halothane 0·5-1 per cent. added. A prop was inserted by the anaesthetist, the mouth packed by the dental officer, Miss Arnold, and three of the teeth were extracted.

During the transfer of the prop to the left side, the child became restless and it was then noticed that the flow of nitrous oxide had ceased. This was re-established by the anaesthetist opening the valve further, the child settled and the remaining extraction was effected.

The extractions were described as uncomplicated and, at this stage, the child's colour was said to be good. The

[Mrs. Currie]

nitrous oxide and Halothane were turned off, but oxygenation was continued. It was then noticed that the child had urinated, that she was pale and had stopped breathing. Positive pressure ventilation was commenced using the rebreathing bag, an endotracheal tube, which first had to be shortened, was passed and connected to the anaesthetic machine and 2 to 3 ml of adrenaline 1:1,000 administered directly into the heart. The child was then moved on to the floor so that cardiac massage could be commenced and an ambulance and crash team were requested. Help was also summoned from the health centre. Dr. Philip Rowlands, a general medical practitioner attending a vaccination clinic, and three district nurses responded. Dr. Rowlands, acting under the direction of the anaesthetist, administered further adrenaline and commenced external cardiac massage. The child was transferred to hospital, where she was declared dead. At the inquest, Dr. Rowlands gave a clear indication that the child was already dead by the time he arrived.

The post mortem examination was conducted by Dr. Lindon, the consultant pathologist at Booth Hall children's hospital. She gave evidence that Gillian was well cared for and well nourished and confirmed the presence of an operational scar over her left hip. No evidence of any other congenital defect was found, nor evidence of any disease except for an upper respiratory tract infection of moderate severity. Dr. Lindon was unable to comment on the effect of the disruption in the flow of nitrous oxide, but when questioned on the effect of the administration of Halothane on three separate occasions in relatively quick succession, she stated that she found no evidence of Halothane toxicity.

Mr. Callaghan: I have all those details from the coroner's report.

Mrs. Currie: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has confirmed that.

The coroner concluded that there were four causes of death: cardio-respiratory failure, hypoxia — lack of oxygen—dental anaesthesia and tracheo-bronchitis. The finding was misadventure.

Therefore, we appear to have a child with a cold receiving general anaesthesia which appeared to have been less than sufficient at some point during the operation. The child collapsed soon afterwards.

I express my deepest sympathy for the parents in what was a totally unexpected death. I should like to draw attention to the excellent facilities and expert staff at the Langley clinic. That clinic is specially equipped to administer general anaesthetic. There are only three such clinics in Rochdale. Most of the general dental practitioners, at whom the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton or Dr. David might be directing many of their criticisms, do not do general anaesthetics now in Rochdale. It is done in the special clinics.

The anaesthetic equipment was well maintained and in good working order. The anaesthetic was administered by a consultant anaesthetist, not a registrar or a senior house officer, who was employed precisely for that purpose. A full range of emergency equipment was available—and indeed, it is not unusual to have to shorten a tube as has been described. The staff were fully trained in the emergency treatment of a cardiac arrest and had recently attended a refresher course. Therefore, I reject all the criticisms that have been made.

I should comment on the response of the clinic staff to the child's condition. The consultant anaesthetist led the attempt to help the child. The drug adrenaline, recommended for use in such situations, was available and was used. The mother was not present while resuscitation was attempted and she has complained about that. However, that was because the staff were concentrating on treating the child. An ambulance was called and during the journey to hospital the child was still being treated by the consultant anaesthetist. The crash team was not included because the ambulance by itself was quicker. I know that the consultant concerned should have all the skills necessary for resuscitation if such resuscitation turned out to be possible.

Gillian died on 21 August. The matter was reported to the health authority on 26 August and it was agreed that if the inquest indicated a need, an inquiry would be held. In the light of the inquest, which, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, set out clearly all the facts of the case, the health authority felt that a further inquiry would not be necessary. It published its own report on the events with commendable speed, and I know that the hon. Gentleman has a copy. Since then, there has been an exchange of correspondence with the Smallwoods' solicitor, the community health council and Dr. David, all requesting an inquiry. I can do no better than quote my reply to the hon. Gentleman of 27 November, in which I said:

"Having studied the report and taken advice, I have concluded that the report"——

I am referring to the report of the health authority—

"has adequately covered the sad events of this particular case, and that the case itself does not give rise to any general issues concerning the safety of dental anaesthesia. I have therefore decided that a further formal inquiry under section 84 of the NHS Act would not be justified."

That is the section of the law that we have used recently, for example, in the investigation of the outbreak of salmonella at Stanley Royd hospital and of Legionnaire's disease at Stafford hospital. We do not consider that it is appropriate or justified to hold an inquiry in the terms that have been requested.

Once Gillian collapsed, everybody acted with commendable speed and everything that could have been done was done. All the correct equipment was in use and working. All the correct guidelines were followed. All the facts are known.

I have received a letter from Dr. David from the department of child health at Manchester university. He was the consultant paediatrician who attended Gillian soon after she was born and subsequently because of her congenital hip problem. He says that he was never interviewed, but in all honesty I doubt whether he could throw any more light on the events in the clinic that surrounded her death, since he was not there.

Mr. Callaghan: He has never been asked.

Mrs. Currie: Those events seem clear to me.

Mr. Callaghan: What about Dr. David?

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry, I am responding to the hon. Gentleman, not to Dr. David, which I shall do in due course.

At the time, the child was under the care of a consultant anaesthetist who was well qualified for the job and who

had been appointed precisely for that purpose. The family have taken legal advice and they also have the hon. Gentleman to advise them. I believe that they have access to all the papers from the authority that I have seen. They must decide how to proceed, but I am satisfied that the health authority has done everything that it can and should have done, and I see no reason for calling another inquiry.

I want specifically to reject Dr. David's assertion that all general anaesthesia on children should be done in hospital. That is not necessary or desirable. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the rules of the General Dental Council as set out in its paper of April 1983, particularly to paragraph 5. That sets out rules that have been accepted throughout Britain and which have been a considerable improvement on the previous arrangements, which were the subject of some criticism.

Paragraph 5 says:

"A dentist who carried out treatment under general anaesthesia or sedation without fulfilling these conditions"—

which were set out in great detail in the notes for guidance—

"would almost certainly be considered to have acted in a manner which constitutes infamous or disgraceful conduct in a professional respect."

No such complaint has been made at any time, and I strongly believe that no such complaint could possibly be sustained.

As I read through the papers I found the case upsetting. I have two daughters of my own. I found myself wondering why Gillian was having her teeth out in the first place. She had lost five on a previous visit, also under general anaesthesia, and was about to lose four on this occasion. I have taken advice on that.

I understand that Gillian's dental extractions were necessary because of rampant caries of her deciduous dentition. A photograph of Gillian published in the *Manchester Evening News* on 29 January 1987 and 17 March 1987 showed her with very broken-down teeth.

The incidence of dental caries in young children in Rochdale has not fallen since 1980 and is much higher than the national average. A typical five-year-old in 1985 in Rochdale had 1·7 decayed teeth, 0·7 missing teeth and 0·8 filled teeth. The equivalent in England in 1983—the most recent figures that I have which are reasonable for comparison purposes—show 1·1 decayed teeth and 0·5 filled teeth. That is a big difference. The mean number of teeth extracted per child treated in Rochdale in 1985—I am talking about children aged between five and nine—was 0·74 and in England it was 0·45. One could put that rather crudely by saying that three-quarters of the children of that age treated at the dentist lost a tooth in Rochdale, whereas it was less than half in England as a whole. Rochdale's children have some of the worst teeth in the country. The record is not one to be proud of.

I also asked whether we had lost any other children like this. I am sad to say that the answer was yes. In 1986, there were two deaths of children associated with general anaesthesia for dental treatment. The other child was four years and four months old, and came from Halifax.

It is normal for children to eat sweets. I reflected on this little girl who had had nine teeth extracted before her sixth birthday through caries and on my younger daughter who loves sweet things and has now reached ten and a half without ever having a single filling or losing a single tooth from dental caries. She is typical of children in Birmingham, where she grew up. The difference is that one child lives in an area with fluoride in its water and the other lived in an area without fluoride. Furthermore, there is no fluoride in the water in Halifax, where the other death occurred.

I am aware that these comments are not entirely fair, because there have been deaths under general dental anaesthesia in Birmingham, too. However, it is possible to cut the risk of such terrible tragedies happening. It is possible to reduce the number of children who need general anaesthesia for necessary and painful dental treatment for bad teeth. I hope that, when the regional and district health authorities in the hon. Gentleman's area move to introduce fluoride—a move that we support and which we shall finance—he will give due thought to this terrible case. I know that some people resent being given what they consider to be unethical medication, but we should not pay for our principles with the death of a child. When the hon. Gentleman is given the opportunity to raise this issue, I hope that he will bear in mind that, had this child lived in a fluoridated area, she might not have died. I know that that does not help the family, but I have to put it on record.

I hope that I have answered the hon. Gentleman's points. The facts are all there and are available for further inspection. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman discusses the matter further with the Smallwood family and lets them decide whether they would like to take the matter further, and in what form.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at sixteen minutes past Midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 10 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL
Order for consideration read.
To be considered upon Thursday 17 December.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday 17 December.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 17 December.

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 17 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rating Reform

1. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to publish proposals for a poll tax in Northern Ireland, including a proposed timetable for its introduction.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Stanley): The Green Paper of January 1986, "Paying for Local Government", which forms the basis of the Great Britain reforms, made it clear that the proposals did not apply to Northern Ireland. That reflects the fact that local government arrangements in Northern Ireland are significantly different from those in the rest of the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend has therefore decided to monitor the development of the proposals in England and Wales before deciding whether, or to what extent, they should be applied in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McCusker: If that reply is not an Irish joke, is it not at least an inversion of logic to suggest that one monitors what one does to 97·5 per cent. of the population before applying it to the remaining 2·5 per cent.? As all local government services of any note in Northern Ireland are now administered by central Government, and as central Government now collects all the local government rates in Northern Ireland, should not the poll tax have been applied first to the 2·5 per cent. and monitored, and then applied to the 97·5 per cent.?

Mr. Stanley: I suggest that the position is eminently logical, as 90 per cent. of local government functions in the Province are carried out centrally rather than by district councils. In those circumstances, and when making a major change in the local government financial system, given that there is a completely different base for local government in Northern Ireland compared with the rest of Great Britain, it seems eminently sensible to monitor the change in Great Britain.

Labour Statistics

2. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): At 8 October 1987, the latest date for which unemployment figures are available, there were 124,701 unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland, representing 18·2 per cent. of the working population. Compared with the same period last year, that is a decrease in unemployment of almost 6,000.

Mr. Cryer: Is it not a scandalous reflection of the failure of the Government's economic policies for the United Kingdom as a whole, and Northern Ireland in particular, that nearly 20 per cent. of adults in Northern Ireland are unemployed? Does that not contribute to the maintenance of the secretarian divide, because there are two and a half times more male adult unemployed Catholics than there are Protestants? When does the Minister expect the Government's economic policies to start working to produce some jobs in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Viggers: As regards unemployment generally, Northern Ireland is now benefiting from the general upturn in the economy of the United Kingdom. If I may amplify my earlier figures, unemployment is now down by 900 a month over a three-month average. We regard that as satisfactory, and the signs are that it will continue. Of course, it is still too high, and we are doing everything that we can to reduce it.

As for the level of sectarian distinction between the Catholic and Protestant communities, we accept that having two and a half times as many Catholics as Protestants unemployed is unacceptable, and we propose to introduce legislation as soon as possible on that point.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the largest numbers of employed people in Northern Ireland are in agriculture? Does he also agree that if the so-called remedies from Europe are applied to Northern Ireland agriculture they will have a very adverse effect on Northern Ireland's family farms? Will he declare the devastated areas of Northern Ireland disaster areas in order to give short-term employment?

Mr. Viggers: The Government have been active in remedying the damage by flooding and in assisting those people who suffered damage. On the general issues, it is not possible for Northern Ireland to stand aside from the main trend within Europe. It is necessary for this to be handled on a European Community basis rather than on a Northern Ireland basis.

Mr. Hume: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that in Northern Ireland a Catholic is two and a half times more likely to be unemployed than a Protestant. If we are to solve this problem, we must tell the truth about it. The unemployment problem in Northern Ireland as it stands today cannot be laid entirely at the feet of the Government. As the New Ireland Forum said in its document "The cost of violence", the paramilitary campaign of violence by the Provisional IRA over the past 20 years has directly cost 39,000 jobs in manufacturing industry between 1970 and 1980, and there are only 90,000 people employed in Northern Ireland in manufacturing industry. That campaign has caused £11 billion worth of damage to the economy of Ireland, north and south. If that money were floating around in the economy, fewer people would be unemployed. If we are to tackle the problem of discrimination, we must do it on all fronts, not just on some. We need fair employment laws, but we also need inward investment in the areas of high unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: I strongly support the general thrust of the hon. Gentleman's points. If we were merely to remove unemployment from one area and allocate it to another, we would not be doing a good service to Northern Ireland. We need further investment in Northern Ireland, leading to further jobs. I endorse and support the hon. Gentleman's activity in promoting investment in his part of Northern Ireland and in the rest of the Province.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Anglo-Irish Agreement provides the best opportunity to solve many of these problems? Does he further agree that the steps that will be taken to introduce that legislation—which will be agreed between the Government and the Government of the Irish Republic — will provide an equitable basis on which to improve the ratio in favour of fairer employment opportunities for Catholics?

Mr. Viggers: It is this Government's duty to bring forward the legislation, and we hope that it will have broad support within Northern Ireland.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Does the Minister agree that one of the causes of unemployment in Northern Ireland is the IRA's vicious campaign of threats and murder against business men and workers? Will he explain to the House what steps are being taken to improve that unacceptable situation?

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and other ministerial colleagues are working hard to improve the political and security climate. My narrow area of responsibility is the economy. If we can improve the quality of investment and the level of employment in Northern Ireland, that will make a contribution to Northern Ireland generally.

Mr. McNamara: Given that nine further states in the United States are proposing to introduce legislation on the MacBride principles and bearing in mind the question mark that that puts over further investment in Northern Ireland, is it not in the interests of the Government to publish early their White Paper showing how far they embrace the recommendations of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights? Is it not also important for the Government to state precisely their attitude towards the goal of reducing the ratio of unemployment of Catholic and Protestant males from 2½: 1 to 1½: 1 over five years? If the Government are unable to accept that goal, will they say why not? If the Government say that they seek to improve the situation in other areas rather than in some, can the Minister tell us the areas in which he hopes to have that improvement and the number of jobs that will be involved?

Mr. Viggers: We are giving the most urgent and careful consideration to the proposals of the Standing Advisory Commission and we intend to bring forward proposals for legislation very soon. If we were to react too quickly, the hon. Gentleman would be the first to say that we had not given careful consideration to the commission's proposals. I hope that when, in due course—it will be soon—the proposals are put before the House, they will have the support of the hon. Gentleman.

Universities (Research Places)

3. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to fund an increase in the number of research places available to postgraduate students at Queen's University and the University of Ulster; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): On 30 November 1987 I announced a new "Distinction Awards" scheme designed to attract to the Northern Ireland universities postgraduate students of the highest ability. Under the scheme, the Department of Education will fund up to 20 additional research awards each year tenable at the Queen's University of Belfast or the University of Ulster. Each award holder will receive £2,000 per annum in addition to the normal postgraduate award.

Mr. Brazier: That is welcome news. May I ask my hon. Friend for his assurance that the extra places will be allocated fairly across the religious divide? I should declare an interest: I am a Catholic married to an Irish Protestant.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the welcome that he has given to the proposals. I assure him that there will be no religious discrimination whatsoever in the giving of the awards.

Joint Educational Projects

4. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available more resources to enable schools from different religious backgrounds to undertake joint educational projects; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no plans to make further resources available. On 14 September I announced the availability of an extra £200,000 for new initiatives in cross-community contacts. The scheme, which is directed at young people under the age of 19, has already encouraged those working in this field to submit 65 applications for grant from the special fund.

Mr. Davis: I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in welcoming the previous decision and hoping that the future will see more resources allocated. Already too many children grow up in an atmosphere of prejudice in Northern Ireland and become fuel and recruits for terrorist organisations. If the problems of Northern Ireland are to be solved, is it not necessary to find ways to increase contact between young people in that troubled Province?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support and I entirely endorse the sentiments that he has expressed. It is important that we should find ways to bring the people of the Province together, to foster their relationships and understanding of their differences, and to ensure that those differences do not become points of division later in life.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that in answer to the previous question he may have unconsciously given a wrong impression——

Rev. Martin Smyth: It will indeed relate to the question, but I must put on record that the tertiary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot go back to the previous question.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that joint community education imposes tremendous responsibility on the voluntary schools system to teach even civics, which would allow us to move together as people and as a nation, rather than have two separate identities? Will he acknowledge that the separation and division are at that level of education rather than at the tertiary level, as implied earlier?

Dr. Mawhinney: I certainly endorse what the hon. Gentleman has said. If I gave any impression in an answer given from the Dispatch Box that there is division at the tertiary level, that is quite untrue and it was not my intention. I do not think that I gave that impression, but if I did it was not intended.

Part of the reason for the project in secondary schools is to explore ways in which schoolchildren from the two communities can be brought together to carry out joint projects, so that they will have an opportunity to learn together and about each other. The idea is that the absence of money should not hinder the bringing together of our young people in special projects.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is it not time to end the religious apartheid in education in Northern Ireland? Both education systems, which are supported by the taxpayer, divide youngsters from the earliest age, even from kindergarten, when they should be learning to live and play together and getting to know each other, so that Northern Ireland will have a future.

Dr. Mawhinney: There will be much support for the sentiment expressed by the hon. Gentleman, and I take careful note of what he has said.

Mr. Alton: I welcome what the Minister has said and his speech on the establishment of the community relations unit, but what progress has been made to assist Hazelwood college? Does he agree that integrated education should be actively promoted, especially in his discussions with members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy?

Dr. Mawhinney: I have had a meeting with representatives of the governors of Hazelwood college in the past few days. We have agreed jointly that I will reach a decision on their application to become grant-aided in the first half of next year. That decision is acceptable to the governors and to me. It will give them an opportunity in the meantime to increase numbers in the school.

With regard to integrated education, the Government see a role—perhaps even a marginally increased role—for integrated schools in the Province. It is not part of my responsibility or intention to do anything that would make the development of integrated education within the law and the constraints that we all know apply more difficult than it is at the moment.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the Minister bear in mind that when the project got off the ground in Enniskillen the parents were kept completely in the dark? The children were told that they were having a holiday and no parents were consulted. As the Roman Catholic Church runs its own schools in Northern Ireland, will the Minister give a categorical assurance to the Protestant community that there will be consultation with the parents of all Protestant children and that they will have the right to say yes or no to any such project, just as the Roman Catholic Church has already said no to integrated education?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am not quite sure to what specific event the hon. Gentleman is referring. I want to make it clear that the scheme is entirely voluntary. People are invited to apply for money for projects if they wish to do so. The initiative does not lie with me. I am not forcing anyone to do anything, and I am not applying pressure. I am responding to what I identify as demand in the community for people to be allowed to come together and to do things together. That is good, and I am willing to finance it for the future of Northern Ireland. There is no sense in which anyone is being allowed to exercise a veto. It will be for the schools, parents and pupils to decide for themselves.

Mr. Jim Marshall: We are all pleased to hear the Minister say that he wants to bring both communities together and to provide finance for that. How does he square that with the view of the Department of Education, as expressed in a letter to a constituent of mine on 22 October.

"there is no need in Northern Ireland for teachers who specialise in Multicultural Education."

That is the view of the Department of Education. Is it the Government's view? If not, what steps do the Government intend to bring forward to reverse that policy decision?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman has a slight semantic difficulty. There is no great need for teachers in multicultural education in Northern Ireland because we do not have a multicultural society in the sense in which that term is understood in England. Society in Northern Ireland is divided on religious grounds. The policy of the Department of Education is of education for mutual understanding. As hon. Members representing Northern

Ireland constituencies will be aware, I have been increasing pressure on training schools in the matter of education for mutual understanding in general. I believe that it is very difficult for teachers to teach about the other community if they have no experience of that other community. We are strongly and firmly committed to education for mutual understanding, but we do not have a multicultural society in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Minister agree that apartheid in education does not exist in Northern Ireland, but that there is the exercise of parental choice? Does he also agree that the voluntary sector embraces both the Catholic and Protestant community and state schools? Does he accept that there is ample opportunity for inter-religious communicational projects between schools if proper encouragement is given, and will he ensure that his Department encourages such intercourse in the immediate future?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman will know that last April I announced that a new policy on parental choice would come into effect in our schools in September 1988. This has been widely welcomed, not least by parents, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his additional support.

As for bringing people together, the hon. Gentleman will have noticed that, at the educational level aimed at the under-19s, the Government have much increased their determination to try to achieve that very desirable goal. I should be grateful for the hon. Gentleman's help, and that of his hon. Friends and other right hon. and hon. Members in Northern Ireland, in doing what they can to encourage our young people to spend more time contacting one another, and less time drifting apart and causing social or perhaps other and worse problems in the future.

Security

5. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the effect of the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the security situation in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about cross-border security co-operation.

14. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Since 23 November a major security operation has been mounted by the Irish security forces, supported in Northern Ireland by the RUC and the Army, which has resulted in a number of important arrests and some finds of explosives and munitions.

Since I last answered questions in the House on 12 November, two civilians have died in sectarian attacks. The security forces have continued their determined and courageous work. So far this year 431 people have been charged with serious offences, including 27 with murder, while 247 weapons, approximately 18,000 rounds of ammunition and nearly 13,000 lb of explosives have been recovered.

In addition, the Garda Siochana has recovered, up to the end of October, 123 weapons, 10,000 rounds of ammunition and some 4,000 lb of explosives. That does not include a product of the recent search operation, which I understand will be announced this afternoon. It included 50 weapons and four bunkers which are believed to have been for storage of possible shipments.

Recent events north and south of the border have emphasised most clearly the vital need for both Governments to co-operate closely in the defeat of terrorism throughout the island of Ireland.

Mr. Flannery: While thanking the Secretary of State for his answer, may I point out that the linking of the two other questions with mine is not quite correct? I am grateful for his information about the security position, and I deplore the terrible events that have occurred. However, my question is quite separate from the orthodox questions on security, which could well have been asked before the Anglo-Irish Agreement question. What I have asked in the question is what effect the right hon. Gentleman thinks that agreement has had on security. I am anxious that his answer should convey to me that, as I hope, the present accelerated rate of killing is temporary and will settle down.

Mr. King: With respect, I do not think that the hon. Gentleman listened to my answer.

Mr. Flannery: I listened very carefully.

Mr. King: At the start of my answer I drew attention to what I believe is the most significant security operation ever conducted within the Republic of Ireland. It was conducted in the closest co-operation and preparation with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army north of the border. It is the most tangible and obvious demonstration of the close security co-operation that is absolutely vital if we are to defeat terrorism, which is now so clearly perceived as the evil that it is for both communities, north and south of the border.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Despite the promising words from Dublin after the Enniskillen atrocity, is my right hon. Friend aware of the scepticism about the full political will of the Irish Republic to defeat terrorism, when it still withholds the direct contact of its armed forces with those of the United Kingdom? What is being done about that?

Mr. King: I am sure that my hon. Friend will not wish in any way to encourage scepticism on the subject. Rather, he will wish to do all that he can to work for the closest possible co-operation. His knowledge, which is profound, of the circumstances of the island of Ireland will make him well aware of the vital importance—given the difficulties posed by the border and the two jurisdictions—of close co-operation. I assure him of our commitment to achieving the closest and most effective co-operation in working with the Government of the Republic.

Mr. Molyneaux: Given the failure to discover the Libyan ground-to-air missiles that are known to be concealed in the Irish Republic, will the Secretary of State make representations to ensure that British aircraft using Dublin airport are afforded the same protection as that given at Shannon airport to Russian aircraft on their way to Cuba?

Mr. King: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman would expect me to discuss the particular detail of this matter across the Floor of the House. We are anxious to respond effectively to any problems that may face us.

Mr. Latham: What could be worse for the image of Northern Ireland than the appalling sight of sectarian killings, which make it look like Sicily or Don Corleone's New York? How can anybody with an ounce of decency continue with such horror, particularly after Enniskillen?

Mr. King: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. There are evil tendencies among some extremes of the population in Northern Ireland that are all too easily inflamed. A heavy responsibility lies on everybody, whatever position they are in—particularly those in any position of responsibility or representational position—in Northern Ireland to do everything that they can to ensure that no such passions are aroused and, rather more, that they are condemned.

Mr. Duffy: Does the Secretary of State recall the seemingly inevitable confusion that attended the recent application for the extradition of Paul Anthony Kane, which received the customary misdirected criticism? Will the Secretary of State say why errors on warrants continue to bedevil the system?

Mr. King: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware of the circumstances of the matter and that I am unable to comment on something that is sub judice.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is the duty of all hon. Members and parties in the House to give the security forces — the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Army — unequivocal support in their fight against terrorism? Will the Secretary of State comment on the fact that the five members of the SDLP including the chairwoman, who is a justice of the peace. clearly and definitely voted against such support when a resolution was put to Magherafelt district council?

Mr. King: I am unfamiliar with the terms of the motion, but, without entering into the detail of the case, I agree with the hon. Gentleman's opening comments. It is the responsibility of everyone who is determined to defeat the evil of violence and terrorism to give total support to the RUC and the security forces in the tough challenge that they face.

Mr. William Ross: I listened to the Secretary of State's comments about the security position in the Irish Republic, for which he seemed to be claiming some degree of responsibility. Will he say what he has done since he last answered questions in the House to improve progress in the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland, for which he is totally responsible?

Mr. King: I certainly was not seeking in any way to claim responsibility for the search operation in the Irish Republic. I should make it clear that we sought to give them every support. The security forces put themselves at some risk and suffered casualties in their support of that search. With regard to the work that is continuing and the activities that are progressing, I am unable to discuss in detail a number of the steps that I have been taking, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are totally committed to that work.

Mr. Gow: In which other countries of Europe does Her Majesty's Government have less satisfactory arrangements for extradition than with the Republic of Ireland?

Mr. King: With no other country in Europe do we have the system of the backing of warrants, which is an important point to recognise in this regard. If the point that my hon. Friend is making concerns the vital nature of an effective, speedy and fair extradition process, I can assure him that we are committed to that. There is a later question on the Order Paper on this subject, but I can assure my hon. Friend that we are determined to work to that end.

Mr. Hume: Following the remarks of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea), will the Secretary of State please confirm that my party is the only one from Northern Ireland represented in this House that has no association of any description, and never has had, with any paramilitary or violent organisation?—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hume: Furthermore, will he confirm that the hon. Member in question and his leader—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hume: Furthermore, will he confirm that the hon. Member in question and his leader have on many occasions been seen in the streets with masked men, taking salutes from masked men, and using paramilitary organisations when it suited them? May I restate for the benefit of the House that my party fully and unequivocally supports the security forces in seeking out anybody who commits a crime in Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Member. I have noted, and the House will have noted, the categorical statement of the hon. Member. But what his intervention has clearly brought home to the House is that, of all things at this time — and I say it to hon. Members in all quarters of the House—what Northern Ireland needs is people who try to reduce differences, who try to build co-operation, and not those who seek the whole time to exploit division.

Rev. William McCrea: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I am not taking points of order.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Secretary of State aware that we on the Opposition Benches welcome the great improvement in cross-border security evidenced in the past few days and salute the work of both the forces of the Republic and our own in Northern Ireland, and the degree of co-operation which they have shown over those exercises? But will he also recall—going back to the earlier statement of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) — that one of the provisions of the agreement was the securing of greater confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland? Is he yet in a position to announce any further steps in that direction and, in particular, as it hits mostly the poor of both communities, is he yet in a position to say whether the Government are prepared to repeal the Payments for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971?

Mr. King: I cannot comment on the latter point, which the hon. Gentleman bowled in rather unexpectedly, but I will certainly look into it.

The hon. Gentleman paid tribute to the vast improvement in cross-border security co-operation, and that is what we are striving for. I have never concealed from the House the very considerable task that lies ahead of us. The very exercise that he referred to, the scale of the

search and the problems of what actually emerged from the search, leave some very difficult questions to be answered and still pose a considerable challenge to the security forces, both north and south of the border. It is certainly a good start, but I do not underestimate the scale of the job that has now to be done.

Sir John Farr: One of the benefits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement—I use the term advisedly—was that in times of emergency police forces on both sides of the border could cross it in hot pursuit of a criminal. Has any agreement to that effect been signed, and have any incidents taken place recently?

Mr. King: Not on that specific matter, but there are certain understandings of the ways in which co-operation can take place and certain arrangements that can be made, so that the security forces can give extremely close support in that sort of incident.

Police Authority

6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Stanley: My right hon. Friend last met the chairman of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland on 23 November to discuss matters relating to the authority's responsibilities. The details are confidential.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Following that discussion, will the Minister give an assurance that the Army uniforms, which were apparently supplied by Mr. Frank Turner of QED to the RUC for cash and sent to Northern Ireland in an unmarked lorry, were not, and will not at any time, be used by RUC personnel or others to pose as British service men?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman has tabled a considerable number of written questions about that matter. I hope that he will wait until we give the answers to them.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, since 1965, 733 people have been extradited to Great Britain from the Republic of Ireland and 158 from the Republic of Ireland to the north of Ireland, giving a total of 891? Given the views of the Chief Constable of the RUC about extradition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has this anything to do with the police?

Mr. Mallon: The views of the Chief Constable of the RUC on this issue are very important. In the light of his views and the figures that I have given, is the view that Britain is a less-favoured nation in respect of extradition very inaccurate?

Mr. Stanley: The Government attach profound importance to the fact that there should be no hiding place for terrorists either north or south of the border and that extradition arrangements must reflect that policy.

Mr. Kilfedder: Is the Minister aware that the spirit of rapprochement, generated as a result of the atrocity in Enniskillen among ordinary people, is being dissipated by sectarian killings? Will he make it clear to the chairman of the Police Authority that we must do everything possible to get people to support the police and to reduce the number of unemployed in Northern Ireland by encouraging them to join the police force? I ask the Minister to appeal to the people of Northern Ireland fully to support the security forces.

Mr. Stanley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we make that appeal at every possible opportunity. It is of profound importance that the entire community gives every support to the security forces. That is a fundamental requirement and we shall continue to make that point clear at every opportunity.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether, when he had talks with the chairman of the Police Authority, he discussed the fact that none of the SDLP representatives have ever called upon their people to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Ulster Defence Regiment or the British Army? Will he remedy that position by calling upon them now to do so, after the attack on the Ulster Democratic Unionist Members, when their own leader refused to talk to the Unionist party leadership and chose to talk to the IRA?

Mr. Stanley: It is the Government's clear policy that the security forces in the Province, whether the Royal Ulster Constabulary or the Ulster Defence Regiment, should be open to people from both communities. We wish to see the strongest representation from representatives of all religious denominations in the security forces in the Province.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

8. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: We are making worthwhile progress in our work under the agreement and are giving particular priority to our aim of enhancing security co-operation with the Republic of Ireland. The agreement has great potential to benefit all in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that all those who believe in the Union should support the Anglo-Irish Agreement in that the agreement is a guarantee from both Ireland and Britain that the status of Northern Ireland will never be changed against the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: That assurance of the principle of consent is at the heart of the agreement. It is very important indeed, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend, even in his present condition, for his support.

Extradition

9. **Rev. William McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the extradition of terrorists from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom, in the light of recent problems in this area.

12. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the implications for his policy on seeking extraditions from the Republic of Ireland of the new extradition arrangements agreed by the Irish Government.

Mr. Tom King: We welcome the Irish Government's decision to ratify the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. We note, however, that they have now introduced further procedural steps in the backing of warrants process. We are naturally concerned that these should not impede the extradition arrangements within these islands, and we welcome the Taoiseach's commitment to review them if they are not working satisfactorily.

Mr. McCrea: In the light of the Prime Minister's statements in the House on several occasions, will the Secretary of State confirm that the Government believe that the regulations put in by the South of Ireland Government inhibit rather than help the extradition of terrorists, which is not helpful in the fight against terrorism? When will the British Government call for the extradition of Owen Carron?

Mr. King: Obviously, I am not prepared to comment on individual cases, but on the general matter I have made clear our views on the importance of effective extradition arrangements and our commitment to work for those in the defeat of terrorism.

Mr. Hayes: I am sure that my right hon. Friend would agree that many Conservative Members are bitterly disappointed with the new extradition arrangements, because they will give precisely the wrong signal to the Loyalist community. In reality, will the new arrangements make any difference, or produce any obstacle, to the extradition of terrorists?

Mr. King: We have made clear our concern about the inclusion of the role of the Irish Attorney-General and the problems that that could cause. We are obviously anxious to ensure—and we hope—that our fears are not well founded, and we shall be working closely with, and making our representations clear to, the Irish Government to try to ensure the most effective arrangements possible.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Winnick: Are we to have a statement before the Christmas recess on what action, if any, is to be undertaken to deal with the present acute crisis in the National Health Service? When beds are not available for young children, as at the Children's hospital in Birmingham, and when at the Queen Elizabeth hospital cancer and kidney patients continue to wait for beds, what evidence is there, if any, that the NHS is safe in the right hon. Lady's hands?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman had been here when I last answered questions, he would have heard of the enormous number of operations that are now taking place—about 2,360,000 a year; of the 6·5 million in-patients a year in hospital; and of something like 38 million out-patient attendance in hospitals. He would also have heard of our excellent record on perinatal mortality, which means that some 3,000 babies are now surviving who would not have survived some 10 years ago.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Has my right hon. Friend, during her busy schedule, observed that, for the first time, the miners have now produced 4 tonnes per manshift, and that is double the production during the time of Lord Robens? Is that not partially attributable to the wise policies conducted by Her Majesty's Government?

The Prime Minister: It is very good news from the viewpoint of the miners and it shows how ridiculous is the overtime ban. It also shows the Government's wisdom in their excellent investment in mining equipment.

Mr. Kinnock: In an unprecedented statement this week, the presidents of the Royal Colleges of Physicians, Surgeons, and Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said—I shall use their word — that there is a deep financial "crisis" in the National Health Service. Does the Prime Minister agree with them?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, spending has gone up enormously on the National Health Service. Spending on the family practitioner services has gone up by 43 per cent. in real terms since the last Labour Government. It has gone up by 26 per cent. in real terms on hospital and community services. Capital spending on hospital and community services has gone up by 42 per cent. Indeed, the Government's record on health services far exceeds that of any other. As I have indicated to the right hon. Gentleman, expenditure on health services will continue to increase further.

Mr. Kinnock: The House and the country will note that the Prime Minister rejects the advice of the presidents of the royal colleges. Is that not further evidence that she is suffering from incurable complacency as well as untreatable arrogance in these matters as in many others? Following her litany of figures, may I say, in the words of Sir Raymond Hoffenberg, the president of the Royal College of Physicians:

"We know we will be hit by all the statistics . . . but the basic fact is that we are spending less on our health service than any other developed European country. The bottom line is that we had a service which was the envy of the world which we ran very cheaply. We are now trying to run it too cheaply."

The statement says:

"In spite of the efforts of doctors, nurses and other hospital staff, patient care is deteriorating." *[Interruption.]*

The House and the country are listening to those boos, when the Presidents of the royal colleges, are saying:

"Patient care is deteriorating. Acute hospital services have almost reached breaking point. Morale is depressingly low."

Does the Prime Minister not think that that is a crisis?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr. Speaker. Had the right hon. Gentleman listened to the figures, I would have thought that he would commend the Health Service on the excellent work that it is doing. I gave the annual figures for in-patients, for out-patients, and for operations. May I also point out that the Government have increased the proportion of the GNP spent on the National Health Service from 4·8 per cent. under the last Labour Government to 5·5 per cent. Not only has the GNP gone up, but the proportion spent has also gone up in real terms. Other countries are able to devote more to health care services because more is contributed privately, both from

private insurance and from families' pockets. If the doctors think what they have written, they must be very thankful that there is not a Labour Government in power.

Mr. Kinnock: In the 40-year history of the National Health Service the presidents of the royal colleges have never found if necessary to speak to any Government in the terms that they have spoken to the Prime Minister's Government. Can she not learn from that, or from the evidence of patients, nurses and other professions in the National Health Service? When Mr. Ian Todd, the president of the Royal College of Surgeons says:

"Managers are telling surgeons to do less work to balance the books."

does she not recognise that she is responsible for setting lives against sums? What will she do about it?

The Prime Minister *rose——[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. How can the Prime Minister possibly answer with all this noise going on?

Mr. Foulkes: You, Mr. Speaker, are like a Pakistani umpire.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should withdraw that remark at once.

Mr. Foulkes: I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister: In the 40 years of the NHS there have never been more patients treated, whether as in-patients or out-patients. There have never been more accident and emergency cases treated. There have never been more heart bypass operations or hip replacements — *[Interruption.]* Of course hon. Gentlemen will interrupt, because they cannot bear to hear the facts.

There are more cataract operations, more bone marrow transplants, more kidney transplants, more cervical smear tests, more people treated for kidney transplants and for chronic renal failure. — *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members will shout because they cannot bear the fact that the Government have a far better record than they have ever had. With regard to the future, if the Leader of the the Opposition had listened to me earlier he would have heard that next year spending on the NHS will increase by £1·1 billion. I mentioned that figure because I have heard Labour Members on the radio suggesting that an extra £200 million would do the task. Next year there will be an extra £1·1 billion—five times as much.

Mr. Riddick: Bearing in mind that the demands for health care are never-ending and the fact that private spending on health care in this country is among the lowest in Western Europe, does my right hon. Friend believe that the time has come to introduce tax relief for individuals who take out health care insurance?

The Prime Minister: No. It is more important to leave people to make their own decisions about what they do with their money than to increase reliefs for a particular sort of expenditure.

Q2. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McKay: Irrespective of the statistics that the Prime Minister throws out, and irrespective of the light attitude that she has adopted towards the statement from the Royal College of Surgeons, will she take notice of the National Association of Health Authorities, which reported that the hospital service is £200 million underfunded? Will she give an assurance to the House that the much needed increase in nurses' pay will not have to be found from the existing area health budgets?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman has given the figure of £200 million which I mentioned earlier. I have already told him that next year the increase going to the NHS will be £1·1 billion. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the previous Labour Government slashed the NHS programme. They cut new hospitals by one third, cut capital spending for two years running and, having supported a strike against patients, presided over an increase in waiting lists of 250,000, to record levels under Labour.

Mr. Heddle: On the matter of those employed in the Health Service, nurses in particular, and the community charge, will my right hon. Friend confirm that among the options which she and her right hon. Friends considered as a replacement for the present unfair and outdated system was capital valuation, coupled with a local income tax? Does she agree that that would bring hardship and chaos to every individual and their families, and that the Labour party, whose policy it is, is discredited for having pursued it?

The Prime Minister: Capital valuation would have been infinitely worse than even the present basis of valuation. A local tax, similar to a local income tax, would put an even heavier burden on those who pay income tax and would mean that the amount they had to pay would be greatly in excess of a community charge.

Q3. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nellist: Instead of burying her head in 10-year-old NHS statistics and repeating them like a cracked record, what would the Prime Minister say to Adrian Woolford, a seven-year-old Coventry lad, who has waited two years for a heart operation? What would she say to the parents of Chintu Kumar, a one-day-old baby, who died after a 100-mile dash from Coventry to Liverpool because half of Birmingham children's hospital beds were closed? What would she say to the parents of dozens of kids in the midlands who, tomorrow night, will meet midlands Members about the crisis? She might be able to buy her health and the health of her kids, but our families cannot. Does she not care?

The Prime Minister: Let me assure the hon. Gentleman that the statistics that I give are not out of date but are updated. The number of bypass operations, cataract operations and many other operations that are now performed on children could not have been performed 10 or 15 years ago. The number of nurses on paediatric work has greatly increased over and above what it was under Labour, and the number of paediatricians is also up. Services are rapidly increasing. Under this Government, not only have we had a great increase in the gross national product, but we have devoted an increasing proportion to

the National Health Service, and the amount of care far exceeds that which occurred under Labour or anything that could ever occur under Labour.

Q4. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Field: Will my right hon. Friend find time to consider a survey that was published by the Department of Trade and Industry? It shows that of the 300 foreign-owned companies in this country 90 per cent. said that industrial relations had improved in recent years, and that 96 per cent. said that the performance of their British subsidiaries was equal to or better than that of their foreign-owned subsidiaries. Is that not yet another endorsement of the Government's policy?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is excellent news. The success of this Government and the response of people to their policies are being recognised the world over. That is good news for everyone in this country.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Given the Prime Minister's concern for independent companies, will she spend some time today considering the implications of British Petroleum's likely doubling of its shares in Britoil? Britoil is an independent company in Scotland. Given that that company employs so many people in Scotland and that the smell of the Guinness takeover still lingers in the nostrils of the people of Scotland, will she assure us that, first, the Government will use their golden share to protect Britoil and, secondly, that they will use every opportunity to safeguard against insider dealing?

The Prime Minister: Insider dealing is a matter of the criminal law. It is not a matter for me. With regard to BP's purchase of shares in Britoil, I understand that it is a commercial transaction, and it is not for us to interfere.

Mr. McCusker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after business questions.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 14 DECEMBER — Until 7 o'clock private Members' motions.

Afterwards progress on remaining stages of the Local Government Bill.

TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER — Completion of remaining stages of the Local Government Bill.

Motions on the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1988-89 (HC 142), the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1984-85 (HC 158) and the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1985-86 (HC 159).

WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill (1st day).

Motion relating to the appointment of Mr. John Bryant Bourn CB as Comptroller and Auditor General.

THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER — Completion of Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill.

FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER—Adjournment motions.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Leader of the House for responding positively to our representations about providing two full days for the debate next week on the poll tax Bill. In view of the importance of the business and the number of hon. Members who will undoubtedly want to speak on Second Reading, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that, if there are lengthy statements or other business before the debate on the poll tax, business may continue after 10 o'clock? Following the right hon. Gentleman's discussions with the Secretary of State for the Environment, after his promise last week, will the right hon. Gentleman inform us when the poll tax rebate regulations will be published since those details must have a direct bearing on the debate on the poll tax Bill?

Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister to make a statement next week on the reasons why the report by Sir Robin Ibbs on the career Civil Service is not to be published? In that context, does he accept that it is important that that statement is made, in the light of the words of the former Cabinet Secretary, Lord Hunt of Tanworth, in *The Times* this morning that

"the issue of lifelong confidentiality is a red herring: what that argument is about is unauthorised disclosure"?

The Home Office has recently announced a change in the manner in which immigration cases are to be handled. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that those are not fully implemented until proper consultations have been undertaken to ensure that Members of the House who are involved in such cases have a direct involvement?

Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement on the Government's defence policy in the wake of the treaty and the super-power meeting in Washington this week? The Secretary of State for Defence told the NATO Defence Ministers last month that he wants what he called "compensations" for the withdrawal and discussion of land-based intermediate missiles? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that a statement is made next week so that the Secretary of State for Defence can tell us about his ambitions for rearmament?

I note that there is to be no debate next week on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and the serious situation that has arisen as a result of the report of the Committee of Selection that it is not able, at present, to recommend the setting up of that Committee? In the light of that unexpected report from the Committee of Selection, I understand that it would be sensible to allow a short period for reflection in the hope that a way forward can be found. However, the Leader of the House will recognise that this issue must come before the House as early as possible in January, regardless of the embarrassment that that will cause the Government.

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that it will cause the Government all the embarrassment that the right hon. Gentleman anticipates. Let me answer the questions that the right hon. Gentleman asked me in the order in which he asked them. First, he asked me about the Local Government Finance Bill. We can certainly have discussions through the usual channels to see whether what he suggests would be helpful to the House. I give an undertaking that I shall do my very best to keep statements away from those days to enable as long a debate as possible.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the decisions to be made about uprating income support in relation to the community charge. All I can tell him is that decisions on the amount of uprating will be announced in due course. I cannot be more specific than that at the moment.

The right hon. Gentleman asked about the report of Sir Robin Ibbs. I shall refer that to the Prime Minister, but I am unable to give him the information that he requires at the moment.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the Home Office review of hon. Members' correspondence and stops. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced on Second Reading of the Immigration Bill on 16 November, he is reviewing the procedures under which hon. Members take up immigration cases with his Department, whether in the form of written representations or of interventions, especially stops in port cases. The review is not yet complete, but when my right hon. Friend and the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), have reached detailed conclusions they will be the subject of consultation with both sides of the House and with hon. Members generally.

I shall refer the question of a statement on defence to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

As the Leader of the Opposition said, I stated last week that I was happy to arrange a debate on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs before Christmas, if that was the wish of the House. However, following discussions through the usual channels, I understand that it would be for the more general convenience of hon. Members if there was a longer time to consider the report of the Committee of Selection. Taking account of that, I propose to arrange a debate on that matter immediately after the House returns in January.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Does my right hon. Friend recall that he gave a modestly encouraging reply to a question that I first started putting to his predecessor before Christmas 1986 about a debate on science policy? When are we to have such a debate? It is becoming rather urgent.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's deep concern about those matters and his persistence. I hope that he will be tolerant of me for a little longer.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): In view of today's recommendation by the British Caledonian board to its shareholders in favour of the partnership with SAS, will the Leader of the House make arrangements for a statement to be made as soon as possible giving an assurance on behalf of the Government that there will be no ministerial interference with the Civil Aviation Authority to prevent the shareholders making a decision in the interests of a strong, second-force airline in Britain and competition for the consumer?

Mr. Wakeham: As I understand it, the Secretary of State for Transport has certain statutory duties in this matter that follow from any report that he should receive from the CAA. I do not believe that I can say anything else about this matter other than that I shall report the right hon. Gentleman's concern to my right hon. Friend.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): As the Government expect to secure the Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill next week, can my right hon. Friend say whether he has any plans to take the Committee stage of part I of the Bill, dealing with the community charge, on the Floor of the House in view of the constitutional importance of the decision and the fact that many hon. Members will wish to discuss that matter in detail?

Mr. Wakeham: I have a feeling that we shall have plenty of time to discuss all the implications of the Bill. I have no plans to take any part of it on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 429?

[That this House calls for the profits made by the House of Commons Refreshment Department, including the Kiosk, during the week 14th December to 18th December inclusive, to be donated to the Ethiopian Famine Appeal.]

It calls for the profits made by the Refreshment Department next week to be donated to the Ethiopian famine appeal. Does he agree that the vast majority of Members and visitors, who will be spending a large amount of money next week through the Refreshment Department, would welcome a proportion of that money going to that important appeal? Does he also agree that where there is a political will there is always a way? Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman use his best endeavours to cut through the red tape to ensure that starving people are helped by this House next week?

Mr. Wakeham: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern. However, the direction of excess funds from the Kiosk is generally a matter of the House of Commons Commission. The Government have made clear their concern about human rights in Ethiopia and the failure to provide agricultural incentives. In the present circumstances, the overriding need is to deliver food to those who face another major famine.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My right hon. Friend will be aware that the annual report on Hong Kong is likely to come out next month. Will he arrange for an early debate on the report on the territory, preferably as soon as possible and before the publication in Hong Kong of the White Paper proposals regarding representative government in the territory? Those proposals are due to be published in February and it would be helpful if we had a debate in the time between publication of the report and the White Paper.

Mr. Wakeham: That is certainly an important issue and I shall look at the possibilities for an early debate.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I refer to exchanges initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) yesterday which you, Mr. Speaker, said could be dealt with now. They concerned the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Lord Advocate, whose responsibilities are also covered by the Secretary of State in this House.

Is the Leader of the House aware that my hon. Friend asked about the background to the pre-dawn raid by Strathclyde police on executives of the BBC in February? In reply to those questions, first the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and then the Secretary of State for Scotland denied responsibility for answering my hon. Friend's supplementary question. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary said that my hon. Friend's question was

"beyond my sphere of responsibility . . . and goes to the root of intelligence matters that are the responsibility of others." —[*Official Report*, 9 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 433.]

Can the Leader of the House say specifically to which others we should address our questions?

Mr. Wakeham: I think the best thing I can do is to tell the hon. Gentleman that the Minister quite properly took the view that the supplementary question concerning grounds for suspicion related to intelligence matters. If, however, the question was intended to relate to the grounds on which the original warrant had been granted, a reply could have been given. I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister has written to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who asked the question, and the confusion arose as a result of a late correction to his question by the hon. Gentleman as to the date of the seizure of the material.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there is no provision next week for a debate on the formation of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. Can he confirm that that omission was at the insistence of the Opposition? If he can, what conclusions does my right hon. Friend draw about the attitude of the Opposition to Scottish business? Is he as concerned as I am that the Scottish people are being denied important representation in this House because of the obstructive tactics of the Opposition? When will we have a debate on the formation of the Select Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: We will have a debate on it as soon as we come back from Christmas. I shall leave it to my hon. Friend to draw conclusions about these matters. I reiterate that the discussions took place through the usual channels, and it was generally agreed that it would be for the convenience of the House not to have a debate next week.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that Opposition Members are extremely anxious that the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs should be set up? Without criticising the Committee of Selection, I may say that the motion tabled in the name of the Chairman of that Committee was not

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really satisfactory in enabling the House to reach a satisfactory conclusion that would serve the interests of the whole House.

If there are to be strictures regarding the setting up of the Scottish Select Committee and the representation of Scotland in it, I refer the Leader of the House to the Committee considering the Health and Medicines Bill in which the absence of a Scottish Minister is to be deplored, particularly as the Opposition have two hon. Members of great expertise who wish to question the Government in Committee line by line and clause by clause on the operation of the Health Service in Scotland. Is it not a scandal that the Under-Secretary of State, who acknowledges the Adam Smith rule, is not willing to be seated on that Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the Ministers on that Committee will give a good account of themselves and will answer all the questions raised in the debates there. I cannot say anything further about that.

As for the hon. Gentleman's other question about the Scottish Select Committee, as I have said from the Dispatch Box on many occasions, I am anxious to set it up as soon as possible. If I have the hon. Gentleman's support in doing that, we may make some progress.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When my right hon. Friend considers setting up the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, will he bear in mind that some Conservative Members will welcome the opportunity to debate what was wrong with it and why it did not perform its duty satisfactorily in the way that the other Select Committees—I served on two of them—did?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend does not need any encouragement from me to find an opportunity of expressing his views on these matters. My concern is to try to get the Select Committee set up in a proper and acceptable manner.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): At some time during the two-day debate on the Local Government Finance Bill, will the Leader of the House try to ensure that the House—in particular hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies — is told why the poll tax proposals will not extend to Northern Ireland? After all, if the poll tax is for the benefit of all the citizens of the United Kingdom, surely the citizens of Northern Ireland should have the advantage of it, too.

Mr. Wakeham: The issue of who is called in debates is not a matter for me; nor is that of whether these matters are in order. However, I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Could my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary be asked to confirm to the House next week that the Goverment have not forgotten Mr. Terry Waite and other British hostages in the Lebanon, and that every diplomatic opportunity will be taken to bring pressure to bear on sovereign Governments—not terrorists—to bring about their release?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course, I am sure that the whole House wants and expects my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to do whatever is open to him to assist in this matter. I confirm that that is what he is doing.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Leader of the House perhaps find time in the early new year for a general debate on the issue of freedom of the press? No doubt he will agree that the growing rash of writs from the Attorney-General seeking to gag parts of the press and some people is most worrying. Will he bear in mind that it is often a free press that separates a democracy from a tyranny?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to comment on those points, but I shall certainly bear them in mind.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that most people in the free world strongly support the INF treaty recently concluded in Washington? Does he accept that the treaty has created expectations which, if combined with major defence cuts by the United States, could have a major impact on the defence of Britain? Is not that a reason for a special defence debate, over and above the ones that we can normally expect, early next year?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that other hon. Members would support my hon. Friend, but I do not see an early prospect of having such a debate. My hon. Friend may be able to find an opportunity on Wednesday to ask the Foreign Secretary a question about this.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): In connection with the appointment next Wednesday of the Comptroller and Auditor General, has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 427 which is in my name and in the names of an increasing number of my hon. Friends?

[That this House considers that, as the Comptroller and Auditor General is an Officer of the House under the National Audit Act (1983), appointments to the post should be made on a motion put down by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and that the appointment should not involve any consultation with the Prime Minister; and further considers that the requirement for the agreement of the Prime Minister to the appointment of an officer whose responsibility is to examine the financial management of the Government is constitutionally unacceptable.]

It draws attention to how unacceptable it is that the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General, now a servant of the House whose job it is to inquire into the financial management of the Government, should be subject to the approval, even the veto, of the Prime Minister. Will the right hon. Gentleman seek to table an amendment to the National Audit Act 1983 to establish that the appointment shall be made by the Public Accounts Committee and on a motion by its Chairman? Will the right hon. Gentleman hold up this appointment until such an amendment has been debated in the House?

Mr. Wakeham: No, I cannot agree to that. The procedure for the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General is laid down in section 1 of the National Audit Act 1983 and that procedure will be strictly followed. This is a matter for the House, but the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee has been consulted and I understand that he has given his approval to this appointment.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend consider delaying the Report stage of the Local Government Bill? Is he aware that this week about 50 of my right hon. and hon. Friends signed

an early-day motion critical of the way in which local authorities exercise their powers under the Race Relations Act 1976? Is he further aware that an amendment has been tabled today to repeal section 71 of that Act? In fairness to local authorities, they ought to know that there is a serious risk of that amendment receiving the approval of the House and they ought to have time to put forward their claims to continue to exercise what many Conservative Members regard as their pernicious powers.

Mr. Wakeham: A reasonable time has been allowed to deal with these matters. No doubt my hon. Friend will forcefully put his point of view in next week's debate.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House give the House time—if not now, certainly after the recess—to consider the matter of loan sharks and the credit problem, which has become a matter of public concern? Does he agree that the House ought to pay more attention to the problem of the exploitation of the most vulnerable sections of working people, many of whom are now at risk because of their indebtedness to loan sharks who demand gross rates of interest on loans?

Mr. Wakeham: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about any irregularities of that sort. I cannot promise him time for a debate in the immediate future, but he might try his hand at applying for an Adjournment debate and see how we get on.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): In view of the allegation by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) that his is the only party in Northern Ireland that has no association with paramilitaries, will the Leader of the House find time before the House rises for a debate on paramilitaries? I and my party not only repudiate paramilitaries but unequivocally support the security forces and the rule of law. It is essential to put the record straight.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend seems to have done that effectively, but I cannot promise time for a debate next week.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman provide time for a debate on the safety of equipment provided to schoolchildren following upon the death of Billy Walker, my constituent, after swallowing the top of a Bic pen? The executives of the allegedly reputable company have yet again refused to discuss the matter privately. In the circumstances, perhaps the best remedy is to discuss the matter publicly so that the company's heartless and irresponsible behaviour can be held up to the scorn it deserves and so that, at the very least, the company's shareholders will know the way in which the company's executives have seen fit to misrun it.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. and learned Gentleman needs no lesson from me on how to raise matters that he rightly thinks are of concern to his constituents and to the whole country, but I suggest that an Adjournment debate may be a suitable starting point.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend seek to arrange for the Minister for Sport to come to the House to make a statement about the problems the British cricket team is encountering in Pakistan, and to make a comparison between that and the excellent umpiring and refereeing in this country, not least the excellent refereeing in the second round of the Football Association cup last Sunday when Macclesfield Town football club, otherwise known as "the silkmen", demolished an official league club, Rotherham, by four goals to nil?

Mr. Wakeham: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his football team, and wish it well in future competitions.

All hon. Members will regret what has happened in recent events in Pakistan. Whatever the circumstances, there can be no excuse for flouting the authority of judges, referees or umpires. Such respect is fundamental to the playing of any sport. The enforcement of standards and the discipline of umpires are matters for the cricket authorities.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House provide time before the Christmas recess for a statement or debate on the Government's attitude to their golden shareholding in Britoil? Does he accept that there is great concern among hon. Members about the future of the United Kingdom's largest independent oil company, about 1,700 Scottish jobs and about whether the Government had prior knowledge of the BP moves? Does he accept that the Government must make a political decision in the next few weeks and that hon. Members have the right to debate it?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise the hon. Gentleman a statement, but I will certainly refer his question to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the amendment to early-day motion 226.

[That this House notes with acute concern the opposition of the honourable Member for Ealing North to the right of the Dawoodis Bohra Muslim Community to have a place of worship in Ealing, despite the support given by Labour and Conservative councillors following detailed consultation in the area; further notes that following his campaign there has been an increase in racially motivated attacks in the area and that some behaviour at a public meeting has been offensive and came close to breaching the Public Order Act; and therefore calls upon the honourable Member for Ealing North to condemn such behaviour unreservedly and to support the right of freedom of worship.]

The motion points out that the Ealing council has mistakenly granted planning permission to the Dawoodis Bohra Sikhs to build a mosque on an industrial estate in Northolt, and seeks to persuade the council to find an alternative site for the mosque.

As the motion is signed by only 30 hon. Members and the amendment is signed by 70 hon. Members, will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate for the sake of the people of Northolt who are deeply concerned, disturbed and angry about the matter?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend raises matters of concern to him and a number of his constituents, but they are matters for the local planning authority, the Ealing council. I cannot promise him that we can find time for a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Home Secretary make a statement next week on the relationship between Gibraltar and Britain on the landing rights agreement with the Spanish Government? We have not had a statement on the agreement, which raises many constitutional issues. For example, if the

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Gibraltar Assembly were to veto the arrangement, what would happen to the agreement and the broader agreement on air fares in the EEC? The House and the people of Gibraltar deserve a full statement from the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Wakeham: That is an important matter and I will refer it to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Has my right hon. Friend noticed the profound concern expressed about the future of the D notice committee? Is he aware that the voluntary D notice system has worked extremely well for many years and was working effectively between the BBC and the authorities until last week? Now that the Government's injunction has smashed to smithereens the reputation and effectiveness of the D notice committee would it not be right for the House to debate whether it should continue to be funded with taxpayers' money and kept going?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future, but the Government attach great value to the D notice system and hope that the media will continue to participate.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that, if the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments decides to request a memorandum on the Welsh rate support grant orders on Tuesday, the orders will not be taken? I am sure that the Leader of the House will agree that there is little point in having a Select Committee to examine orders and report to the House if the orders are debated prior to that report.

When does the right hon. Gentleman expect the Register of Members' Interests to be published? Will it be published early in the new year? May we have a debate on the register because there have been a number of reports about hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), being employed by organisations such as Saatchi and Saatchi, which is lobbying for British Airways in the BA-BCal bid? We should be able to explore the ramifications of the way in which Conservative Members obtain financial advantage from their parliamentary endeavours.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sorry that this saga is changing its nature. All hon. Members have now completed an entry to the register and it was laid on Tuesday following a meeting of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I understand that at the meeting the Committee agreed a short report which will be published early next week. A copy of the register, which is being printed as it stood on 8 December, is in the Library. The hon. Gentleman can study it at his leisure. I cannot answer the question about the Welsh rate support grant without looking into it, but I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in view of the fundamental importance of the amendment tabled to the Local Government Bill by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and his colleagues about the Race Relations Act 1976, and how that applies to local government, and as it strikes at the foundations of the Bill, will he give additional time—perhaps until midnight—on Monday for the debate on the amendment?

Mr. Wakeham: Certainly we have given what I believe is a reasonable amount of time. We will waive the rule on Monday to enable discussion to take place. However, there is no fixed time limit as such.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House confirm that, as it is currently compiled, the Register of Members' Interests is based upon a system that was devised more than a decade ago? Although it would require hon. Members to show whether they have any interest in stonemasonry, they would not be expected to include any reference to show whether they were freemasons, including those who are honorary freemasons, some of whom may be on the Conservative Benches. Would it not be a good idea, when the Register is compiled next time round—it is apparently ready for publication now — that it should contain a part instructing Members of Parliament who were members of a freemasons' lodge to include that information in the Register, as is the case in many local authorities?

Mr. Wakeham: That is of course a matter primarily for the Select Committee on Members' Interests and ultimately for the House.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to allow the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) to withdraw and apologise for his disgraceful attack on the Army colonel which was made under the cloak of parliamentary privilege and which has since been proved to have been false?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that that is a matter for me. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) is responsible for what he says and he will have to decide how best to deal with these matters.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that I have issued a public statement today about the Queen's Dragoon Guard in which I said that, in view of the fact that the Ministry of Defence had found no evidence to substantiate the allegations, I withdraw unconditionally and apologise to the commanding officer and the regiment?

With regard to Lieutenant Colonel Macmillan, the complaint was not that he broke the regulations, as the MOD has implied. The complaint was that he fined a man £500 for having a very untidy room and another man £500 for refusing to stop his bicycle when asked and for being disorderly. I regard those fines as excessive. The charges and the fines were excessive. Nevertheless, I have said publicly that I regret naming Lieutenant Colonel Macmillan under parliamentary privilege before the allegations were checked.

There is far too much evidence not only of bullying, but of real brutality in the Army. I have made my apology in good faith, but that in no way detracts from my deep and profound concern about my evidence of bullying. I will pursue my campaign to try to eradicate bullying from the Army.

Mr. Wakeham: The whole House will be grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for making that apology as he may have caused serious damage as a result of what he said previously. We much appreciate his apology. However, I

cannot accept what he said subsequently. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces have made the position quite clear. I do not believe that that coincides with what the right hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Given that this is apparently a Government of law and order, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement as early as possible about the Post Office letter monopoly and its lack of enforcement in Coventry? Will he explain why the university, the district health authority and a number of businesses are clearly breaking the law by using a firm called Coventry Couriers which, at 10p a time, and with a frank very similar to that used by the Post Office, is delivering mail and breaking the monopoly in Coventry —or will it be like the Chancellor's wife this morning, with another blind eye being turned?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that if he has evidence of the law being broken there are proper ways to deal with it.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Notwithstanding the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to the leader of the Liberal party, will he consider urgently the possibility of an early debate on civil air transport policy so that the Secretary of State for Transport can explain fully to the House how the Government intend to facilitate transnational mergers within Europe, avoid quasi monopolies by big airlines and maximise competition for the benefit of the travelling public?

Mr. Wakeham: I fully recognise the importance of those issues. However, I cannot offer an early debate on the subject. I will keep the matter in mind.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As the Government have introduced the Local Government Bill as a means of extinguishing the scope for mischief-making by the race relations industrialists in local government, why is this democratic Government now emasculating its own handiwork by bringing forward new clause 5 on the instructions of a discredited quango—the Commission for Racial Equality—when it can just as readily, with this Bill, get rid of clause 71 of the totally discredited Race Relations Act 1976?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend's question is more pertinent to the debate next week than to business questions.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the Leader of the House find ways, through the usual channels, to get the Secretary of State for Energy to issue a statement of concern about the sale of National Coal Board houses in Nottinghamshire? Currently 2,000 houses are up for sale and 3,500 ex-miners, most of whom are very old, need help and security. They fear for their future security in their homes. I do not believe that they should be made to wait by the coal board, which is refusing to sell to proper housing consortia which will look after them in their old age.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything to what I said on the subject a week or two ago.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Leader of the House realise that his comments on the Scottish Select Committee are disgraceful and completely unacceptable, indicating delay, dither and incompetence on the part of the usual channels? It is scarcely credible that the Labour party seems to be going along with it. What is the Leader of the House doing about Scottish Tory Back Benchers who are shirking their duty by refusing to serve on the Committee, and about ideas such as drafting in English Members when duly elected SNP Members who are willing to serve are deliberately excluded? When will this affront to Scotland be ended?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not consider it in any way an affront to Scotland that such matters must be considered properly and carefully. The Scottish Select Committee is an important matter. If we are to set up such a Committee which has the support of the House, we must make sure that we obtain agreement as widely as possibly throughout the House.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): In the light of today's decision by the five Law Lords, which will prevent journalists from investigating insider dealing and other important matters, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the need to amend the Contempt of Court Act 1981? Does he agree that Mr. Jeremy Warner of *The Independent* should defy the Law Lords and not reveal his sources?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly do not recommend anyone to break the law, but I have nothing else to say about the case in the House of Lords.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware of the early-day motion that I am tabling today—*[Interruption.]* He may have had notice of it. It calls for Sir Clive Whitmore, chairman of the D notice committee, to convene a meeting of that committee, and to recommend the resignation of all the members.

Does the Leader of the House understand that the work of the committee is now totally undermined? The committee is recommending one course of action, while the Attorney-General and the Treasury Solicitor are recommending completely different courses. As there is an inconsistency and a contradiction, why cannot the matter be wrapped up in the way that has been suggested?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, I can contain myself in patience until I see his early-day motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): May I return to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas)? Will the Leader of the House seek an early meeting with the Secretary of State for Social Services to see whether an Under-Secretary of State for Scotland can be a member of the Standing Committee on the Health and Medicines Bill? How can we possibly question the likely effects of the Bill on the Health Service in Scotland—as the right hon. Gentleman knows, health is dealt with separately in Scotland—unless someone with responsibility for it is on the Committee?

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas).

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Does the Leader of the House accept that many hon. Members are

[Mr. Graham Allen]

very concerned at the appointment of a new Comptroller and Auditor General? I do not intend to cast aspersions on any individual, but the appointment is of someone who has been very senior in defence procurement, and also has a Treasury background. Given the fight that hon. Members on both sides of the House have had to secure the independence of the Comptroller and Auditor General, will he allow his right hon. and hon. Friends a free vote after next week's debate on the appointment, so that they can decide having heard the full facts, and without pressure from the usual channels?

Mr. Wakeham: When the hon. Gentleman has been here a bit longer, he will know that we do not talk about whipping matters from this Dispatch Box.

The new Comptroller and Auditor General is a deputy secretary in the Ministry of Defence and has wide experience of public expenditure both in the MoD and in the Northern Ireland Office. He is an eminently suitable person to be appointed, and his appointment will be the subject of next week's debate.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): In view of the unsatisfactory replies that we are receiving from the Government over the acute crisis in the National Health Service, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman, in the spirit of Christmas, whether any arrangements are being made for copies of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens to be given to every member of the Cabinet to read on Christmas day?

Mr. Wakeham: Instead of going on in the way that he does—I accept that it is in the spirit of Christmas—the hon. Gentleman should take heed of what I said to one of his hon. Friends the other day. If the hon. Gentleman looks at some of the figures published in *The Guardian* about spending on the National Health Service, I think that he will see that the record of the present Government is considerably better than that of the Government whom he supported.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Has the Leader of the House been informed that this morning the Act Now group, representing 40 organisations of or for disabled persons, has launched a campaign calling for the full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act? In its main leaflet it asks why, given that Royal Assent was granted on 8 July 1986, nothing has happened 17 months later. What reply has the Leader of the House to that question — especially as he was Chief Whip at that time—and will he forgive disabled people for feeling cynical about the Government's inactivity?

Mr. Wakeham: In answer to the hon. Gentleman's first question, I did not know of this morning's announcement. However, I shall refer his question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Adjournment (Christmas)

4.15 pm

Mr. Speaker: I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Friday 18 December, up to eight hon. Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 pm on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Tuesday morning, and the result will be made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1979, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Consolidated Fund (No. 3) Act 1987.
2. Highland Region Harbours (Miscellaneous Powers) Order Confirmation Act 1987.
3. Lerwick Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1987.
4. Associated British Ports Act 1987.

Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill

4.16 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

It is appropriate that we should be considering this Bill in what has been a very significant week for arms control, and for the development of East-West relations generally. As the House will be aware, the Bill was given its Second Reading on 22 October, and subsequently considered in Committee. The debate on 22 October and the Committee stage gave wide opportunities not only for discussion of the main provisions of the Bill, but for a wide-ranging review of arms control issues generally. I thank my colleagues on both sides of the Standing Committee for the insights and contributions that they made. I should particularly like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, Moorlands (Mr. Knox) for his exemplary and good-humoured chairmanship of the Committee.

I am sure that the House will not want me to cover the same ground as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State in his speech on 22 October. However, it might be appropriate briefly to recapitulate the purposes of the Bill. I hope after that, if it is consistent with the rules of order, to say a few words about the historic agreement on the removal of the INF missiles signed in Washington on Tuesday, to explain both the main provisions of the Bill as they affect the United Kingdom and how it may be employed to give effect to the INF treaty.

As it now stands, the Bill is intended to give effect to the outcome of last year's Stockholm conference on confidence building and disarmament in Europe. The conference called for privileges and immunities to be extended to inspectors carrying out on-site verification, and to observers invited to military exercises notified under the terms of the Stockholm document—which is itself a major confidence-building measure between East and West. We believe that it is a significant and rather underrated development.

The United Kingdom's representatives have carried out one inspection in the German Democratic Republic this year and have observed 15 exercises since the document was signed. Eight of those observations were in Warsaw pact countries and seven in other NATO countries.

For the first time, we had an opportunity to play host to observers from Stockholm signatory states, including all the Warsaw pact countries except Romania, during Exercise Purple Warrior in Scotland last month. The observation programme passed off smoothly and attracted compliments from East and West observers on the efficiency with which it was organised and on the commitment to openness and transparency that it demonstrated.

The Bill provides for privileges and immunities to be conferred by Order in Council, to give effect to arrangements superseding the Stockholm document or to furthering arms control and disarmament generally—for example, the INF agreement, to which I shall return in a moment.

The purpose of extending the Bill by Order in Council is to ensure that, so far as possible, we avoid the need for primary legislation each time there is a new arms control agreement. The verification arrangements of such agreements might involve the granting of privileges or immunities. I assure the House—I hope that I made this clear in Committee — that such extensions will be performed under the affirmative resolution procedure, which will give hon. Members a full opportunity to debate any order. I believe that that is a sensible way to proceed, and that it will reduce the administrative burden on the House.

A number of probing amendments were tabled in Committee, the effect of which would have been to limit the granting of privileges and immunities to the Stockholm document alone and require the introduction of fresh primary legislation every time that a new arms control agreement was implemented. I am pleased that, in the light of some discussions, sponsors of the amendments agreed to withdraw them. The fact that no further amendments were tabled on Report suggests that the framework that was set out in Committee is acceptable to the House. I am glad about that, as these issues should, so far as possible, not be the subject of partisan considerations but should command the confidence of everyone.

I should like to make one point clear. The Bill does not make any changes in the privileges and amenities that are given; they remain exactly as set out in the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964. All it does is extend for a very brief period the category of people who are entitled to enjoy those privileges and immunities. In practice, this will have little effect on people who are here for a very short visit and very limited in numbers. For instance, under the Stockholm document, inspectors—a maximum of four per inspection team—and observers—a maximum of two per country — will enjoy, among other things, inviolability of the person, immunity from criminal jurisdiction and, with some minor exceptions, immunity from civil and administrative jurisdictions. Those privileges are enjoyed by diplomats who are currently accredited here. Many of those observing exercises in the United Kingdom — this was the case with Purple Warrior—will be service attachés accredited here. Many of the small Stockholm signatory countries send no observers at all.

In the case of inspectors, the time limits are clearly specified in the Stockholm document, and no inspection may last for longer than 48 hours. It is envisaged that inspectors will bring auxiliary personnel, as the British inspection team did when it went to the German Democratic Republic in September. Auxiliary personnel are equated with administrative and technical staff at diplomatic missions in London and will enjoy inviolability of the person and immunity from criminal jurisdiction. Such immunities will be limited to acts performed in the course of their duties.

In Committee, questions were asked about the hypothetical extension of the Bill to a range of potential arms control agreemens. I assured the Committee, and I repeat my assurance to the House, that at present we envisage the extension of the Bill to only the INF agreement, in so far as it affects United Kingdom territory. We intend to avail ourselves of clause 1, which provides for its application to other arms control agreements, in this respect. I am unable to tell the House precisely when we shall do that, because much will depend on the timing of the Bill's remaining stages, and other matters relating to the ratification of the INF treaty, which we hope will occur in the new year. I hope that it will be completed in time

[Mr. David Mellor]

to allow an Order in Council to be tabled speedily. Indeed, we would want to table it before the treaty comes into force.

I said earlier that the INF agreement was signed on Tuesday after much painstaking negotiation and considerable difficulty. Despite the doubts of Left and Right, which were expressed at different times, the two super-powers have achieved what their negotiators have long had in their sights — the global elimination of United States' and Soviet longer and shorter range intermediate ground-based missiles.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): While the Minister is on this subject, will he say when the INF treaty will be available to the House? Is the text available now? Has the Minister seen a copy of it, and will it be available in the Library?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Before the Minister deals with that point, may I say that I am sure that he will bear in mind that his remarks must be related to the content of the Bill. We cannot broaden the Third Reading debate into a general debate, or anything like as wide a debate as we had on Second Reading.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Without intending any discourtesy to the Minister, surely what my hon. Friend has asked for is highly relevant. The Bill confers privileges and immunities on Soviet inspectors who will be coming here in fulfilment of the provisions of the treaty. If we are conferring privileges and immunities on foreign inspectors coming to Britain, to the constituency of, among others, the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), surely we have a right to see the text of the treaty under which the Bill will confer privileges and immunities? Surely, therefore, it is highly relevant to this narrow Third Reading debate to ask to see the treaty?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I wanted to remind the House that the debate cannot be broadened to a general debate on the treaty; it must relate to what is in the Bill. I have heard nothing out of order yet, but I thought that it might be helpful to fire a warning shot.

Mr. Mellor: The principal treaty between the Soviet Union and the United States was signed on Tuesday. The basing country agreement between the United States and Britain regarding inspections on United Kingdom territory at the two areas where missiles are deployed will be signed tomorrow. Subsequently, a document between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union will have to be signed, whereby the Soviet Union will agree to abide by the arrangements that have been entered into, and that will not be done for some time. With regard to the first two documents, we shall make them available as soon as we have clean texts. We have copies of the text, but they are not in clean form.

We have been kept in touch with the drafting as it has gone on, and as I have explained to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), all the arrangements affecting the United Kingdom had to be cleared with us before they were accepted. A clean copy of the treaty in proper form will be deposited as soon as possible. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hamilton finds this funny. It is typical of the hon. Gentleman to start carping on a day when all of us——

Mr. Robertson: Don't be rude.

Mr. Mellor: It is all very well the hon. Gentleman telling me not to be rude; it is like the kettle calling the pot black. This treaty should be a cause for rejoicing. We have no interest in keeping it a secret document, and when we have a proper copy of the text available from Washington it will be disclosed. At the moment, copies come in the form of diplomatic telegrams of a kind that we would not wish to deposit in the House of Commons. A proper copy will come very quickly, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no great secret that he needs to have uncovered.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: In a moment.

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: In a moment.

Mr. Davies: On the same point——

Mr. Mellor: In a moment. I have told the right hon. Gentleman that I shall give way when I choose and not when he stands at the Dispatch Box, in breach of the rules of order of the House, and shouts at me. I shall make my point and then, if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall give way—but not before.

As we intend to introduce an Order in Council that would permit inspectors diplomatic immunities and privileges under the Bill, pursuant to their work on the INF treaty, I shall give some details of the verification arrangements as they will affect the United Kingdom, if right hon. and hon. Members on the Labour Front Bench will permit me to do so.

Mr. Davies: The hon. and learned Gentleman talks of verification arrangements. Will the note agreed between the United States and the United Kingdom set out the number of cruise missiles at Greenham Common and the number to be removed? The Minister will have seen the report in today's *Independent*, which seems to give the impression that there are more cruise missiles at Greenham Common than the Government knew about. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House the figures? Are there 24 launchers and 96 missiles, or 29 launchers and 101 missiles? How many missiles and launchers are there at Greenham Common and how many will be removed?

Mr. Mellor: That is well wide of the mark, and I shall not deal with that point. I think that I have the assent of the Chair in saying that. The Bill deals with privileges and immunities for inspections. There will be draw-down arrangements to provide for the missiles to be removed at a certain period. I am not here to answer Ministry of Defence questions about how many missiles there are. The right hon. Gentleman, who purports to be shadow Secretary of State for Defence, knows that that is a Ministry of Defence matter and not a Foreign Office matter.

Mr. Davies: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: I shall not give way. The right hon. Gentleman can stand there till doomsday and I shall not give way. The right hon. Gentleman knows that, if he

wants that information, he must seek it in a proper way and not from a Foreign Office Minister speaking on a quite different matter.

The INF treaty has proved that to negotiate from strength and maintain Alliance solidarity is the way to achieve arms control agreements. The agreement has established the principle of asymmetrical reductions—heavily asymmetrical, as it turns out—with the Soviet Union coming down from much higher levels. It will eliminate the threat of SS20s, SS12s and SS22s to our cities and airfields. For the first time in the nuclear age, nuclear weapons will be reduced. The verification regime is the most stringent to be put in place by any arms control agreement so far and will set new standards for future agreements. The inclusion of on-site inspection represents a considerable breakthrough. If it is faithfully implemented, the agreement will help to build up the trust between East and West without which no lasting improvement in relations is possible.

I come to the verification regime, which we hope the House will permit to take place under the privileges and immunities set out in the Bill. How will the INF inspection regime affect the United Kingdom? The details of the inspection arrangements, which are the same for all the countries concerned, whether they are associated with United States or Soviet Union INF facilities, are set out in an inspection protocol appended to the principal treaty. As I said, tomorrow in Brussels the United Kingdom, along with other basing countries, will sign a basing country agreement with the United States. This will establish the practical procedures and provisions necessary to enable the United States to discharge its obligations under the treaty in respect of facilities not on United States territory.

Under the exchange of notes with the Soviet Union, which will be signed shortly after the basing country agreement, the United Kingdom will grant the Soviet Union the right to conduct inspections on United Kingdom territory. In return, the Soviet Union will undertake to comply with United Kingdom laws and procedures, thus establishing the triangular nature of the legal relationship which is crucial to the respect for United Kingdom sovereignty which we wish to maintain, as well as playing our full part in——

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman is being grotesquely discourteous. He is not even allowing me to finish my sentence.

Mr. Davies: It is a simple point.

Mr. Mellor: Any question that the right hon. Gentleman asks is likely to be simple, but that does not mean that I wish to give way to answer it.

The basing country agreement and the exchange of notes will guarantee the United Kingdom direct powers to ensure observance of United Kingdom laws and sovereignty, and any future changes in these arrangements that affect the United Kingdom will not be agreed by the United States without our prior approval.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mellor: Before I give way to the right hon. Gentleman, let me say this. Throughout the Second Reading debate we were pestered to give details of the verification arrangements under the treaty. I was unable to give the House those details, for the perfectly straightforward reason that the treaty had not been concluded. Now that it has been concluded, and I am giving the details, we have these monkey-house noises from Opposition Members who have no desire to listen but who are interested only in making their own debating points gleaned from a 15-minute reading on the tube of the latest wild speculations in today's newspapers. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to reveal more of his morning reading, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Davies: I do not know why the Minister is being so tetchy. I was merely going to ask him whether the treaty or the basing agreement to be signed by Britain and the United States—I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman has seen the treaty—sets out the number of missiles and launchers at Greenham Common and therefore the number to be removed. Does the treaty say that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want to be difficult with the House, but it is my job to see that the rules are observed. I am sure that the Minister will bear in mind the scope of the Bill in answering the question that has been put to him. Mr. Mellor.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The missiles at Greenham Common and Molesworth will be dealt with in the verification proposals in the treaty, so they are perfectly within the scope of this discussion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not the subject of the Bill. We had better get on with the debate.

Mr. Kaufman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would be better if the House left it to me to judge whether remarks are in order.

Mr. Kaufman: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However brief the debate may turn out to be, it is important for us to clarify at the outset the limits within which it can take place. As I said on an earlier point of order, the Bill confers diplomatic privileges and immunities on Soviet inspectors who are to come here. The Soviet inspectors will operate with the privileges and immunities conferred by the Bill, but under the terms of two documents, and it is impossible for us to debate the Bill adequately without discussing those documents, which the Minister alluded to but which are not available to the House. We are being asked to provide powers on which no satisfactory information is available.

One of the two documents to which the Minister referred is the inspection protocol. We are dealing with privileges and immunities to be conferred on inspectors. I do not begin to see how we can adequately debate a Bill under which we are to confer powers under an inspection protocol, not one word of which is available to this House. Furthermore, the Minister said that tomorrow the United Kingdom would be one of a number of countries signing a basing country agreement. That basing country agreement will affect the soil of this country. It will affect two constituencies. One is that of the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) and the other is the

[Mr. Kaufman]

constituency of the Chief Secretary. Yet we are asked to confer powers, as a Parliament, under a basing agreement——

Mr. Mellor: No, we are not.

Mr. Kaufman: Yes, we are. This is Parliament. We are asked to confer diplomatic privileges and immunities. It is Parliament that is doing this, not the Government. We are still a parliamentary democracy. We are being asked to do that, and those powers will be conferred under a basing country agreement. That is an agreement to which the Government are a direct signatory. Yet there again we do not know the agreement under which we are conferring the powers.

It seems to me that the debate ought not to proceed in this way, because we are being deprived of important material in which we are conferring powers.

Mr. Mellor *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Is it further to the point of order of the right hon. Member? If not, let me answer the right hon. Gentleman's point.

The right hon. Gentleman has really answered his own point, in the first part of his point of order, when he said that he conceded that this debate is comparatively narrow, in that it deals with the powers of the inspectors and the extension of those powers. Of course, it would be appropriate for passing reference to be made to the documents in the context of this debate, but it would not be in order for the details of the document to be debated on the Third Reading of this Bill.

Mr. Kaufman: I am grateful for your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but your response highlights the problem. We cannot refer to the details of the documents, since no one on the Opposition Benches has seen a word of them.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Minister will not even answer questions on them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that it would be better to let the Minister get on with his speech.

Mr. Mellor: If I may say to the right hon. Gentleman, I assume, having great respect for him, that this is a deliberate rather than an accidental misunderstanding of the situation. The point that he put to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is wholly erroneous. The Bill as drafted deals only with allowing inspectors and observers under the Stockholm arrangements the privileges and immunities confirmed by the Diplomatic Privileges Act 1964. Any subsequent privileges and immunities to be granted will only be granted by permission of the House once an Order in Council has been laid and an affirmation resolution has been sought from the House.

If it be objected that the privileges and immunities sought in relation to the intermediate nuclear force treaty arrangements are wrong, the proper time to make that point is when the affirmative resolution is debated in the House.

Mr. Kaufman *rose——*

Mr. Mellor: In just a moment.

Here one sees the error into which one falls if one tries to be accommodating in one's approach to debates in this Chamber at the request of the Opposition. When initially we sought in Committee simply to deal with the Stockholm arrangements, on the proper basis that other future arms control agreements lay outside the immediate scope of the Bill and that parliamentary procedure was provided for that to be done, that was regarded as unhelpful, a bad spirit developed in the Committee and in the end we agreed, with the kind permission of the Chairman, to be allowed to discuss in little modules wider arms control matters within the context of the privileges and immunities that might in future be granted under this Bill.

In that same spirit, although the Bill as it passes into law will confer no rights or entitlements whatever on any inspector who might be appointed under a treaty that has yet to be ratified and will not come into force for a number of months, I thought that it would be helpful to the House to have an opportunity of setting out, since it would be our intention to use the Order in Council procedure provided for under this Bill in due time, so that inspectors might enjoy privileges and immunities when going about the business of the INF treaty inspection, to give details of the arrangements.

Instead, we find ourselves plunged into an even worse thicket, in which an attempt is made to suggest that we are now taking the debate forward without documents being available. This is the logic of the asylum, not of a parliamentary Chamber.

Mr. Kaufman: May I make it clear to the hon. and learned Gentleman that I do not criticise him for the way in which he has come equipped to the debate this afternoon. I think that he has been placed in an extremely unfortunate position because he has been asked to request the House to give a Third Reading to a Bill two days after one of the agreements which will trigger off the Order in Council procedure. Without in any way belittling the hon. and learned Gentleman—I have regard for him, as he knows — the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs ought to have come here this afternoon in order to present to the country, on the first available occasion, his thoughts as Secretary of State on how this Bill will operate. I say that in no way belittling the hon. and learned Gentleman. This is a very important debate, despite either the length of the Bill or the length of the debate.

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for the manner in which the right hon. Gentleman makes his point. I am happy to say that my right hon. and learned Friend has the same confidence in me that the right hon. Gentleman has been kind enough to express. Be that as it may, I want to assure the House that all the arrangements pursuant to the Stockholm agreement are in the public domain. That is the area in which privileges and immunities are directly conferred by the Bill as drafted. Any matters that need to be considered, that are novel in relation to the INF agreement, can be considered when the affirmative resolution procedures come to the House. In the interests of preparing the ground for that, I am happy, consistent with the rules of order, to give such information as I can about the nature of the inspection regime. I was beginning to do so when we were taken into the interesting highways and byways that we have been following for the past few minutes.

Going back to an earlier point, the INF treaty itself will provide for the draw-down over a three-year period of all

intermediate-range missiles, including those stationed at Greenham Common and Molesworth. Some six flights, consisting of 96 missiles, will be removed from Greenham and one flight consisting of 12 missiles from Molesworth. It is these two sites in the United Kingdom which will be liable to inspections, and these are the United States-operated facilities that I have already mentioned.

Under the terms of the treaty all the cruise missiles—I have given the numbers—will be eliminated within three years of the treaty coming into force.

There will be four types of inspection at Greenham Common and Molesworth. First of all, there will be a baseline inspection between 30 and 90 days of the treaty's entering into force, to verify the data exchange; secondly, there can be short-notice challenge inspections until missiles are eliminated, and inspections in the United Kingdom will be part of an annual quota of 20 such inspections in the three years of the elimination period; thirdly, close-out inspections, when all missiles have been eliminated; and, fourthly, continuing short-notice challenge inspections for 10 years after the end of the three-year period — in other words, extremely rigorous verification. It is, therefore, a period of 13 years altogether.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I understand from the details of the treaty which are published in *The Daily Telegraph* today that there is to be a special verification commission. Will that come within the remit of this Bill, and will its members be able to come to any of the Royal Air Force bases in the United Kingdom that may be involved if there were a dispute over the question of verification?

Mr. Mellor: As I understand the position—but I will write to my hon. Friend in more detail on this point—the purpose of the commission is to ensure that these arrangements are carried through smoothly, and all relevant assistance will be given to those who need to do that. Precise details of this, of course, and the arrangements under which they would come here remain to be worked out.

I should just like to make one point in relation to what I said about the flights at Molesworth. Contrary to what I said, it is 16 missiles at Molesworth, not 12.

Mr. Kaufman: As the hon. and learned Gentleman has had to correct himself, it would be helpful if, for the sake of clarity and for the information of the people in the country, he will tell us how many missiles will be removed from each site.

Mr. Mellor: I gave the figures and I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman, who either interrupts and ask questions or jibbers from a sedentary position, seems determined to be profoundly unhelpful. It is not a convincing performance. Ninety-six missiles will be removed from Greenham Common and 16 from Molesworth.

So far as the last category of short-notice inspections is concerned, there is an overall annual quota of 15 Soviet inspections for the first five years after elimination and 10 for the next five years. No more than 50 per cent. of the inspections can be made in any one basing country.

All inspections in the United Kingdom will begin with the arrival of a Soviet aircraft at RAF Greenham Common, and a maximum of 10 Soviet inspectors will be involved.

There are strict time limits. A single inspection could last for up to 90 hours from entry into the United Kingdom to departure, but most will be shorter than this. United Kingdom authorities will be informed immediately by the United States of Soviet requests for inspection. As little as one hour's notice will be given to clear a Soviet flight plan. How soon after this Soviet inspectors will arrive will depend on the point of their departure. United Kingdom and United States officials will jointly meet the aircraft carrying the Soviet inspection team and will form part of a permanent escort of Soviet inspectors during the period of inspection.

All inspection personnel will require United Kingdom visas. Inspectors will be drawn from a list approved in advance, about which the United Kingdom will be consulted. United Kingdom customs procedures will apply at the point of entry and British officials will then join their United States counterparts in examining equipment introduced for the purposes of inspections, to ensure that it is within the agreed limit.

Mr. Cohen *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

While carrying out their inspection duties, the inspection personnel will be granted privileges and immunities. It is for this purpose that the Government will seek an Order in Council to apply the terms of the Bill to INF inspectors. These privileges and immunities will be consistent with, and in some respects more limited than, those granted by the Vienna convention on diplomatic relations of April 1964, and they will be set out in an annex to the basing country agreement, which will be made available to the House shortly, together with the INF treaty and protocols and the United Kingdom-Soviet exchange of notes.

Although the negotiations are behind us, we cannot, nor should we, put the INF agreement out of our minds. It must be ratified by the United States Senate. We Europeans must leave the United States Congress in no doubt about our support. It must be implemented and the verification provisions must be shown to work. We and the other European basing countries will be closely involved in this. This process will provide the backdrop to future arms control negotiations. We hope that this will cover 50 per cent. reductions in strategic weapons, eliminating the conventional imbalance and achieving a global ban on chemical weapons.

The Government hope that the INF agreement signals a sea change in the prospects for realistic, multilateral, verifiable disarmament. We shall play our part in ensuring that the opportunities offered by it are exploited to the full. Successful arms control can help to build trust and confidence between East and West. Verification of arms control arrangements through on-site inspection is a tangible piece of glasnost. The Bill will facilitate this and I have no hestitation in commending it warmly to the House in the hope that it will receive a speedy passage in the other place.

4.55 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I apologise to the House because, if the debate goes beyond 6 pm, I shall be unable to remain for the closing stages. I have to take part in a public encounter with the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), during which we shall no doubt discuss the Bill.

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

I repeat, in the same spirit in which I made an earlier intervention, that it is wrong that the Foreign Secretary is not here to tell the House how the Bill will operate under the INF treaty. It is particularly offensive because he has distributed to every hon. Member a letter, via the Letter Board, in which he talks about making an early statement. This letter is the early statement. It is offensive to the House of Commons that the Foreign Secretary should write a circular letter to individual Members of Parliament, rather than stand at the Dispatch Box and answer questions across the Floor of the House, which is what parliamentary democracy is about.

The Minister has given us some details of the verification procedures under which the inspectors will be operating, under the privileges and immunities conferred by the Bill. It is a long-term piece of legislation, even under the first of the Orders in Council. Ten years plus three years makes 13 years, which will take us into the 21st century. If we get a strategic arms reduction treaty within the next few months, as all hon. Members hope, that will be taken further as the verification proceeds and as more inspectors are given the privileges and immunities under the Bill to carry out that verification.

We are not being provided with the information required to debate the Bill adequately. The Minister has told us how many missiles will be moved from Greenham Common and Molesworth. He has had to correct himself, although I do not blame him for that. On a matter such as this, the Minister must be briefed, and there was a mistake in the briefing which aroused some uncertainty about the accuracy of the material. Several newspapers —I have here *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*— make estimates about the number of missiles.

The Bill will be enacted by Parliament and will operate on our soil—that is particularly true in the cases of the two constituencies involved which are represented by Conservative Members — yet we were given the information about the number of missiles to be inspected under the scope of the Bill after the Soviet Union had been given the information. It is unacceptable that a foreign country, involved in a treaty to which we are not party, should be given information about how the Bill will work before the House of Commons, which is being asked to enact the measure, receives such information.

Until the Secretary of State for Defence told the House the other day, we did not know that there were missiles at Molesworth which will be inspected. The Soviet Union knew about that before the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, into whose constituency these missiles were surreptitiously slipped. It is not possible for the House properly to debate the Bill. As a Parliament, we are making a law and conferring powers on people from overseas who will be given privileges. It is totally unacceptable that we should be asked to debate a Bill without simple statistical material being given to Parliament before it is given to the Communist party of the Soviet Union.

Secondly, I say again, as I said on a point of order when I intervened in the Minister's speech, we are conferring privileges and immunities which will operate under the Bill. The Minister is mistaken in saying that they will operate under the order and that therefore we have no locus to debate that today, because the order-making power is made by clause 1(2) of the Bill. Until we pass the Bill and until it is given Royal Assent, no order-making power will be available. That being so, for us to discuss what will happen under an order which the Minister has already said the Government intend to make under the Bill when it is enacted is germane to our discussion. Therefore, the Government should have postponed this debate for a few days so that we could have had the two key documents — the inspection protocol under the treaty, and the basing country agreement.

The Minister says that there is not a clean text, but there is a text of the treaty which contains, or has added to it, the protocol under which the Bill will be triggered. Before the Bill came before the House of Commons for Third Reading, the Government should at any rate have laid the inspection protocol before the House so that we might know under what terms the privileges and immunities will be conferred.

The Minister said that later this week the Government will sign the one document to which they are a party— the basing country agreement. I say again, these privileges and immunities are being conferred under the Bill in accordance with the basing country agreement, to which the Government will be a signatory. The Government must surely have that document in their possession. It must have gone through the Ministers' boxes and through the Prime Minister's box. I cannot imagine that such a major agreement would not have been thoroughly inspected throughout the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence, the Prime Minister's Private Office and the Cabinet Office. I cannot imagine that it has not been available for weeks now. It may not have been available in final form, but the drafts must have been going through those various offices. It is unacceptable that we should confer on people from other countries powers to carry out inspections in constituencies represented by Members of the House without our being able to see the basing country agreement under which they will operate.

Mr. Mellor: I do not want to spoil the right hon. Gentleman's debating point. I simply say to him again that no power is provided in the Bill until an Order in Council is laid and until there is a debate in the House and an affirmative resolution is passed. By that time, all the documents will be available. I am sorry to disappoint the right hon. Gentleman on one matter. It is right that at every material point the text, as it affects the United Kingdom, has been subject to the most scrupulous examination, but the idea that a clean, or even a substantial, copy of the treaty must be available for weeks is wide of the mark. The negotiators were working until the day before the treaty was signed and completed, and that is the basis upon which all this has been done. As I made clear in Committee, it was a race against time to finish it. When the clean text is available, it will be shown to the House. The right hon. Gentleman is sufficiently good at finding good points that he does not need to dwell on what I am afraid is a bad one.

Mr. Kaufman: It is a bad point only because the Minister misheard what I said. I was not talking about the treaty. Clearly the treaty has not gone through all those offices and been gone over in the way that I described— although I would have hoped that the Prime Minister might have had a peek at it before she entertained Mr. Gorbachev. I hope that she saw the treaty before she saw the lunch menu at Brize Norton.

I was referring not to the treaty but to the basing country agreement—the document to which either the Foreign Secretary or the Secretary of State for Defence, or possibly both, will append their signatures. That document must have been going through the Government machine for weeks. If it was not, the Government were damed irresponsible in not looking at it carefully since it relates to activities that will take place in Britain. That document, to which the Government are a party, should have come before the House of Commons and it should have been on the Table for us to see before the debate started.

Mr. Mellor: The right hon. Gentleman is not doing himself justice. How can we lay before the House a document that has not yet been signed? He suggests that the basing country agreement has an existence independent of the principal treaty. That is true only in part. Of course, the basic formulation—the content—does not relate — *[Interruption.]* May I have the right hon. Gentleman's attention? It is difficult for him to hear what I say and for me to say what I want to say if I am subject to constant interruption. The right hon. Gentleman, as I know well enough after four years at the Home Office, does not need that much briefing.

The basing country agreement is available and known in its bare form, but its contents follow the contents of the inspection protocol, which is part of the principal document. Therefore, the basing country agreement cannot be concluded before the principal agreement and its inspection protocol are completed. All those arrangements fall together.

I am saying this in order to be helpful. If the only consequence is to stir up further recriminations, I shall not trouble further. In the hope that the right hon. Gentleman is concerned about the reality, I can tell him that he will get the document at the earliest opportunity, and that can only be after it has been signed tomorrow.

Mr. Kaufman: It is not satisfactory that the House of Commons should see a document, which is not controversial, only after it has been signed. The House of Commons has been asked before now to give its assent to treaties. It is a peculiar proposition that only when the Government have signed something should the sovereign Parliament of Britain be allowed — *[Interruption.]* — Parliament is sovereign—to have a glimpse of it.

I had better explain this clearly to the Minister. He talks as though the order to which he refers with regard to clause 1(2) is an entity, complete, entire and free-standing. It is not. It is a subordinate piece of legislation made under the Bill when it becomes an Act and which cannot be made until that time. Therefore, it is completely relevant for us to refer to the potential content of an order which can be made only when the Bill receives Royal Assent.

I say this to the Government, I say it to the Minister, and I wish that I could say it to the Foreign Secretary who, I repeat, should be here. The Opposition completely support the Bill. There is no problem about it going through the House and there is no problem about it going through the House of Lords when it has completed its stages here. On the other hand, in so far as we are referring to the order-making power under subsection (2) with regard to this week's INF agreement, the Bill will not be triggered until the United States Senate has ratified the treaty. That means that, although we are perfectly happy to facilitate the Bill's passage, there is no tumbling hurry. The Bill could easily have been debated in the first week back after Christmas, when we would have had the relevant documents. As I said, the Government have seriously mishandled the matter. In addition, they have created a difficult position for the House of Commons.

I agree with the Minister when he praises the agreement. As I said on Second Reading, it is the most hopeful development for humankind since the atom bomb was exploded at Los Alamos in 1945. The Government are trying to dodge the implications of the agreement under which the Bill will operate. It is totally absurd for the Minister, and for the Foreign Secretary in his word-processed letter, to claim that somehow or other, what they call the twin-track approach is responsible for the treaty under which the Bill will be brought into action. The idea that the Russians are so terrified of 400 cruise missiles that they are ready to destroy 1,600 missiles gives us a very interesting sidelight on what the Government believe is the Russian inferiority complex. If the Russians have such an inferiority complex, I do not understand why the Government are so afraid of them. If the agreement under which the Bill is to operate were a tit-for-tat agreement, an agreement to destroy 400 for 400, or 1,600 for 1,600, the Government might have had some claim that the twin-track route had worked.

The agreement that will be policed in Britain under the Bill is a tribute to the good sense of the United States and the Soviet Union coming to a rational agreement that will benefit all. It has nothing to do with the Government allowing cruise missiles openly into Greenham Common and secretly into Molesworth. The Government had better get off the silly point—the only point on which they can hang their hat—of trying to pretend that somehow or other they had any role, except as a bystander, in an agreement under which the Bill will allow foreign observers and inspectors to come to Britain.

We are delighted that that is happening, but the fact that it is happening owes nothing whatsoever to the policies of the Government. Indeed, we all know that if the Prime Minister had had her way, she would have stopped the agreement coming into force.

We have been discussing properly the consequences for the implementation of the Bill of this week's INF agreement. The President of the United States and the General Secretary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union are this week in Washington — to our great satisfaction—continuing discussions which we all hope — and there seems to be a reasonable amount of optimism — will lead to a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic nuclear weapons—a giant step forward—in addition to the modest but epoch-making step forward which occurred this week.

Of course, the provisions of the Bill will stand to be implemented again if there is a START agreement, because the inspectors will be coming — with their privileges and immunities—under a separate and much wider arrangement. We have to consider the implications of a START agreement, in view of the fact that, under such an agreement, the Soviet inspectors will also be given the opportunity to come here. They cannot inspect Polaris, because Polaris is an independent British deterrent. We own the warheads and the missiles and we are capable of servicing them.

That will not be the case under the Trident agreement, because we will not own the Trident missiles. They will

[Mr. Kaufman]

come from a pool at King's Bay, Gerogia. There will be implications for inspection if the United States reduces the number of its Trident missiles in King's Bay, Georgia, because such an inspection will include the inspection of our missiles when they go back for servicing. Even though we will not be a party to the agreement, the missiles which we are leasing from the United States for seven to eight years will go back to the pool at King's Bay, Georgia.

If the Soviet Union and the United States come to an agreement under which those missiles are reduced by half —as we all pray they will—the missiles temporarily in the possession of the United Kingdom, as our independent nuclear deterrent, will be subject to inspection at King's Bay, Georgia, under powers parallel to those in the Bill. That demonstrates the total emptiness and hypocrisy of the Government when they claim that the successor to Polaris will be an independent deterrent. It will be part of the American deterrent, which we will be allowed to borrow temporarily at a cost of £10 billion to the British taxpayer, and which, of course, we will never be able to use independently, if there is ever the folly for it to be used at all.

The Prime Minister is obsessed with the possession of nuclear weapons when the Soviet Union and the United States sensibly acknowledge the destructiveness of possessing such weapons. She is now a unilateral nuclear armer when the Soviet Union and the United States are becoming nucler disarmers—and all praise to them.

Although the Bill and the powers conferred by it demonstrate that the Government are merely spectators of the marvellous process that is taking place in the world they are in no way activists, catalysts or assistants to it.

Mr. Mellor: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kaufman: No. These are my last two sentences and it will spoil the flow of my speech.

Although the Government demonstrate that they are out of step and out of date, in terms of world processes, the Bill fits well into the policies that the Labour party will be advocating throughout this Parliament and at the next general election. That is why we wholeheartedly welcome it.

5.16 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), for whom I have considerable respect, finds it so difficult to give more than a grudging welcome to the Bill, which is such a vital accompaniment to the INF treaty which marks the first reduction in nuclear weapons in the history of the world since 1945. Although it is a small Bill, in its own way it is extremely important. Since you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have allowed the debate to go a little wider than the Bill itself, perhaps you will allow me to go a little wider, to the extent of putting my remarks into a context for which I believe the Bill allows.

I wish to remind the House that on 18 June 1980 the then Secretary of State for Defence told the House that cruise missiles were to be deployed at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth as NATO's response to the Soviet Union's deployment of SS20 missiles, and to the threat that those arms posed to Western European security.

On 15 November 1983, the first cruise missiles arrived at Greenham. Throughout the four years that have elapsed since then, the Government, their defence policy and my constituents have been under almost continuous attack from the Opposition, from CND and from those women who describe themselves as Greenham peace women, who have had a squalid encampment at Greenham Common regardless of the nuisance that they knew they were causing to my constituents. Those three groups—the Opposition, CND and the Greenham peace women—have tried to inform the nation that they are the people who care about peace, disarmament and humanity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Member a preamble, but he must now relate his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I was about to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those groups argued that we on these Benches and our American and NATO allies were the warmongers determined to maintain the arms race. Today, four years later, the Government have brought forward the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill for its Third Reading.

The Third Reading comes at a fortunate time, because it means that the INF treaty, can be implemented as soon as it is ratified by the United States Senate and the Supreme Soviet, and that those who are to be authorised observers for the Soviet Union will have diplomatic immunity to enable them to discharge their duties. As a result of the Bill and the INF treaty, we in west Berkshire will no doubt be welcoming Russian personnel, as we have welcomed American service men, on the same basis as we accepted cruise missiles — to play our part in maintaining the peace and security of Europe.

As I understand it from the outline of the INF treaty printed in today's *Daily Telegraph*—nobody has suggested that that outline is inaccurate — under article 11 observers will be arriving at RAF Greenham Common and RAF Molesworth within 30 days, and not later than 90 days, after the treaty comes into force. The outline of the treaty in the *Daily Telegraph* states:

"each party shall have the right to mount 20 inspections a year in the first three years, 15 in the next five and 10 in the last five."

Since the article also states that the right to inspect applies not only to Molesworth and Greenham Common, but to support facilities — and clearly effective verification must involve those facilities—can my hon. and learned Friend give any indication of how many establishments in the United Kingdom are likely to be involved? Will all those who come from the Soviet Union be accompanied wherever they go by RAF personnel?

The Bill refers to inspectors, observers and auxiliary personnel, all of whom will enjoy diplomatic privilege. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister seemed to suggest that that would not mean an increase in Soviet personnel in the United Kingdom who enjoy diplomatic immunity. Has the Soviet embassy stated whether it will want to increase its staff by the numbers suggested in the Stockholm agreement, or are all observers, inspectors and auxiliary personnel to be flown in and out to perform their verification duties without any long-term residence in the United Kingdom? Perhaps that last question is peripheral to the Bill.

Nobody will argue that effective verification is anything but essential to the INF agreement. The Bill shows that the

United Kingdom is willing to play a full part in that. It will involve Soviet inspections of INF missile deployment sites in the United Kingdom, and it underlines the fact that the Government are working in close consultation with the United States. The United States will be responsible to the Soviet Union for obligations in the treaty, but United Kingdom sovereignty and security will be fully respected through the agreements with the United States and the Soviet Union to which my hon. and learned Friend referred.

I said that the Bill was an essential accompaniment to the INF arms agreement. We all appreciate that that arms agreement is a good deal for NATO. We will lose missiles and launchers capable of delivering fewer than 400 warheads. The Soviet Union will surrender similar systems capable of delivering almost 1,600 warheads. We will accomplish more than we set out to accomplish when we demanded in 1979 that the Soviets withdraw their SS20s from Europe.

In addition, the Bill provides for effective verification, including, for the first time, on-site inspections in the Soviet Union. Because the INF treaty requires the elimination of an entire class of nuclear weapons, verification will be made easier. The treaty and the Bill vindicate the difficult decision to deploy intermediate range missiles taken by NATO in 1979. It will prove conclusively that strength, not appeasement, influences Soviet behaviour. As such, it should guide Western defence strategy and serve as a model for future arms negotiations. I commend the Bill and its intentions.

5.24 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I welcome the Bill, as do hon. Members on both sides of the House. I thank the Minister for his co-operation. After the first session in Committee, at which we had to force information out of him by long speeches, he did co-operate and gave many details to the Committee about the various stages of negotiations as they were taking place. He gave the Committee and the House some worthwhile information.

The Bill is about privileges and immunities for Soviet inspectors who, will inspect INF missile sites on United Kingdom territory. You said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker —I noted it down—that it would be all right to make a passing reference to the INF document. In my preamble I should like to make some reference to that document, which was signed in Washington by the United States and Soviet Union.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I did say that, but the emphasis was very much on the word "passing".

Mr. Cohen: Yes, indeed.

The treaty is a welcome beginning. The Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence sent a joint letter to all hon. Members prior to this debate, obviously to influence the debate. In that letter they call the treaty a historic agreement because for the first time ever the number of nuclear weapons in the world will be reduced by treaty. We are not sure of the figures, but I believe that the world's stockpile of nuclear weapons will be reduced by between 3 and 7 per cent. That is a welcome start, but we have to move on to further reductions, not increases.

The Minister and the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) said that the agreement came from strength. I do not believe that. The agreement came about for various reasons. One of those reasons was overkill. There is a vast number of nuclear weapons in the world. I believe that there are 60,000 with a capacity that greatly exceeds that of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. Another reason is the pressure applied by the peace movement and the Greenham peace women. They have applied continual pressure on Governments, to which they have had to respond. Another reason is the over-stretched and crumbling economy of the Soviet Union and the West. There is pressure on those economies mainly because of the burden of defence spending.

The joint letter from the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence says that the agreement

"shows the possibility of negotiating an effective means of checking that neither party to an arms agreement is able to cheat."

That is right. Verification is about checking to ensure that there is no cheating. Therefore, I welcome the rigorous verification process. It is the most rigorous that we have yet seen in an international agreement. However, I should like to see more details about that process.

The Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence referred in their letter to cheating. It is important that neither the Soviet Union nor the West cheats on the agreement. As has been said, the Bill facilitates the INF agreement. Therefore, it was disturbing to see the Secretary of State for Defence at Monterey looking for ways around the treaty, for compensatory measures, and for what the Prime Minister calls modernisation, but which is really an increase in nuclear weaponry outside the INF agreement. Cheating is outside the spirit of the INF agreement.

The Secretary of State for Defence had meetings with his French counterpart to consider the Eurobomb. The Eurobomb would be a worrying development, and I hope that the Government will not go along with it.

The Secretaries of State were right to talk about cheating in the context of the Bill. I hope that the verification process, especially with the use of satellites and other high technology, will stop cheating. But cheating will stop if both sides approach the matter in the spirit that brought about the agreement in the first place.

The Minister mentioned the 96 missiles at Greenham Common and the 16 missiles at Molesworth. I understand that many missiles, particularly those at Molesworth, were installed only last week. They were rushed in so that they would be in place before the INF agreement was signed. That was wrong and a waste of money. I asked a question about the cost of Molesworth and Greenham to NATO and the British Government. The figure is £174 million. What a monstrous waste of money. Missiles have been at Greenham for only four years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying wide of the Third Reading debate. He was addressing his remarks to inspections and inspectors' powers. He is straying from that matter now. He must refer to the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: The point that I want to make is that the missiles at Greenham and Molesworth, which are subject to verification and inspection by Soviet inspectors, will be in place for a maximum of another three years. I put it to the Minister that they should be taken out as soon as possible to prevent the waste of any more money. The Government are just throwing money down the drain.

[Mr. Cohen]

I wished to raise a matter by way of intervention, but the Minister would not allow me to do so because he was concluding his remarks. He referred to the lists of inspectors, over which Her Majesty's Government will have a say. That remark raised a serious worry. Presumably, expulsions could take place. They have taken place in regard to other diplomatic lists. There is a tit-for-tat aspect, and it would be worrying if it arose out of the arrangements and applied to inspectors. If we expel some of the Soviet inspectors, and if the Soviets expel some of the United States inspectors, what will happen to the treaty and the verification arrangements? I realise that the matter is hypothetical, but it is not so outrageously hypothetical that that could not happen. It is appropriate for the Minister to respond to that point. I hope that such expulsions will not take place. President Reagan said "trust but verify". I hope that we can have trust and verification.

There was discussion in Committee about the need to ratify the treaty in the Senate. We pressed the Foreign Secretary to urge the Prime Minister to tell recalcitrant conservative Senators that they should ratify the treaty without delay. We have still not had a response from the Prime Minister. I hope that the Foreign Secretary will say how his discussions with the Prime Minister have gone on that matter. It is about time that we had a statement in clear, unequivocal language from the Prime Minister that she will not give conservative Senators a hostage to fortune and will say that the treaty should be ratified without delay.

Conservative Members cannot claim triumph for the treaty. It is a treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. Any claims about triumph, particularly in respect of cruise missiles, sound hollow. Conservative Members are saying that they had put cruise missiles at Greenham Common and Molesworth. That is where the inspections will be held and to take them out and put them at, perhaps, Holy Loch if they are air-launched in order to get around the agreement does not sound like much of a triumph to me. It would have been a triumph if the Government had included British-owned nuclear weapons in the process. They could then have been subject to similar verification procedures. If the Trident system, which has a minimum of 512 warheads more than Polaris's 128, had been scrapped, or at least brought into the verification process, that would be a triumph.

I welcome the treaty and the verification process. It is important that the Government become involved in arms reduction and do not stand aside, as they have done, by not involving British-owned nuclear weapons. They must become part of the arms reduction process.

5.36 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Conservative Members have been amazed at the churlish way in which Opposition Members are reluctant to congratulate not only my hon. and learned Friend the Minister but also the Prime Minister on the significant role that she played in acting as a go-between for the two super-powers. It was only obvious that NATO consulted our own Peter Carrington and that the Prime Minister was kept fully informed at all levels by the Soviet side and the United States side.

The shadow Foreign Secretary was wrong on one point. He said that the treaty must be ratified by the Congress and by the Senate. It must also be ratified by the Supreme Soviet. Mr. Gorbachev himself is not so confident that he can get ratification just on the nod. He is making tremendous progress in his own country. He put forward a plan that could not be visualised even a year ago. He is moving carefully forward. The churlishness of Opposition Members could not reflect on his performance in his country. We must watch that we do not expect too much from Mr. Gorbachev. When he succeeds, we must be wholeheartedly behind him in what is the most difficult job any Russian General Secretary has ever had to do.

The Bill must act almost as a photocopy for other countries that have cruise and Pershing missiles on their soil. I refer, for example, to Holland, Germany and Italy. The more rational way to play the verification process is to make sure that the cruise and Pershing missiles that were flown in by the United States air force are flown to one central verification point. It is nonsense that there will be many verification points throughout Europe. At the moment we are concerned only with Europe. The missiles concerned are movable and adaptable to air freight transport.

I should have thought that, if only for simplicity and the maximum use of limited manpower, a verification team could be used at a verification centre. It emerged in Committee that inspectors and observers are not numerous and have not had much work to do. Even the verification staff of the Western European Union have not had a lot of work to do on the verification of stockpiles of weaponry. There must be some co-operation between the countries that have used cruise and Pershing, so that there can be a verification centre.

I am worried especially about the number of inspectors and observers who will be available. Up to now, we have been talking only about Russian inspectors and observers. We know from experience that they will be existing diplomatic staff from the various embassies throughout Europe. Indeed, they will probably have a dual role as members of the KGB and inspectors or observers. However, we do not know; that is one of the little problems that one encounters when dealing with the complete change of heart that Mr. Gorbachev has brought about.

Verification by human beings must be backed up substantially by verification by satellite. This is probably not the debate to raise this, but we have heard little or nothing about the percentages and performances of verification by satellite. That is important, because all the missiles in the verification process are extremely movable. At a moment's notice, they can be dispatched from one end of Europe to another. I am thinking especially about behind the iron curtain. In our future debates we need to know exactly how effective is satellite verification and the sort of processes that will be involved. We need to know about accuracy and the state of our existing satellites for high definition verification.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman has rightly said, that is not the subject of this debate.

Mr. Hill: I raised a query in Committee about verification by human beings, but I am not completely reassured. Although my hon. Friend had obviously done his best, the question that I asked is hypothetical. It

concerned the number of countries and the numbers of back-up staff to the inspectors and observers who would be involved in the verification process. Many people are afraid that hundreds of iron curtain warriors will tread the by-lanes of Newbury and Molesworth. I have also heard it said that they will sit at the gates with the peace women. I hope that that is not true, because I can see all sorts of national problems in that. Knowing the numbers of nuclear warheads that will have to be verified and dismantled — no-one has yet mentioned dismantling, although it is in the Bill—we need to know the number of people who will be required to carry out the inspection and dismantling process.

I have been conscious that, if one considers the problem as a quid pro quo, it would not work out. We are giving up 400 nuclear warheads, but it is a statement of fact that the USSR will give up about 1,600 warheads. We do not know whether the warheads that the Soviet Union is to give up are at the end of their life span. The SS20, for example, has been a major weapon in Eastern Europe for some considerable time. We do not know—although the figures are out of balance — whether the equivalent destruction values are approximately the same. It might be as well to know those things, as that would certainly hearten those who are a little in doubt, such as Opposition Members, who have been terribly nervous about it. They seem to think that the balance is wrong and that perhaps we should give up 1,600 nuclear weapons to balance those 1,600 SS20s.

The main thrust of the Bill does not go into great detail on what the INF agreement is about. We are told that that is in the *Daily Telegraph* and, apparently, *The Independent* has an extremely good article on it. I am pleased to see that the shadow Front Bench read the better press because that is another move to the middle ground. The *Daily Telegraph* has always been my favourite reading and I am pleased that it is also the favourite reading of the shadow Foreign Secretary.

At no time in Committee did we mention that we did not have a draft INF agreement before us. We did not go into the nitty-gritty. We considered the positive plan to give diplomatic immunity to those people who will have to verify. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister enjoys a tremendous reputation in Europe for being on top of his job, especially in this area. We have talked almost constantly about the Russians coming into the United Kingdom, but we could say the same about the Russians going into Holand, Germany or Italy.

However, what will be the diplomatic immunities for those who will have to go behind the iron curtain? I am thinking, for example, of the travel restrictions there. We do not have such restrictions in Europe. Inspectors and observers behind the iron curtain will be closeted all the time and we should consider that fact. I was going to say that they may be followed by men in large trilbies and long black leather overcoats. However, when I watched my television last night, I realised that they were all in Washington, so that danger does not exist.

We are too myopic when considering conditions for the inspectors and observers. I hope that many will be inspectors and observers from the Western European Union. I always boost that wonderful institution, which has been involved in the verification process for many years. I hope that we shall go further and find out exactly what plans and immunities are being put forward to safeguard the inspectors and observers who come from western Europe.

5.48 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): In Committee I had the pleasure of joining my hon. Friends in pressing the Minister on several points. Today is clearly the day on which, I hope, the Minister will give some concrete answers. Like all hon Members who have spoken, I welcome the treaty and therefore, this measure that follows directly from it—that we should have inspectors in this country to determine the fact that intermediate nuclear weapons will have left the country. As one of the people who believe that the peace movement contributed substantially to that process, I want to welcome it warmly.

I should like to ask the Minister whether he believes that the political climate has anything to do with building trust and confidence. I believe that it has and that the issue is not simply one of the technical measures before us.

Again, I press the Minister to tell us that the Government will make it clear to the country that there is no intention to circumvent the INF treaty by permitting or bringing in air-launched or sea-launched intermediate weapons to substitute for those which we are trying to get rid of as a result of the treaty.

How will it be possible for the inspectors and observers to verify that we are keeping the agreement? How will it be possible for them to know that there have been no secret flights of United States planes into United States-controlled bases in Britain carrying air-launched cruise missiles? The United States has repeatedly flown missiles and nuclear warheads into the country. That is why what the Secretary of State told us this week about the missiles at Molesworth was such a revelation. It is clear that this House has not been privy to that information.

Therefore, I ask the Minister to make it clear how the Soviet inspectors would be in a better position to verify that no substituting warheads had been brought into Britain, when the House of Commons has signally failed to discover that information in the past.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) referred to the right to inspect support facilities, and I trust that the Minister will be specific about that. I am aware that, at times, there has been controversy about the use of RAF Welford and RAF Alconbury in connection with the storage of warheads for cruise missiles and the movement of convoys from the main bases of Greenham and Molesworth to those locations. If confidence and trust is to be built up, it must be clear to the Soviets that missiles have not been taken out of the main bases and put somewhere else.

The Minister said that the agreement was triangular, but I find that difficult to accept. I believe that, given what has been said by representatives of Her Majesty's Government, they have not welcomed the moves that ultimately led to the INF treaty. That treaty has been negotiated between the Soviet Union and the United States. We are all aware that the Prime Minister went to Washington to urge the President not to make a deal with Mr. Gorbachev. That will not be forgotten by the House or the British people.

Mr. Mellor: I am sorry to intrude upon fantasy land —to do so is probably a pointless operation—but the hon. Lady has only to look at the document that I read

[Mr. Mellor]

out in Committee — the communiqué regarding the Prime Minister's meeting last November with President Reagan, in which the two leaders committed themselves to an INF agreement—to see that what she has just said is nonsense.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not for me to say whether we are in fantasy land, but we are in great danger of going beyond the rules of order.

Mr. Mellor: Saved by the bell.

Ms. Ruddock: Not at all: I stand by the point that I made.

Subsequent to that communiqué, the Prime Minister has said that there has been enough nuclear disarmament. That is clearly contrary to the views of the President of the United States and the General Secretary——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is now going very wide of the Bill. We are on Third Reading. I realise that the hon. Lady has not been here long, but on Third Reading it is in order to refer only to what is in the Bill.

Ms. Ruddock: I am learning fast. I was trying to respond to the points made by the Minister, but let me conclude my questions.

The Minister has referred to the granting of visas to the Soviet inspectors, and he gave a clear indication that it would be possible for Britain — indeed, that would be correct — to refuse permission for any particular individual to enter this country. Under the agreement that is yet to be signed—the basing country agreement—will the United Kingdom retain any right to veto a Soviet imspection per se? Will the issue of the timing of inspections, the numbers and so on entirely rest on agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union? Are there any specific arrangements by which Britain will contribute inspectors to visit the Soviet Union under the terms of the agreement that has been reached?

5.54 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I support the Bill because I believe that it is a testimony to the policies of this Government, the United States Government and the Governments of our NATO allies. That policy is the prudent pursuit of multilateral and verifiable disarmament. There were many reasons for entering into negotiations, but when one considers the international situation that prevailed in 1984, one realises that one of the prime reasons was that the NATO Alliance was not prepared to be browbeaten. NATO intended to match weapon increases with weapon increases. It did not intend to be bullied and would negotiate only from a position of strength. I believe that, without the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles, and without the mere threat of the American strategic defence initiative, it is unlikely that the Soviet Union would have negotiated on a serious basis about serious disarmament.

The Prime Minister, my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and my hon. and learned Friend deserve credit. I do not believe that it gets us anywhere when the Opposition refuse to give such credit.

We are about to enter a tremendous era of disarmament, and things that were undreamed of a year or two ago are now before us. We have been given a chance, and it is wrong for people to decry the tremendous efforts that have been made by the Western Governments. Our Government were a key element in the negotiations, and I wonder how far the United States would have gone to reach such an agreement if Britain had disagreed with such negotiations taking place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is coming to the end of his preamble and will now address his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Browne: I especially support this treaty because I believe that it heralds a new epoch — the first nuclear disarmament in history. Although the INF treaty does not have great significance for the military balance, it is a trend setter. However, one bad trend may be over-expectation.

A key point in prudent, multilateral, verifiable disarmament is trust. The key elements of that trust are verification and integrated, balanced agreement. Obviously we must not consider that nuclear balance or nuclear disarmament is a good thing if there is a massive imbalance in conventional, biochemical and space weapons. All disarmament must be considered integrated, multilateral and verifiable.

The Bill covers four main elements of verification. Many of the INF weapons are mobile—this is especially true of the Soviet weapons—and it is vital to have on-site inspection. We cannot rely exclusively on space-based surveillance. I also approve of the short notice challenge system. If we are to have on-site inspection, it is vital that we give diplomatic privileges to the personnel in those inspction teams.

It is understandable—I know that it comes in a trend —that because of terrorist actions in London and other countries we are trying to cut back on diplomatic privilege for one reason or another. I also support that. This is an extenuating circumstance, and we should think constructively of extending privileges for these inspctors. They need protection, and they also need to be afforded efficient passage. Life in the Soviet Union is very different from life in western Europe, and the ability of people to move about freely is a different concept. We must strive to make sure that the privileges that we grant by passing the Bill—I hope that it will be passed tonight—are reciprocated by the other side, not only in writing, but in real intent and practice. Our inspectors should be afforded the same ease of movement as we afford to people from the Soviet Union while they are in the United Kingdom.

I agree with the need for site verification, but what about out of sight on-ground verification? With regard to diplomatic privileges afforded to Soviet teams coming here to places such as Greenham Common, which is close to my constituency, will Soviet teams come to what would have been considered possible launch sites, and even the routes to launch sites, of cruise missiles in the Winchester and Alton area? Likewise, will we be afforded those privileges —if they are granted—on the other side? Will the on-site inspections be restricted to the base, or will we be allowed to look at possible launch sites and routes to them?

Another key element of verification — the third — is dismantling. The breakdown and disposal of the missiles is the key to the verification process — especially dismantling. Where and how will they dispose of all those materials? It is paramount that our inspection teams are afforded full access to ensure that that is properly done.

It is no use looking at empty sites if the missiles, or even the missile material, are available either for immediate deployment or quick assembly in other areas to which the inspection teams do not have right of access. Dismantling is a key element that I would like my hon. and learned Friend to cover this evening.

The fourth key element that I want to discuss is that of intent. One must build up verification. One cannot see everything in the world, especially when looking at missiles such as these. Intent is important. We see the Soviet Union agreeing to the treaty, but at the same time we see it modernising its military forces — fewer troops, more high-tech forces—and moving from labour-intensive to capital-intensive armed forces. And this is at a time when the United States appears to be over-extended, not only in diplomatic terms of granting visas, but in budget terms. If there are cuts in the United States budget deficit, they may well end up as defence cuts in American deployments to western Europe. I find that worrying, because I see a possible imbalance under the INF treaty, which throws even more weight on the verification, which must be extended to looking at Soviet intent. Obviously my hon. and learned Friend cannot comment on that this evening, but I hope that he will take the point on board.

I fully support the Bill and the measures outlined in it. It is a short Bill, but vitally important. It will be relatively easy to explain to our constituents the fact that Soviet personnel will be landing here. That is a strange, but not a bad, thing. Indeed, it is a good thing, because the era that it unfolds is one of genuine nuclear disarmament—the beginnings, the first steps. I am all for that. I want to emphasise to my hon. and learned Friend that I hope the reciprocal arrangements made on the other side will be not only in black and white on paper but in reality. Given the different type of environment and the huge expanses of some of the areas in the Soviet Union, I hope that we will have a matched verification ability, which will be the key ingredient in the whole matched INF agreement, which I entirely support.

6.5 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Bill is designed to implement the Stockholm agreement to build up confidence measures between the United States and the Soviet Union. For that purpose, privileges and immunities are being conferred on inspectors. However, the House tonight — not unnaturally — is concentrating on clause 1(2), under which, under an Order in Council approved by the House through the affirmative procedure, the immunities and privileges can be extended. Quite rightly, the House is looking forward to dealing with those orders to implement the INF treaty, which has been brought about by the bold and courageous leadership of Mr. Gorbachev. I hope that the Minister does not want to disagree with that, because the Prime Minister, who used those words when she met Mr. Gorbachev during refuelling at Brize Norton, would sack him if he did. Therefore, we must recognise that we will be concentrating on clause 1(2). It is right that that should be so: it is an important step forward.

I do not think the Prime Minister can claim much credit, as she has gained an international reputation as a defender of nuclear weapons. She may have had a couple of telephone calls from someone in NATO — such as Peter Carrington—or from someone else, to tell her how the negotiations were going, but she can claim no credit for this INF agreement. The Minister is muttering from a sedentary position. In his winding-up speech he can tell us to what degree the Prime Minister has been involved. How many telephone calls has she had? How many discussions in the negotiations has she had? Of course the Minister cannot answer that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope the hon. Gentleman will not invite the Minister to do that, because, were he to be tempted along that road, he would be out of order.

Mr. Cryer: I said what I said in passing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the Minister is muttering under his breath the whole time. I feel constrained under that sort of provocation to make some sort of comment on the rubbish that the Minister is muttering under his breath; but I take your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall resolutely ignore the tortuous nonsense that seems to be pouring from the Minister's lips in his sedentary position.

As regards clause 1(2) and the INF treaty with which we are primarily concerned, there should not be any cheating in the application of the treaty, because we are anxious to deal with the affirmative resolution under clause 1(2), and if there were any cheating, that clause would not be brought into operation. There have been suggestions that there might be a development of air or sea-launched cruise missiles to make up for the 112 missiles that the Minister claims would be removed under the treaty from Greenham Common and Molesworth. The Prime Minister has not made a clear statement about the position of air and sea-launched cruise missiles and their possible adoption to cheat on the INF agreement.

I am desperate to see another order under clause 1(2) of the Bill come before the House. As the order under the Bill is brought before the House and given its affirmative passage and the missiles are dismantled, under the verification procedures set out in the Bill and because of the immunities and privileges conferred on the inspectors, what will happen to Molesworth and Greenham Common? Will they be used for a productive use, such as growing wheat for Ethiopia? The Minister laughs, but the then Secretary of State for Defence went to Molesworth with 2,000 police officers and more troops than stormed Goose Green to evict 16 peace people because they were growing wheat for Ethiopia. I do not want to go along that path, but I say that by way of explanation.

As the verification procedures are carried out and the missiles are sent packing back to the United States, where they belong, what sort of positive development will take place at Greenham Common and Molesworth? For example, will there be consultation with the Greenham Common peace women who, for many years, have stayed there against the sneers and taunts of the pin-striped hooligans who dominate the Conservative party? Those women went there and said that they would stay until the cruise missiles had gone. They have been proved right. The House is providing in legislation the verification mechanism that will carry out the belief that the Greenham Common women had when they went many years ago to set up camp outside the Greenham Common gates. Despite all the dodges and harassment by the police and Army and the legislative dodges produced by the Government, those women have stuck to their task, and credit is due to them.

I look forward to the time when we have an order under clause 1(2) for verification procedures that will allow

[Mr. Cryer]

inspectors to come to Britain to check that we have got rid of Trident. The Minister mutters sedentary nonsense about the Prime Minister not being a warmonger. Perhaps he will tell us why we are keeping Trident when we are all supposed to be pleased that nuclear weapons are to be eliminated. I offer an opportunity to the Minister. If he believes in market forces, why does he not apply market forces to Trident? If he did, we would use all the more rapidly the legislation in the Bill.

Why does the Minister not put Trident out to flag-day collections and use the £11 billion for something more useful? If the market will not give him the money, we could establish verification procedures under orders under the Bill. People could then come to Britain and see that we had got rid of Trident and were joining the 121 non-nuclear nations that have signed the United Nations non-proliferation treaty renouncing nuclear weapons. If we did that, we would be joining the majority of the world's nations, and that is an important development for which the legislation provides.

Quite properly, the House is dealing at some length with the intermediate nuclear force provisions under clause 1(2) of the Bill. It is a small first step, but it is welcome in all parts of the House. However, it represents only an 8 per cent. reduction in the total number of nuclear warheads that are available to exterminate civilisation—*[Interruption.]* The Minister mutters that it is 3 per cent. Various newspapers have suggested that the number of warheads is larger than was at first thought because there has been a certain amount of deception about the number of warheads in this category that have been deployed. That would not be surprising, because time and again the Ministry of Defence has deceived the House about the number of operational United States bases in Britain. If there has been a sleight of hand, an economy with the truth, over the number of missiles, that would not be startling. Even if it is only the 3 per cent. that the Minister claims and not the 8 per cent. that some newspapers claim, it is at least a step in the right direction and is welcomed by everybody.

Mr. Hill: It is a giant step for mankind.

Mr. Cryer: It is not a giant step; it is a modest step brought about in large measure by the bold and courageous leadership of Mr. Gorbachev. The Prime Minister said that at Brize Norton. We must not argue about negotiations from strength, of which the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) spoke. He said that by keeping our nuclear weapons we forced the Soviet Union to the negotiating table. That is a peculiar argument and does not comply with the information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in a letter sent to all hon. Members. It sent a letter instead of sending a Minister to the House to make a statement, as any democratic Minister should do. The letter says:

"under this INF Treaty the Soviet Union will be giving up some 1,500 deployed nuclear warheads, nearly four times as many as the United States, removing the enormous Soviet advantage in this category of weapon".

Therefore, we have negotiated not from strength but from weakness.

In the negotiations we have achieved a success that has brought about an INF treaty with the Soviet Union, which has an enormous advantage in the number of warheads. That shows that there can be successful negotiations from weakness which will lead to the removal of a far greater number of nuclear weapons from the other side.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to advance the argument that, if we had had no intermediate nuclear weapons, the SS20s would have been withdrawn anyway? Surely he does not mean that. He must accept my argument that, because NATO showed itself willing to deploy weapons of an equivalent type, the Soviet Union recognised that it would not be able to get away with nuclear superiority and that there was no point in pursuing that approach. The Soviet Union recognised that it would be better to remove its weapons if we removed ours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will come back to the Bill.

Mr. Cryer: I should like to say something by way of explanation before I come to clause 1(2), which is the important part of the Bill. I say to the hon. Member for Newbury that the Soviet Union has always faced technological innovation by the West. It has been catching up all the time, but it has not had an overall nuclear weapons superiority. That is the sort of propaganda put about by NATO and the Ministry of Defence in order to justify their own position.

We shall never produce more orders under clause 1(2) for further verification inspection arrangements if we argue that we can only negotiate from strength. That is the essence of the arms race, in which each side says that it has to be stronger than the other or it will not be able to negotiate. How can we look in the eye the 121 non-nuclear nations that signed the United Nations non-proliferation treaty and tell them that they cannot have nuclear weapons, that having them is very foolish and we do not want to proliferate, if that is what we are doing?

It is important for us to start the procedure for dismantling Trident, and the Government should bring before the House an order under clause 1(2) by way of the affirmative procedure, for which the Bill provides, and say to the Soviet Union that we are joining it in demonstrating our emphasis on the need to get rid of nuclear weapons. We should say that we recognise the importance not of our peripheral nuclear weapons, but of the stockpiles held by the United States and the Soviet Union.

That is really why the INF treaty has been brought about. It is in place not because of the increase in the deployment of cruise missiles, but because the Soviet Union has recognised that it was the only way to end the arms race. It recognised the possible use of nuclear weapons either by accident or by design. Thank goodness the Soviet Union took the initiative of a test ban for 18 months and other important initiatives that have been met from time to time by the President of the United States. That is all to the good.

The major initiatives for the agreement came from the Soviet Union, because it recognised that at the end of the arms race there is a great danger that one or more weapons will be used by accident or design. That is why the peace movement poured out in its millions throughout Europe to demonstrate the fear that the end of the arms race would result in nuclear annihilation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that the hon. Gentleman is doing his utmost to link his remarks to clause 1(2), but the link is now getting very thin.

Mr. Cryer: I shall bring my remarks back to a solid base. I had intended to take only a few minutes, but Conservative Members have been muttering under their breath at me. As you will appreciate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this acts as a provocation and I have had to defend myself against the pin-striped nuclear fanatics on the Conservative Benches——

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): The voice of appeasement.

Mr. Cryer: The hon. Member for Stretford, who has taken his carpetbag and shifted elsewhere so that he can keep his seat, says that the Bill is the voice of appeasement. The verification inspection arrangements in clause 1(2) have been welcomed by Conservative Members, yet the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has strolled into the Chamber and said that it represents appeasement, because he is fundamentally opposed to any sort of properly negotiated treaty, and the provisions of clause 1(2).

Mr. Churchill: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should be so misinformed. I represent the same constituents as I have represented for the past 17 years, although the name of my constituency has changed, through no choice of mine. I have been in strong support of the verification provisions of the agreement. It has been solely thanks to the strong policies adopted by NATO and the Government that the agreement has been achieved, and no thanks to the policies of appeasement of the Labour party.

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your indulgence in allowing me to say that the hon. Member for Davyhulme has wandered in at the close of the debate and slings out a word such as "appeasement", when he has no knowledge of what has gone on. I am pleased that he supports the legislation. I do not apply the term "appeasement" to this legislation. The Stockholm agreement on building confidence measures, at which the Bill is aimed, and the INF treaty, signed by Mr. Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, are very important steps. If we are to invoke clause 1(2) to provide verification and inspection orders through the affirmative procedures of the Bill—the hon. Gentleman would not be familiar with that, but that is what the Bill contains—we must contribute to measures for peace by getting rid of Trident nuclear weapons, which represent an escalation in nuclear weaponry and are in breach of the solemn United Nations non-proliferation treaty that we have signed.

The Bill is a small but valuable step in the preservation of civilisation on our planet. It is recognised as an important step by the United States and the Soviet Union, but the steps must become larger if we are to get rid of the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

6.23 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I hope that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) will forgive me if I do not follow him too closely. In his period of enforced absence, the hon. Gentleman's politics has not improved; now his remarks are even more extreme. He fails to recognise that the joint nuclear deterrent of East and West has kept world peace since the last war. The unique understanding between our Prime Minister and Mr. Gorbachev, which his leader could never have attained with Mr. Gorbachev has resulted in Mr. Gorbachev coming to Britain to see our Prime Minister and consult her before going to Washington to sign the historic intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

The Conservative Government, NATO and the West have been determined that at all times we should be armed and able to resist nuclear blackmail. That has resulted in the Russians being brought to the negotiating table, and 8 per cent. of the world's nuclear missiles have been negotiated away. The Government and the Prime Minister have every reason to congratulate themselves.

I refer to the verification provisions in clause 1(2). Much has been said about the welcome visitors who will come from behind the iron curtain to verify the removal and complete disestablishment of the nuclear missiles at Greenham Common and Molesworth. Have the Government given any thought to the extent to which the verification could take place by satellite? I understand that the missiles will be deactivated, which is quite a sophisticated job and will be carried out under the supervision of Soviet observers.

It may be possible that agreed sites in Britain, Europe or Russia could be deactivated and slit lengthwise, with all the nuclear fissionable material removed completely, but the equipment left there so that a spy satellite could check on it. Photography by spy satellites is so exact that it could check that the missiles not only are made ineffective under the inspection of the official visitors, but will remain ineffective for all time, hopefully as a rusting monument to the success of the negotiations.

I ask the Minister to tell the House, perhaps through the Order in Council, the number of persons who will be involved in verification. In this period of glasnost, when our relations with the Russians are very good, they would not be likely to send unpleasant people here under the cover of inspectors, but we must have some scrutiny by the team of visitors.

The Long Title of the Bill states that the visitors will be "observers or inspectors, and auxiliary personnel". We do not want to limit the number—other hon. Members and I believe that the more who come and the sooner they come, the better. Will the Minister tell us what the categories in the Long Title mean—although I suppose "observers" is obvious. Will he also tell us how many visitors will come and how long they will stay in Britain? I presume that they will visit the sites in Molesworth and Greenham Common. Will they stay here until the missiles are completely deactivated and rendered useless? Will they be accredited to the Russian embassy as part of the normal Russian detachment? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tell us what is going to happen.

It is only two days since this wonderful treaty was signed. It would be helpful to know whether the observers who arrive for the purposes of verification will be officially accredited to the Russian embassy and whether they will reside there. Presumably the accredited number will swell while they are in this country, and when their welcome task is finished they will leave.

The Bill mentions the Orders in Council that are to be published. Has any date been set for the publication of these necessary and welcome orders? I understand that the usual process is that Orders in Council are debated and approved by the House. Is that likely to happen in January? If so, I would be grateful if my hon. Friend could tell us whether the Orders in Council will be produced in

[Sir John Farr]

time for us to consider them before Christmas so that we can be ready for the debate early in the new year. It is a remarkable coincidence that we are debating the Bill today. Indeed, we could almost pay tribute to the party machine for that. It is a remarkable coincidence that we are debating the Bill at a time of international rejoicing, and I congratulate all concerned.

6.31 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): A number of questions have been raised in the debate and no doubt the Minister will endeavour to reply to them. I have a few questions to ask. The Minister mentioned the treaty. He will understand that it is a voluminous document, containing 31 pages of treaty and 100 pages of what is described as a "memorandum of understanding" or an appendix. I am not sure whether the Minister said that a copy of the treaty would be deposited in the Library. I hope that he will make clear which documents will be deposited in the Library, preferably before the Order in Council is brought before the House.

Will a copy of the treaty be deposited? Will the 100 pages of appendix which I understand contain a certain amount of United States classified information—which will be available to the United States Senate — be deposited? The Minister referred to various other documents, including an agreement between us and the United States, which I understand is called a "basing" document — although I am not sure what that will include—and a exchange of notes between us and the Soviet Union. Which of those documents will be deposited in the Library so that they can be examined before the debate in the House on the Order in Council that will give effect to the verification procedures in respect of the INF treaty?

Questions were raised about the destruction of missiles and warheads. I understand that that destruction will not take place in Britain. Presumably that will happen in the United States. The warheads will be placed on aeroplanes and flown out just as they were flown in; the rockets will also be flown out. Will the Minister confirm that there will be no physical destruction in Britain? As this is within his knowledge, despite the fact that it will happen in the United States, will he confirm that the nuclear material in the warheads, both Russian and American, can be freely used for other nuclear weapons? As I understand it, the treaty does not provide for total disposal of the nuclear material. The material will be available to be used in other nuclear weapons or, if it is technically possible, for commercial nuclear purposes.

Several hon. Members referred to travel arrangements and asked whether the Russians would be allowed to travel. Will the Soviet inspectors be allowed to travel far from Newbury, or will they be stuck in Newbury — which is a pleasant place? When they travel around the country, will they have special branch officers travelling with them? What arrangements will be made for travelling? Will the inspectors be restricted to particular sites, or will they be allowed to travel?

There is no point in going over the arguments in the Bill again. It provides not only for the granting of immunities in respect of the Stockholm agreements, but, according to the Long Title, for

"arrangements for furthering arms control or disarmament."

Once the Bill is enacted, it will become the Act under which an Order in Council will be made in respect of the INF treaty. It will also establish the machinery to ensure other verification proposals for other treaties. I very much hope that there will be other arms reduction agreements that can be covered within the Act.

The Minister looked ahead to a 50 per cent. strategic arms reduction treaty and we all look forward to that. I believe that the verification problem has largely been cracked — I would not say solved — and the steps forward on verification contained in the INF treaty will make it easier to reach agreement on a 50 per cent. strategic arms reduction treaty. Verification will obviously be more difficult in START because not all the weapons will be destroyed; half will remain. The political impetus behind the INF verification agreement is a great step forward. It will make negotiation of START easier. Indeed, negotiations on START have already begun and are moving rapidly. That should make it easier to reach agreement on a 50 per cent. arms reduction treaty.

The Minister also referred to a chemical weapons treaty. We are enacting tonight the machinery that will enable observers and inspectors to verify such a treaty. The verification of chemical weapons will pose a difficult problem. The Minister also referred to a conventional arms reduction treaty. As the Minister stressed, this legislation will enable us to provide verification in that area.

I would be out of order if I considered conventional arms reduction. However, every time that the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) speaks, he gives a plug for the Western European Union. I have not always agreed with that body, but today I will give it a plug although I am not a member of it. I want to plug the WEU's recent report on the conventional arms balance in Europe. That is probably the best report on the subject. I would subscribe to most of the report, which more or less gets it right. The report will make it a little easier—it will not be easy—to reach a realistic arms reduction agreement when negotiations hopefully start between NATO and the Warsaw pact some time in February or March.

While the Minister was looking forward to other treaties, he did not refer to a treaty on the elimination or reduction of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Mr. Mellor: Quite right.

Mr. Davies: I note that the Minister says, "Quite right." We have debated this subject before and we will debate it again, but we should not debate it tonight. Apparently all the other treaties are fine, but the Government are making fools of themselves over battlefield nuclear weapons. Most NATO Defence Ministers would like to see simultaneous negotiations over those weapons. Indeed, the Federal Republic of Germany is desperate for simultaneous negotiations. I hope that the Government will think again. I do not know why they should be against it. We are not talking about giving up weapons independently; we are talking about multilateral negotiations.

The Bill establishes far-reaching verification procedures. I do not believe that those procedures would have been agreed without the political impetus that created the treaty in the first place. There have been arguments about why the treaty has come about: one side says that

it is because the West negotiated from strength. However, as my hon. Friends have pointed out, the Russians have three or four times as many missiles. That is a curious definition of negotiating from strength.

I believe that there are two main factors. First, public opinion was a powerful factor. Whatever their views about nuclear weapons, people in western Europe and the United States did not want any more of them. They felt that there were plenty around, and most people wanted them to be reduced. In the United States, the pronouncements of theologians and of the American Catholic bishops had an enormous effect on President Reagan, especially before his most recent re-election as president.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The rules of the Chamber must apply to the Front Bench. The right hon. Gentleman is straying from the Bill.

Mr. Davies: I was paying tribute to the political impetus that brought about the verification procedures in the Bill. Without that, delegates would have been sitting in Geneva for years, trying to solve the difficult problems of verification. The details can be worked out, but without political will it is not possible to reach an agreement. That will has come from the President of the United States and the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist party, both of whom, I believe, abhor nuclear weapons and want a nuclear-free world.

I conclude with a tribute to all who have campaigned for the removal of nuclear weapons. I hope and believe that this will lead to other treaties, although it will not be easy; it will probably be more difficult. I hope that the United States Senate will ratify the treaty——

Mr. Hill: And the Supreme Soviet.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) mentions the Supreme Soviet. Mr. Gorbachev himself has said that he has to get the treaty through the Supreme Soviet, but I hope that the United States Senate will not stand in the way—although I am sorry to say that its track record in ratifying treaties is not very good, from the League of Nations, to SALT 2. I hope that, for its own sake, the United States will realise that this treaty is not just about America, as, in a narrow sense, SALT 2 is. It is about weapons in Europe, although those weapons are American.

All those senators who will be flexing their muscles without enjoying themselves and putting down amendments should see the treaty in a wider context, and think of the damage that will be done to the United States in Europe if they do not ratify it. I hope that there will be no amendments under the old rule of "tacking"—which the other place can still do, but we cannot—and that the Senate will not tack on to the treaty matters which, while important, are extraneous to it. Otherwise, damage will be done to the United States and, as a result, to the West.

We welcome the Bill. I am sure that its progress in the other place will be speedy, and we look forward to the Order in Council which will enable us to debate more fully the documents with which, no doubt, we shall by then have been supplied by the Minister of State.

6.43 pm

Mr. Mellor: By leave of the House, I shall be happy to respond to as many as possible of the points that have been raised. There have been a number of intelligent and interesting contributions — and, of course, the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) also spoke.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) ended on an important point. I am glad to be able to agree entirely with him, and indeed to commend his words and the vigour with which they were spoken. Whatever else we may fall out about in the House — and some hon. Members have gone to considerable lengths tonight to manufacture differences, even by travestying the words of others—it is clear that the House is united in welcoming the INF treaty. That is also the united position of NATO, which cannot be said too often. We do not want any member of the United States Senate to feel it necessary to ride in, like the knight in shining armour on the white charger, to rescue Europe from the consequences of the treaty. We are well content with it, have played a full part in ensuring that it came about and want it to be ratified as quickly as possible.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli asked me a number of questions, which I shall do my best to answer quickly, so that I can respond to other points. The treaty documents published by the United States will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. As the right hon. Gentleman rightly said, there is a memorandum on data, but it has not yet been published by the United States, and may never be. If it is not published, we cannot deposit it in the House, but anything that the United States publishes in relation to the principal treaty will be lodged in the House of Commons Library as soon as possible thereafter, as will the basing country agreement and the exchange of notes. We want people to know what has been done in their name.

The right hon. Gentleman was also right to say that there would be no physical destruction of warheads in Britain. Nuclear material which has been extracted can be used again.

Echoing a number of hon. Members—including my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) in his interesting speech—the right hon. Gentleman asked about inspectors. That, of course, is of particular relevance to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson), whose presence in the House is always welcome to us, for we know the courage with which he has faced up to physical disabilities that would have destroyed a lesser man. I say that with all the sincerity that I can muster. My hon. Friend has done a formidable job for his constituents, who have been at the sharp end of making the Alliance's policy of standing firm work. All of us whose constituencies are remote from the issue should pay tribute to their fortitude, and to my hon. Friend's spirit in ensuring that their points were not ignored in the House.

Inspection will be restricted to two bases in the United Kingdom, which are the declared sites. I return to the point about satellite reconnaisance made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough. The treaty — although this will not necessarily be true of its successors —makes it much easier to be confident about disclosed sites, because it is possible to know by various means— satellite photography, no doubt, being one — what is present, and where it is.

Inspectors will be accompanied at all times by United Kingdom as well as United States personnel. They will enter the country for a limited period, and will not be permitted to travel outside the places which relate to their immediate needs — the site that they are inspecting, the

[Mr. Mellor]

airfield from which they come and points on the journey inbetween. Inspectors of military exercises will often be diplomats accredited to missions already in the country, and may stay for longer. I should say, however, that the observation of Exercise Purple Warrior lasted only two or three days.

The right hon. Gentleman set out the Alliance's negotiating position——

Mr. John Browne *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: I have a good deal of work to get through if I am to answer the debate in full. I do not mean to be discourteous, but I must try to answer the debate in 10 minutes, which is not easy.

The INF agreement and the START agreement on conventional and chemical weapons form not only the United Kingdom's but the Alliance's negotiating position.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): What about battlefield weapons and Chancellor Kohl?

Mr. Mellor: The West Germans subscribe to the Alliance's policy, like everybody else. Faced with the huge chemical and conventional threat, we believe that chemical weapons must be eliminated and the imbalance in conventional weapons redressed before we consider the negotiations on short-range nuclear forces.

I am not confident that the verification regimes for those matters, which will be more complicated than those for the INF agreement, could be contained in the procedures set out in the Bill. It is likely that they will require primary legislation; that is almost certainly the case for chemical weapons. It may well be the case for START, but it is not the case with regard to the INF agreement.

I am sorry that the Labour party persists in saying that the United Kingdom was and is irrelevant to these discussions. I suspect that the British public will take more notice of Mr. Gorbachev's views about the United Kingdom's relevance than the views of the Leader of the Opposition and his spokesmen. It is worth recalling what Mr. Gorbachev said at Brize Norton during his historic visit on Monday:

"We have covered this road together—the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and your allies and partners."

On 8 December *Pravda* said——

Mr. Cryer: Conservatives are quoting *Pravda* now.

Mr. Mellor: I would have thought that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) would treat *Pravda* with respect. *[Interruption.]* It is all grist to our mill these days. *Pravda* said:

"Both sides emphasise that the INF agreement was not only a result of the efforts of the Soviet Union and the USA but also due to the fact that they had acted in agreement with their allies. Here, Mr. Gorbachev emphasised Europe's role, which was not only indispensable, but increasing."

In saying that Mr. Gorbachev merely stopped off for a cup of airline coffee, the Labour party exposed how out of touch it is with events. I hate to rub salt into the wounds that gape every time Labour Members rise uncertainly to their feet to talk about these issues, but we have had 17 years of Labour government since the war, yet during that time a General Secretary of the Soviet Communist party never considered it remotely worth while to come to the United Kingdom. The Labour party must understand that things have changed.

The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) was kind enough to thank me for trying to respond to detailed debates in Committee. I am grateful to him; he and I have been over a few courses in Committee and I have no doubt we shall do so again. He asked about inspectors; there will be a list of inspectors but they could be refused entry. An inspection must take place within the terms of the treaty. One of the key matters that we considered necessary to protect British sovereignty was the right of veto of an unsuitable inspector, and we shall not hesitate to exercise it if need be. The hon. Gentleman was right to say that we shall not want to get involved in tit-for-tat arrangements. Plainly, everyone will want to use their best endeavours to ensure that inspections go smootly.

The hon. Member for Leyton asked about the draw-down period. We expect the missiles at Molesworth to go within a year and that the others will go within the three-year period of draw-down, after which there will be a liability for inspections for a further 10 years.

The hon. Member for Leyton mentioned deployment at Molesworth, and I should make it clear that it was always part of the Molesworth deployment schedule that the first flight would become operational before the end of this year—as soon as the base was ready for them. Efforts to meet that end have been under way for several months, and had matters taken their normal course, the base would have become fully operational—four flights of missiles would have been established—by the end of 1988. Although the treaty cannot come into force until it is ratified by the United States Senate, the Alliance has agreed to suspend deployment following the signature of the agreement. The Alliance has been desperate to achieve consensus on that, and I am sure that there is agreement among hon. Members on that matter.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) plays a leading role in the Western European Union, as well as in the House. The WEU is a useful body, as I discovered when I was there last week. Hon. Members participate in it to try to achieve agreement within the Alliance on key issues. My hon. Friend asked about the number of inspectors. We expect it to be not more than 10, which is a relatively limited number. He asked about conditions for inspections behind the iron curtain — *[Interruption.]* That is the phrase that was used; whether it fits in with the right hon. Gentleman's views is another matter. Those who go to eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to carry out obligations under the INF treaty will have precisely the same terms and conditions as Soviet inspectors coming here.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) repeated the brazen assertion that she made on Second Reading — that the INF treaty came about because of the peace movement. That brazen assertion was also made during a radio interview in which I was taking part by Monsignor Bruce Kent, who plays Rasputin to the Lady's Tsarina in the peace movement. He is every bit as brazen as the hon. Lady, although he is not so attractive.

Mr. Robertson: The same could be said of the Minister.

Mr. Mellor: I concede that, in the spirit of honesty and candour that informs these issues. I try to be nice to the hon. Lady when I can; there was little in her speech that was favourable.

The reality is that this arrangement came about because the so-called peace movement was defeated at elections in

the United Kingdom. The hon. Lady unattractively mingled paranoia and a dislike of the United States in her speech. All the examples that she gave of avoidance of obligation concerned the United States. I wish that the hon. Lady would get it into her head that we should also ensure that the Soviet Union is not avoiding its obligations. If the hon. Lady looks for violations of treaties, she is as likely to find them on the Soviet side as on the other.

We hope and believe that the regime of verification that has been undertaken, which is more obtrusive than anything contained in any East-West agreement in the past, will enable everyone to be sure that these arrangements are stuck to.

The hon. Member for Deptford travestied the Prime Minister's position. The Prime Minister and President Reagan agreed a negotiating strategy, which was subsequently agreed by NATO as long ago as November 1986. The hon. Lady said that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had said that nuclear disarmament had gone far enough. That was a description of the position after the INF and START treaties had been completed and had nothing to do with her suggesting that there was no need for START negotiations; she is as anxious as any of us for them to be successful.

After this interesting debate, I hope that we shall agree to give the Bill a unanimous Third Reading. Whatever else we may disagree about, we agree about the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

London Docklands Railway (Beckton) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I should tell the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the instruction to the Committee on the Bill, and it will be in order to debate it as part of the general debate on the Bill.

Mr. Thorne: The docklands light railway is one of the outstanding success stories of recent years. Even before its opening it had a remarkable effect upon the volume of interest expressed in the docklands enterprise zone. A large number of businesses were attracted to the area in the expectation that exceptionally good public transport facilities would be provided to give quick and easy commuter access. That process was reinforced by the passing last year of the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Act, which will give ready access to the City institutions, via the Bank, in addition to commuter access via the Stratford British Rail interchange provided for in earlier legislation.

Since the opening of the railway by Her Majesty the Queen on 30 July this year and after the computer teething troubles that delayed its public use for a further month, the volume of passengers has exceeded all expectations. Furthermore, London Regional Transport is being besieged from all directions to extend the network across the river to Greenwich and north-east to Barking. I even received a strongly worded personal plea from the Bishop of Barking and Father Barnes, the vicar of St. Mary's, Ilford, who are by no means happy to hear that Beckton is the furthest point in the present proposals. They believe that it is essential to provide an interchange with the Southend-Fenchurch street line as quickly as possible.

Because of this unprecedented success, the promoters would be happy to accept the proposed instruction in the names of the hon. Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing):

"That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill, That it Report to the House on the evidence to it concerning the adequacy, or otherwise, of the characteristics and capacity of the proposed railway in relation to the likely demands placed on the railway by existing and planned development in and around the area of the Royal Docks."

London Regional Transport is promoting the Beckton extension of the docklands light railway on behalf of the London Docklands development corporation. Under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, the LDDC is charged with promoting the redevelopment of the docklands area. The redevelopment process is well under way. To date more than £2,400 million has been committed, including £2,200 million from the private sector. To the middle of this year about 660 new companies had set up businesses and more than 10,000 new jobs had been created. A further 3,000 jobs would be created or preserved in existing firms as a result of grants approved under the Inner Urban Areas Act scheme. More than 6,000 private homes have been built, 45 per cent. of which have been bought by residents of docklands boroughs.

Improving public transport accessibility is an essential requirement of the redevelopment process. To this end

[Mr. Thorne]

LRT is constructing the docklands light railway through the area. The first stage of the railway, which opened on 31 August, consists of two routes, totalling 12 km, linking Stratford to the north and the City to the west with the Isle of Dogs development area. This is known as the initial railway. Work has now started on extending the initial railway at the western end by some 1·8 km to Bank station to provide a better interchange with the Underground and a link to the heart of the City business area. The extension is being jointly funded by the Government and the developers of Canary wharf on the Isle of Dogs, and will be open for passenger service in late 1990.

Under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 the London Docklands development corporation was established — by the London Docklands Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1980 — as the urban development corporation for London docklands for the purpose of securing the regeneration of its area. The corporation believes that the works proposed and the powers intended to be conferred by the Bill will help to achieve that.

Under the London Docklands Railway Acts 1984 and 1985, the promoters constructed railway works which led to the public opening of the first stage of the docklands light railway from the new Tower Gateway station at Minories to the Isle of Dogs and Stratford in the summer of this year. The promoters have obtained powers, in the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Act 1986, which will enable them to extend the DLR from Tower Gateway to Bank. The Bill is therefore seen as authorising stage 4 of the docklands light railway to provide an eastern extension from Poplar through the areas of Leamouth, the royal docks and Cyprus to the housing development sites at Beckton.

The principal clause—clause 4—gives the power to construct a number of works: works Nos. 1 and 2 are railways providing connections with the DLR at Poplar. Work No. 3 is a railway which would constitute the eastern extension of the DLR to Beckton. Works Nos. 4 and 5 are short lengths of railway from the eastern extension into the site of the former Beckton holder station gas works.

Clauses 5 to 14 of the Bill would confer the necessary powers for the construction of works Nos. 1 to 5, including special provision for crossing that part of the River Lea known as Bow creek.

Part III of the Bill provides powers to acquire lands compulsorily for the purposes of the works to be authorised by the Bill, and clause 16 gives the promoters the option to acquire such new rights over any of the lands as my be required instead of acquiring any greater interest in those lands. The period for the compulsory purchase of lands and new rights under the Bill is limited by clause 17 and expires on 31 December 1992.

Other provisions in the Bill contain powers uniform with those already conferred by the London Docklands Railway Acts 1984 and 1985 and the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Act 1986 so as to achieve an integrated system for operating the docklands light railway.

At the expiry of the petitioning time laid down by the House, 10 petitions had been deposited against the Bill, but one of those has been withdrawn. There appear to be no objections to the concept of the Bill. One fundamental objection is to the intended route of the railway. The Bill provides for a southern alignment across Bow creek, while the majority of petitioners seek a northern route providing for a DLR station at Canning Town.

Following detailed discussion and the refinement of the design and layout of the works at Poplar, in the Connaught road area and at Beckton, adjustments to the proposals are sought in an additional provision, for which leave has now been given to promote. The adjustments would enable the new railway to be integrated more effectively with the highway proposals and other developments in the locality.

The DLR is only one of the numerous projects designed to regenerate London docklands and the route selected is that which is felt to provide the greatest benefit in the long term, having regard to the development potential of the area, the road schemes being implemented or planned, the other forms of transport available or to be provided and the expenditure allocated to the DLR. Consequently, the alternative route through Canning Town is not favoured and the promoters adhere to their choice as proposed in the Bill; but this will, of course, be considered in detail in any subsequent Committee.

The promoters, therefore, ask that the Bill be given a Second Reading so that they may be allowed to proceed and put to the Committee to which the Bill may be referred their case for the provisions of the Bill and of the additional provision.

7.9 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I begin by saying that I shall not oppose the Bill. On the last occasion when the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and I crossed swords on the issue of the docklands light railway, I opposed the proposal that he put forward. Tonight it is a pleasure to say that I do not oppose the Bill whose provisions he has just outlined.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for selecting the instruction in my name and that of my hon. Friends from the London borough of Newham, and the hon. Gentleman and the promoters for accepting it. That will assist the Committee in its important deliberations.

I shall not follow the hon. Member for Ilford, South too far down the road of the London Docklands development corporation, on which I fear we would have differences of view, particularly about his reference to the 45 per cent. of local east end residents who had bought houses. That may have been the initial figure, but, as everyone will know, things have changed since then and, whatever happens to the Bill or to the docklands light railway, I suspect that the figures will change in the future. But I do not want to pursue that because, of all things in dockland, until now the principle—and I emphasise that—of the docklands light railway has been agreed on both sides.

The Minister will be glad to know that when it was first promoted it had the agreement of the Greater London council, the London borough of Newham, the Docklands Forum, the Joint Action Group in the Docklands and every conceivable residents' and community association, as well as of the LDDC and the Government, so that is at least one feature on which we can agree on principle. I can go back even further, because many years ago the much maligned but, I think, quite good Docklands Joint Committee published a pamphlet entitled "Bus, Tram or Train?". The group put together a discussion document in 1974 and it plumped not for the tram — which is, in effect, what the DLR is—but for the train.

In the dockland strategic plan which the group then published there was an extension of the Fleet line through dockland, albeit taking a slightly different route from the one that we are discussing tonight, extending to Thamesmead. Unfortunately, public money did not stretch to a full tube railway at that stage.

The group also published a good many other plans, including the "Technical Appendix to London Docklands" and "The Years of Growth". So what happened at that stage was better than some people now believe, particularly those who parrot some of the things that have been said by the LDDC. To some extent, therefore, the Bill is a substitute for the proposal at that time, which was passed by the House, for the extension of the Fleet line right to Thamesmead. So, in a sense, we have gone back 10 or 15 years to where we were before, with a scheme that is a substitute for it.

I mentioned earlier the considerable degree of agreement. The disagreement arises, first, over the route. The Canning Town loop proposal has been referred to by the hon. Member for Ilford, South. There is also disagreement on the funding and on some of the purposes to which the railway will be put; in other words, over our interpretation of "regeneration". Regeneration in east London, particularly in the London borough of Newham, has not, as interpreted by the LDDC, been in favour of the existing communities. It has been in favour of other people.

We are concerned with the railway tonight, so it is appropriate for me to quote from the annual report of the Docklands Forum, a body set up and commended by the House of Lords Committee which set up the LDDC. It had this to say about the docklands light railway in the annual report for 1986:

"The Forum has continued to press for the eastern extension of the DLR to Beckton. Members objected strongly when the necessary Bill was not allowed to be laid before Parliament in November 1985 because 100 per cent. private funding could not be guaranteed. The Forum considers that public funding for the Beckton extension cannot now be refused because the City extension is to receive at least £60 million of public money despite a Government statement that the DLR would receive no further public money. When the extension goes ahead, Forum members are concerned that the service to the local community should be maximised, and that means it should run to Beckton District Centre via South Canning Town".

It is on that note that I turn to the fundamental issue with which we are very concerned—the Canning Town loop. When petitions come to be heard in Committee, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Ilford, South, the borough of Newham will be foremost in putting a petition in favour of the Canning Town loop, followed by residents' associations in the Canning Town area, who understand the position and who would want that very much because, in the view of the local people, it is not, and should not be, a developers' railway alone. The Government may want that, the LDDC may want that, but the people of east London are due and deserve a railway that they can use, as well as a railway that will be used for the other purposes that the Government have in mind.

We cannot understand why the Government and the LDDC—perhaps the Government are neutral on this, but certainly the LDDC is not—will not concede the idea of the train calling at Canning Town, which is the centre of Newham dockland and one of the major community centres in east London. It is both a shopping centre and a market centre. In particular, it lies at the end of many bus routes and is therefore a natural centre for transport interchange.

It might be thought that the loop entails an enormous detour. It does not. It is about half a mile, or even less, longer than the direct route chosen by the LDDC. It might be thought that it would cost a lot more. When I originally wrote to Christopher Benson, chairman of the LDDC, he wrote back claiming that it would be very much more expensive. I believe that the promoters have subsequently claimed that too, but there have been reports, the gap is narrower, and the London borough of Newham tells me that, according to its calculations, it might even be cheaper to take the route that the people of Newham prefer.

Be that as it may — and it will be discussed in Committee—it might also be thought that the journey time will be longer. One of the objections, we were told, is that people hurrying to the City would have to go via Canning Town and it would take longer. If they go by the direct route, there is one station. If they go by the loop, there is one station. If it is half a mile longer, if acceleration and stopping times are the same, and if the train travels at an average of only 20 mph—a very modest speed—I make the additional time about a minute and a half. So that argument falls flat as well.

There is yet another reason that might make the loop superior. The bridge across the River Lea would allow easier navigation of sea-going and river-going ships up part of the River Lea which otherwise might be disadvantaged by a bridge lower down. All in all, we cannot see why that loop should not be built. The residents and the London borough will put their case to the Committee, so I will leave it at that, but I do not want to underestimate the symbolic importance of putting a station at Canning Town, historic centre of east London, because putting the line directly across the Lea will cock a snook at the people of east London, who have taken a great deal recently.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is the Government's case primarily one of cost? Has my hon. Friend noticed that they built an inadequate railway, for cost reasons, and then keep adding bits? There have been changes since the Bill was laid last year, and we hear that other bits will be added on. Is it not likely that, in the future, the Canning Town loop will be added on? It would be much cheaper to build it now rather than in two or three years' time.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend is right, and, as I have said — this will be discussed in Committee — the cost would probably be less if it were built now. The Government are standing off a little, at least procedurally, on this matter. The cost may not be borne by public funds, as some of us think it should, but may be borne by the developers themselves. If the cost is equal, they will not have to pay any more to provide a service for local people which they originally wanted to deny. These are important considerations which no doubt will be addressed in Committee.

My hon. Friend has pointed to another matter. If the original route goes via Canning Town in a loop, no one would object to an alternative route being built at a later date. That is another possibility that has not yet been canvassed.

The petitions will also deal with other matters. I shall not spend much time on these, but it is important to list

[Mr. Spearing]

them. Some people differ in their views about the sites of stations. This is true in Newham and in part of Tower Hamlets, where part of the new railway will be built. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) may wish to raise that matter. There was a proposal to narrow Victoria Dock road in my constituency. This may appear to be an extraordinary proposal when one considers the heavy use of roads in the area as a result of the development in the royal docks. Later proposals might have made this unnecessary, but it is a matter of local concern.

The elevation of the railway has caused problems. There has been trouble with noise in Tower Hamlets, where the original undertakings in respect of noise have not been carried out. Residents in Strait road, the Cyprus area and Winsor terrace will seek an undertaking from the promoters about routes. We hope that discussions will resolve those problems before the Bill goes into Committee.

The hon. Member for Ilford, South mentioned the branch line to the Beckton gas works now being demolished. That is planned as a depot——

Mr. Thorne *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: I see that the hon. Gentleman agrees with me. This is important, because, although depots may be silent, this one would be near Winsor terrace and the residents would like undertakings about the design layout and any noise that may come from the depot. Those are matters for the Committee.

I wish to deal now with the important matter of funding. I quoted from the Forum report, which stated that the City extension was originally to be funded entirely by private money. It is now to be funded by a proportion of private and public money, but we understand—the Minister may confirm this—that the railway extension will be wholly funded by the developers, or through the increased value of the land when the railway has been built. This is contrary to most approaches to such matters in this country until now. Usually, the public fund a road or railway and, through subsequent planning controls, the community—I emphasise that—benefits from it.

The Government have driven a coach and horses through that principle in favour of another which does not find favour on the Opposition Benches. It means that the railway and the development that it serves go hand in hand, which is one of the less attractive features of the development. As the developments will not be founded on local needs, but are being devoted to other purposes, the money for it is coming from those developments. We must be sure, and I am sure that the promoters will demonstrate in Committee, that the money that is likely to be available from those developments will meet the estimated cost of the railway, which in current prices is about £140 million.

How exactly will that work? This is an important point, not just for the railway, but for my constituency, through which it runs. We have been told—it was re-emphasised a moment ago—that the cost of the railway will be defrayed from the rising cost of the land, which itself will be made more attractive by virtue of the railway. As I understand it, the LDDC will be valuing the land after planning permission has been given and—I emphasise this—it has come to an agreement with the developer on what that value shall be. It is necessary to go through the stages, because it is a controversial area both in content and in method.

First, planning permission must be obtained, and planning permission for the area of the royal docks that is served by the railway is now going through the due process. There has been one formal referral back to the LDDC, and at some stage it will no doubt agree it and then, at a later date, put a price on the land relative to the planning permission that has been given.

It is at that point that I lose track of the process. Either the land will be allowed to the developer at a lower cost than it would otherwise merit by virtue of the planning permission and the developer will then pay to the DLR or London Transport, or whoever is building the railway, the relevant amount, or it will get the land on its books at less than the price, and the LDDC, having forgone that amount of money, will pass it over to the contractor or the DLR.

I take it that it is the former process that will operate. This is of some importance, because this is a novel method of funding public transport. I believe that this is the first time that that method has been used, at least to any great extent. It is the Minister's responsibility to tell us this evening how that will be done. If he cannot do so this evening, he should do so before we go much further.

There could be some slip twixt cup and lip. I suppose that the developers are all right, but we have read about some difficulties in the City, and a difficulty may arise from a judgment that will come from Luxembourg in the not too distant future relating to VAT on building. We know that the provisional judgment does not relate to VAT on private housing, but it may well end up relating to commercial developments and to buildings for retail consortia, and so on. At some stage, the financial mechanism must be looked at carefully. We want to make sure that the resources are available.

In addition, we must look at the development itself. The royal docks are now undergoing enormous change.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Before my hon. Friend moves on to consider other matters, will he reflect on the fact that the Beckton extension is being funded by receipts from the LDDC from land sales, with no direct Government money, despite the fact that the Government are prepared to put over £60 million into the DLR City extension to allow the Canary Wharf development? At the moment the Government seem prepared to use public money to subsidise private transport, yet public transport is to be financed totally from the private sector. There will be £300 million of public money in the docklands highway. Is that not typical of the Government's approach, which is to subsidise the private sector and ask the public sector to go private in order to get the financing that we want in Newham?

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining the new territory, in terms of both funding and planning public transport, that we are now entering by virtue of the Bill. The Bill may be something of a precedent.

Let me take up what my hon. Friend said about the City extension. I am sure that the Minister will remember, about two years ago in the House, the rather dramatic evening when he announced that the money for the City extension could not be raised by private funds. We may

hear the same about the eastern extension, for all we know. If it could not be done for the Canary Wharf, and it still has not been done, what about the royal docks and the Beckton extension? That is an important point of principle.

I remind the House that at that stage it was said that all the money could not be found, but what has happened subsequently to Canary Wharf? It has had to pay only £8 million in cash and it has been let off £12 million in lieu of its contribution to the City extension and other bits and pieces. Therefore, Canary Wharf, with its enormous development, is getting a great deal from public land that was once owned by the Port of London Authority. Indeed, all the land in the royal docks that is being developed is either ex-Port of London Authority land or ex-gas board land and is owned by the British people. That should be well understood.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend has great knowledge of transport matters, in which he has been interested over the years. Has he ever known another example of funding in this way from enhanced land value? After all, it is clear that if one builds a railway on a piece of land, the value of that land will be increased. Is the same not true if one builds a road? For example, the land adjacent to the M25 must have increased in value. The Government are happy to finance the roads out of public money, and are doing so in the docklands area and the east end of London, which is for the private sector, but when it comes to the public sector, we have this curious arrangement of which I have never heard before. Has my hon. Friend ever known that principle to be adopted? The other bit of the railway into the City brings people from the City, Sussex and Surrey into the docklands—the so-called yuppies. That bit of the railway is being financed by the Government, but for our constituents to get out of the east end into the City, the Government adopt this method.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be brief.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining my point. The Minister may be able to tell us whether there is any precedent. I rather think not.

I go one step further than my hon. Friend. The fact that roads have been publicly funded in that way has been balanced by the fact that any development that may come — or not, as we hope, in the case of the M25 — is constrained by proper planning procedures. There have been some planning procedures in the LDDC area, but not, I emphasise, planning procedures that were generally agreed after the war on both sides of the House for the public good. Those planning procedures are organised by the LDDC, a wholly appointed, undemocratic body and a creature of the Secretary of State. The planning procedures in the royal docks are different from those that would have protected public money invested in roads and railways.

Not only do we have a different sort of statutory procedure, but the Secretary of State has recently announced that instead of having a public inquiry into one of the major developments in the royal docks, the LDDC will be allowed to determine the matter without any public inquiry. The area that the railway is to serve is the subject of about 15 different planning elements, all of which have been made public, although no formal planning application has been determined for any of them. There are about 15 different plans for major developments, any one of which, on planning criteria, could have led to a major national public inquiry in its own right. The area of the royal docks along which the railway runs, if it were described in terms of central London, would run from the Palace of Westminster to Kensington Palace. The area it involves is larger than Kensington gardens and Hyde park put together. That is the area that will be served by the extension of the railway.

What will be put there? Messrs Rosehaugh Stanhope has five different elements in its plan, which is before the LDDC. It proposes 1,000 homes in the western area of the site, plus schools, shops, a business park of 2·5 million sq ft, and a retail centre, and a community leisure centre of another 1 million sq ft. That is a planning proposal currently before the LDDC on which the Minister has said that there will be no public inquiry. The retail centre and the rest of the plan—apart from the houses—probably would not be there but for the Bill.

The second scheme, north of the Victoria docks, put forward by Lang-Fox-Vom — the London dome — proposes 2,000 homes, with facilities attached, a hotel, ultimately with 700 rooms, a sports dome to seat 23,000 people and another business centre. That is the second major area.

The third proposal, from Heron-Mowlem-Conran Roche south of the Victoria docks in the area surrounding the mills, would provide 4,000 dwellings, only a few of which would be let at fair rent, 500,000 sq ft of business premises and light industrial areas. That is rivalled by another scheme for the same area of the Victoria dock village, run by the East London Housing Association and Messrs. Barratt. There is a race to see which will get it. If my arithmetic is correct, that would amount to 7,000 dwellings, in addition to the business and retail premises.

That is an enormous development. One could say that it will not get through, but it will, because on 31 March the Secretary of State said:

> "I have today approved a strategy for the royal docks proposed to me by the LDDC which will turn 270 hectares of derelict land into a new employment, retailing, leisure and residential centre for London. The LDDC strategy, completed in consultation with me, will provide 7,000 housing units"—

my estimate was right—

> "and some 48,000 jobs."—[*Official Report*, 31 March 1987; Vol. 113, c. 440.]

That was the intention of the Secretary of State, who is working the planning procedure that I described, broadly to approve the investments that I have outlined, and to estimate—his estimate may be slightly over the top—that there will be 48,000 jobs.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Secretary of State regularly goes right over the top and has to be brought into line by the courts, as we have known, in his various ministerial guises. Indeed, he is a recidivist in many respects. Does my hon. Friend agree that Opposition Members who represent east London welcome jobs, but would like to think that many of those jobs will go to the people who live in the east end who presently suffer unemployment? Will he comment on the scandalous situation in which a Secretary of State can give planning permission for monumental developments without any reference whatsoever to the needs and wishes of the people in the east end of London, as expressed by their democratically elected councillors?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be persuaded to go too far down that line. We are getting a long way away from the Beckton railway.

Mr. Spearing: With due respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not so. The railway goes right through those developments and would not be funded if it were not for them. I understand your reminder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will not pursue too far what my hon. Friend has said. However, that is so. It illustrates the points that I made earlier. If people from Newham took those jobs, they would not need to travel on the DLR. They would walk or take the bus, and that would probably be better for everybody. It is true that an industrial zone is being retained, but we would like jobs for local people, and we wonder how many there will be.

The railway is at the centre of the debate. The planners and the LDDC have told us that in spite of the railway they expect 60 per cent. of those moving in and out of the enormous development to travel by road. That is an important estimate. I do not know whether it is true, but at least there is that assumption. We have to do some sums to see how many are expected to travel on the railway. In other words, we need to do some mathematics on what is technically called the modal split.

I do not know what the demand for the railway will be. I should have thought that it would be better to have an even higher proportion than 60 per cent. travelling by public transport because a great deal of money has been provided for the roads. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) mentioned a figure of £300 million for the east London highway, which is in Tower Hamlets and goes under Limehouse basin. That is an enormous cost. The roads in Newham will cost between £140 million and £200 million, about the same as the cost of the railway. However, the roads will be provided by the Department of Transport.

Mr. Leighton: By the taxpayer.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, by the taxpayer. Those roads will benefit people who will perhaps not be using public transport so much. However, the railway will be funded by the developers. That is an anomaly and shows the way in which the Government's introduction of urban development corporations has upset the apple cart in all sorts of ways. I have to ask whether the railway will be able to cope with all those enormous developments.

Mr. Leighton: It will not.

Mr. Spearing: I do not think that we can argue that tonight. That is a matter for the Committee and that is why I tabled the instruction. I am grateful to the Minister and the promoters for accepting it. These matters should be debated and looked at closely in Committee.

I tabled the instruction before I received in the post a very helpful document—I want to pay tribute to the promoters for producing it—which tells us a little more about the proposed characteristics of the railway. It shows that the capacity of the railway is perhaps not as great as we might have thought. In a table in the document we are told that in 1991 which is when the service to Beckton will be introduced, it will have a capacity of about 3,900 passengers per hour. That is based on the present one-unit train operating now. The ultimate capacity will be 11,700 passengers per hour. That is with an interval of only four minutes between trains.

Perhaps those figures can be modified. We know that the railway is suffering from some electronic bugs and it may not be able to run at less than four-minute intervals. Although a capacity of 11,700 passengers per hour may sound a lot, it is not when there are 23,000 seats around the London dome and all the housing that I have listed. I am beginning to wonder whether the Dockland Joint Committee—a much maligned body—was right and that perhaps a rather more substantial railway would have been wiser, particularly as there is a demand for extensions to Thamesmead and there may be demands for other extensions. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) is present, and there is a logical extension to Barking.

I suggested that two or tree years ago, but the Department of Transport pooh-poohed it and threw the suggestion out of the window when I asked for the roadworks to be modified on the road to Barking—which will be opened shortly — which would have allowed a good route for the railway.

In short, people in the area like the principle of the railway. It will be advantageous to people living in Newham. It will enable them to travel to central London and to move around in Newham, which is a good thing. However, we think that the railway is rather cheap and that it could have been more substantial. We would like to see some of the electronic bugs ironed out. Above all, we regret that the railway, through financing and through its engineering, is not part of the coherent pattern of transport that we would like. Nevertheless, we do not oppose the Bill, for the reasons I have outlined.

7.46 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) who presented the Bill will certainly have eased its Second Reading by the competent manner in which he has described the contents and purport of the Bill and, most notably, by his wise acceptance of the petition in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

It is minimal common sense that there should be a study to see whether the new proposed Beckton extension is adequate to meet the scale of use that can be expected, taking account of the major planning developments listed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South.

I feel that the fact that we have not had a comprehensive study of rail and road transport needs in the entire docklands area is a serious omission. I fully understand the difficulties of planning too far in advance, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South reminded the House, a considerable exercise in forward planning was done 10 years ago by the docklands joint committee when it published the docklands strategy. I am glad to say that, as Secretary of State for the Environment at that time, I was broadly able to accept it when it was published in 1976. In that document the committee was able to make reasonable forecasts about the scale of transport needs and to present a strategy to that effect. We are certainly suffering from the loss of such a strategy for road and rail transport now.

The hon. Member for Ilford, South mentioned the fact that this is the fourth Bill on the docklands light railway that we have had in the past few years. The first two authorised the construction of the DLR from Tower

Gateway — the station in the Minories in my constituency—to the Isle of Dogs and Stratford. That large stretch of the DLR has now been completed and it has been operational since the autumn. The third Bill, which was before us last year, will take the DLR from Tower Gateway to the Bank. The main purpose is to link the City to the vast Canary Wharf development on the Isle of Dogs.

Although improved communications in the docklands are welcome, problems have arisen. Those problems should be discussed and faced now. My colleague and parliamentary neighbour, the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), who is indisposed tonight, would have wanted to raise two broad points about the Bill which directly affect her constituents. First, at Poplar the Bill allows for a flyover to be built to take the track for the Beckton extension. I am assured that that takes the track very close to residential areas.

The second point relates to Blackwall station, which is located on a flyover across a six-exit roundabout. That is a serious point. Unless something is done, pedestrian access is bound to be unsafe and inadequate. I hope that London Regional Transport will do its utmost to overcome or minimise such problems. I hope that that matter will be thoroughly discussed in Committee.

Unlike its predecessors, the Bill does not directly affect my constituents in Stepney and Bethnal Green, but some important lessons are to be drawn from our experience with the DLR so far, which I hope will be applied to the proposed extension of the railway to Beckton.

First, there is the problem of excessive noise. The DLR has not proved to be a quiet railway. In particular, I refer to that stretch of the DLR which runs along Cable street, Stepney, which is in my constituency. Noise limits were specified at the time of the construction of the railway. I regret to say that they have been exceeded at many locations, as independent noise reports, carried out by the South Bank polytechnic, have confirmed. It did a most important study that showed that actual noise levels are above the specified noise levels at only one location during the day. That is not too bad. However, in the evening and at night, recorded noise levels are under specified noise levels at only one point. That is a serious criticism. The reason for high noise levels is the poor noise insulation quality of the concrete and steel elevated structures. Noise is echoed by the steel structures. That demonstrates poor design work and the results of cost cutting.

Further, it is our belief that existing noise specifications should be reduced because the noise of the DLR is characterised by a low rumble, which is not included in conventional noise measurements. My council, the London borough of Tower Hamlets, is now calling for a level of 35 dB(A) to be specified. The noise problem will be enormously enlarged when the City extension line is completed because the number of passengers and coaches will be at least quadrupled.

The second point, of which we already have experience, is the loss of privacy. That flows from the elevated nature of the railway in most parts of my constituency through which it runs. Residents' homes are overlooked. Station design should include visual as well as noise screens. Lights should be shaded so that they do not shine into people's homes.

The third point relates to safety in the broadest sense. The stations that have been built so far are unmanned and open all night. It is extraordinary that the docklands light railway system is guarded only by a partial video screening that is taken from a central point. We in the east end of London are terribly well-behaved, but stations that are unmanned and only lightly and indirectly supervised by video cameras may give rise to serious vandalism problems — and, indeed, even worse problems. I am being extremely British and understating the problem. However, it is serious. Although the line has only recently been completed—it is almost a brand-new line—I have the greatest anxieties and worries about what may happen in future. The defects should be not only avoided in the new Beckton extension but remedied throughout the existing DLR route.

Many problems are due to the inadequate funding of the DLR. The different financial packages for the line have been put together in an extraordinary way. One package relies upon Government finance. A second package—the extension of the DLR to Bank station in the City—is a mixture of private money and public investment. Apparently the latest package — the extension to Beckton—is to be funded by wholly private sources. We wait with interest to hear what the Minister has to say about that. The system is not fully and adequately financed.

The Government and London Regional Transport have a real responsibility to ensure that the system works in accordance with the full standards of safety and amenity that the public expect. If a further Government input into the docklands light railway is required to overcome the problems that I have described in relation not only to the extension to Beckton but throughout the existing system, then so be it. We should expect the Government to make that financial contribution.

Mr. Tony Banks: I emphasise what my right hon. Friend said in the context of other London Regional Transport developments. Quite recently we saw that the effect of underfunding provided by the Government for London Regional Transport and its own cost-cutting exercises was to reduce the margin of safety on the Underground and bus systems. We do not want to prejudice the outcome of the inquiry into the King's Cross fire, but clearly there seems to be a link between cost-cutting exercises and the margin of safety. My right hon. Friend attended the meeting between London Labour Members and Dr. Bright, the chairman of London Regional Transport. Would my right hon. Friend care to say more about the safety aspects of the DLR?

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend's point was at the back of my mind. It is at the back of all our minds when we discuss rail transport in London and the appalling disaster at King's Cross station. Special dangers are associated with underground systems as opposed to overground systems, but safety problems must be at the absolute forefront of all our minds.

I merely repeat that the safety of passengers must be considered. They often go to dark stations late at night. Such stations may be peopled by only a handful of passengers, and, as we know, totally unmanned by railway staff.

7.58 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has already said, Opposition Members will not oppose the Bill. Much

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

of it will be considered in more detail in Committee. Obviously, I am not opposed to the basic principle of extending a railway to give better facilities to people who live beyond the points to which it extends at present. Beckton is not in my constituency, but it is next door. Many of my constituents shop in Beckton. They know its name almost as well as they know the name of their own constituency. What happens in east London generally greatly affects the people of Barking. As the entire development of London docklands is creeping towards us, such things impinge on the lives of my constituents.

Although we do not oppose the basic principle of improving transport facilities in this part of London, I wonder whether this is not another lost opportunity. If London Regional Transport and the Government had properly thought out extending the transport facilities to and beyond east London, we should have had a better proposition, about which we might not have had so many queries. We frequently have lost opportunities in this House. They have occurred in, for example, the Education Reform Bill and the Housing Bill, and doubtless we shall find the same with the poll tax Bill. However, this seems a classic case of a lost opportunity.

In an intervention a few moments ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) said — I am paraphrasing — that he could foresee the possibility that a little later on, the docklands light railway might go in another direction, or a little further. Why not think out the whole thing to start with, so that at least everybody knows where they are?

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend asked why this issue could not have been thought out. As a former member of the Greater London council transport and planning committee, I can answer that the trouble is that there is no longer a strategic planning authority for London. Therefore, public money or, come to that, private money cannot be deployed in the most effective or best way for the people of London, whatever income they have or whatever job they do.

Ms. Richardson: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Indeed, I had intended to make a point about the GLC later, but my hon. Friend has made it for me.

All the thinking behind the Bill has been derived: it has not resulted from genuine planning. I hope that my hon. Friend, who has a much greater knowledge of this part of London than I have—although I regularly travel up and down the highway, bumping down that inadequate road —agrees that this should be an opportunity for people in the area to have an input into the type of transport system that they want. When the GLC existed, the people who lived in houses and flats in the area — not necessarily commuters—could go along to the GLC to make their views heard through that council. They no longer have that, and it is a significant lack.

Although the Bill is, as it were, privately promoted by London Regional Transport, I detect the Government's hand hovering over it. Obviously, the aim of the Bill is to open up docklands in line with the Government's thinking on docklands. The sponsors have failed to listen to the very people who would be likely to use—or would like to use—the facility of the railway. I believe that I am right in saying that one could call it a commuters' railway rather than a residents' railway.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and because she has put her finger precisely on the point—that the primary purpose of the railway is not to serve the people of the east end, any more than is the opening up of docklands. That is why there is so much objection from the communities in the east end to the developments in docklands and to the railway. My hon. Friend was absolutely right to point out the difference between now, when there is no public accountability in community terms, and the time when the Greater London council was responsible for the strategic planning of London and was the transport authority as well.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend is quite right. One can envisage situations in which a railway might have been planned, as might have happened under the GLC had we still had that authority—with the people of, in this case, Newham and Barking in mind. Although I am glad that in Barking we do not have such high unemployment as Newham where, I believe, it is 20 per cent.; nevertheless it is a depressing and problematic issue. When one plans a railway, one should think also about ways of bringing industry and people together. One should not think only about providing a railway to take people out of the area and into the City of London to earn vast amounts of money, who then return to their £500,000 houses——

Mr. Tony Banks: And drink champagne.

Ms. Richardson: I doubt whether they do that, but it is not a matter for me.

The London Docklands Railway (Beckton) Bill will provide an eastern extension, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has said, from Poplar through the areas of Leamouth, the royal docks and Cyprus. I must confess that I should visit Cyprus because I have not seen it and think of the other Cyprus every time that I read about it. It will be interesting to know about it, but my hon. Friends should not tell me now.

Mr. Banks: I must advise my hon. Friend that the weather is not so nice.

Ms. Richardson: Indeed, but I should like to know the origins of the word and whether it has any connections with the country of that name.

Of course we applaud the principle of extending public transport. Opposition Members have a good record of opposing restrictions on transport throughout the whole period since the war. We have fought the closure of railways and stations and have tried to argue that people need transport, whether by rail, underground or bus, not only in London but throughout the country. However, we must consider closely piecemeal suggestions such as those before us.

I am sorry to mention my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South so often, but I am glad that he made such great play in an important part of his speech of the looping through Canning Town, because that is a crucial part that has been missed out. As I understand it, LRT objected to that on the grounds that the cost would be prohibitive. However, one must consider cost and costs. The people of Canning Town will lose out because of the loop. I believe that it is perfectly possible that in the future LRT will have a loop through Canning Town. It would have been much better if it had done so now, so serving far more people and enhancing the transport provision to the City of London and the Isle of Dogs.

Mr. Spearing: An important point about Parliament is involved. Even if the Government deny public inquiries into such matters, is my hon. Friend aware that the private Bill procedure in Committee makes it possible—I am not saying that I believe that this should happen—that if the Committee were so persuaded by my constituents and the petitions presented that the railway should only be built provided that it goes by Canning Town, under the customary procedures that would probably persuade the House that that should be so. Therefore, all is not yet lost.

Ms. Richardson: I am not suggesting it is, or, at least I hope I am not. However, one does have doubts, because LRT has been antagonistic to the Canning Town loop and has been willing to ignore all the pressures put on it and one wonders whether, in spite of all the petitioning, LRT will listen. I think that if we had still had the GLC, it would have listened, if it had been so stupid as to make the mistakes in the first place.

We must not forget the people on the Isle of Dogs who may well not have the transport provision to which they are entitled because it has not been properly thought out. Whenever I sit down at home to watch "EastEnders"—it is not often, but otherwise I video it—at 2 o'clock on Sundays when the omnibus edition is shown, I think of the docklands light railway and wish that it would run there and bring more transport to the area.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Is she aware that Albert square, on which "EastEnders" is based, is located in my constituency of Newham, North-West? I hope that when my hon. Friend watches that programme she thinks fondly not only of Newham, North-West, but of the hon. Member who has the job of representing that constituency in this House.

Ms. Richardson: I thought that it was based on Albert square—it is a natural thing for anyone to think. When the picture comes up of the Isle of Dogs at 2 o'clock on a Sunday, I shall remember what my hon. Friend has said. Indeed, in future I shall remember my hon. Friend as the hon. Member for Walford.

The Bill seeks only to help better-off people moving into the development area rather than existing residents — many of whom are very poor. The Bill will do nothing to enhance their prospects. I have severe apprehensions and reservations about how the Bill will help the borough of Newham and the future safety, happiness and welfare of the residents.

I should like to spend some time underlining what my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said about safety. I am extremely concerned for everyone who travels on the docklands light railway and I am especially concerned for the safety of women travellers. I have not used the railway myself. I will try it although I am rather apprehensive after what I have heard. Many women have come to me to say how apprehensive they feel going into a totally uncrewed station, how lonely and frightened they feel, despite the fact that some of them are tough characters and able to look after themselves. When I am driving to Barking, I pass Tower Hill station as I drive on to the highway. That station has an escalator that always reminds me of some kind of futuristic Hyatt hotel, such as the one in San Francisco.

Mr. Leighton: It is the only escalator on the docklands light railway.

Ms. Richardson: That is true, and one wonders what will happen if disabled people wish to use the docklands light railway.

As stations become vandalised and alarm buttons are destroyed—that happens, like it or not—I am extremely worried that problems will arise for women, men and elderly people. My right hon. Friend referred to the fact that there is only one video screen and that it is operated on a cyclical basis to cover all the stations. The station person must oversee the workings of all the other stations and the trains, and also look after the safety of the passengers.

Let us suppose that that person has eyes in the back of his or her head: what happens if he or she sees somebody being attacked? We do not know what the provision is for calling the police. Are there railway police? I hope that my neighbour, the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) can tell me that the railway police will be quickly on the scene if they are called.

One cannot describe the docklands light railway as a "one-person train"; it is a "no-person train". It is amazing that we have reached the point when we are willing to dispense with people who are willing to look after other people.

Mr. Tony Banks: If the train is operated by no one, the logical conclusion is that it should have no one on it. That would answer my hon. Friend's concern about the safety factor. Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that, because of the pressures of costs, it is the safety margin that is always cut? Despite what the Minister says from time to time, the travelling public do not like one-man-operated buses. They certainly do not like the idea of having no one crewing a train.

When the docklands light railway was opened, there were many difficulties. Indeed, the official opening had to be delayed because of safety problems. I would like my hon. Friend to dwell a little longer on the peculiar problems faced by women travelling at night on public transport in London when there is an insufficient number of people to guarantee their safety.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member may comment on the Beckton light railway, but not on the general conditions in London.

Ms. Richardson: The docklands light railway is the worst example in London—and the rest are pretty poor —in terms of safety and having staff around. If you will allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should just like to recall one occasion when I happened to be at the station at Birmingham international airport to catch a train that was leaving at 12.30 am. I got on to that station and could not believe that I could not find a single person. There were three or four platforms and no trains, although a train was due to arrive. There was no one about. I stood there for 25 minutes and I was terrified. I do not know what I would have done if anyone had come up, but to stand in that ghostly atmosphere was horrible. It must be equally horrible on the docklands light railway.

Women face safety problems because they must travel to and from work. Since the Government deregulated women's working hours, they are subject to the whim of their employees. Now many more women must take buses or trains late at night. Those women who travel on the docklands light railway may be forced to travel at such hours.

[Ms. Richardson]

Another safety factor about which we should be worried is the fact that the railway is open all night. Goodness only knows what could happen if someone was dragged in or left at one of those stations. I hope that, when the time comes, the hon. Member for Ilford, South will discuss the policing of that railway.

Mr. Spearing: Is my hon. Friend aware that, before the docklands light railway officially opened, my hon. Friend the Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon) and I were invited to ride on it? Unfortunately, the design of the doors is such that my hon. Friend was assaulted by them. Those doors swing inwards and that causes some difficulty. On the Underground, the doors slide open horizontally. Even if improved stock is delivered for the Beckton extension, that will cause some difficulty because, unless the whole system works in one way, people travelling in the older type of car—where the doors swing across and can hit someone—may not be aware of the problem and may be hurt. The improved stock might only be used on some parts of the railway. It appears that, because of too little finance, we are now left with that hazard.

Ms. Richardson: When corners are cut, safety is always the first thing to go. When corners are cut in the name, not of cost-cutting, but of an improved railway, the only thing one gets is a feeling that people will not be safe.

A year or so ago, I was invited to look around Mansion House station and consider safety conditions there. I commented on the lack of alarm buttons in that station. I was shown the videos in a control room. There were four of them and one man was supposed to look at them all the time. I do not know how—he did not have four eyes. The videos showed different parts of the station. We must seriously consider whether it is right to replace people by videos and television screens. It is much easier for people to complain to, scream to or be seen by someone standing on the station than it is to wonder, while being attacked, whether the television screen is picking up the incident. Probably it is not.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney also mentioned the people who live in the vicinity. In the places in which the light railway is elevated, people in the trains and stations can look down on people's houses, which is amazing. When I go across the M40 at Hammersmith on the elevated section I can almost see into people's flats, because the road is so high. I always think that that is an intrusion into people's lives, even when the flats and houses are some distance away. In the case of the railway, I understand that children have already thrown down things that have hit windows in neighbouring flats and houses. That is an unwarranted intrusion. The promoter of the Bill—London Regional Transport—should examine more carefully the problem of the privacy of people who have nothing to do with the railway but happen to live by the station.

In addition to LRT's responsibility for station safety, we are also thinking about the responsibility of the borough of Newham for the surrounding approach areas to the station. The roads outside, the corners and the approachways will not be the responsibility of the railway. I assume they will be the responsibility of the borough of Newham. When building a new station, one must consider how best to design and landscape it. Its approaches must be safe, and there should not be nasty corners when one leaves or approaches the station in which someone could be attacked. Why should Newham have to pick up the tab? It is already hard pressed and should not have to pick up the tab for what should not be its financial responsibility. The whole matter has been badly thought out, and I echo what has been said about the demise of the GLC and of a London strategic authority that would have been able to take into account all these wider implications, instead of doing the whole thing in a piecemeal fashion.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend has put her finger on an important point. Although I believe the London borough of Newham is well represented in the House by its Members of Parliament, all three of us would agree that it is not the most beautiful spot on earth. One reason for that is that it is a way through for large numbers of commuters. The A13, running right through the borough, brings many problems to the people and council of Newham, who have to try to keep the place tidy and presentable. The docklands light railway, as my hon. Friend rightly said, will bring similar problems. Does she not feel that more consideration should be given to the sort of problems that boroughs such as Newham and Barking experience because they straddle major routes into and out of London?

Ms. Richardson: I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West will agree that, in the past year, the A13 has been a pain——

Mr. Banks: Because of the work being done on it?

Ms. Richardson: I am sure the improvements to the road will be welcome when they are finished, but a journey from Westminster to Barking, which used to take half an hour, now takes an hour. The delays on the A13 are unprecedented. I cannot prophesy that all these problems would be cured, but they would be improved if they were thought out by a strategic authority in cooperation with London Regional Transport.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend makes the point. The great traffic problems around Bow church have been caused by the need to strengthen the road and bridge over the railway. Unless we show ourselves capable of integrating the necessary planning into our transport system, what is seen as an improvement in one mode of transport only leads to a great deterioration in another. That is a crazy way of running a transport system.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend has wound up my speech for me very well by pointing that out.

As I have said before endlessly, the whole way in which these proposals and the extensions to them started—including the done that we are debating tonight, has been piecemeal—hopping from stage to stage. How much better it would have been if a bit of forward planning had been done, taking into account the problems and benefits that might come to various members of the communities that will use the railway, both passing through and inside the constituency through which it runs. I hope these points will be closely explored in Committee and that, when the Bill emerges from Committee, it will be a fitter one than it is now.

8.26 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): In some sense I feel a little out of place in the debate, being the only northerner to be invited to it. However, I was drawn to it by the news that

my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is the Member of Parliament for "EastEnders". I feel disappointed about that, because every Sunday I have been in the habit of sitting my children in front of "EastEnders" to make sure that they learn about life as it would be lived by a typical Cabinet Minister or Minister of State and so that they can experience what the south of England is all about. I have a little more familiarity with the docklands railway, because ever since I came down south to the Houses of Parliament it has been only with the greatest difficulty that I have been able to persuade anyone from the south of England that I am not the hon. Member for Stratford. To that extent, I feel I am well into the system.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on introducing the Bill, and I join my hon. Friends in thanking him for accepting their amendment. That will greatly ease the passage of the Bill, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will recognise the benefits of that judicious move.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) who, as active and assiduous constituency Members, have given up their evening to be here to put forward their case and, in the process, to educate those of us who do not have their detailed local knowledge.

As the official Opposition, we welcome light rapid transport—light rail—systems in all our urban areas. As a general principle, we think that the more of them there are, the better, especially in London. In so far as the light rail system takes people off the roads and eases the transport problems of the conurbations, it is welcome and will receive the approbation of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It is necessary to be critical, or at least less than complimentary, about the way in which this proposal and proposals for the whole network have been carried out. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) has already drawn to the attention of the House the lack of an adequate strategic planning function for transport and for other services in Greater London since the demise of the Greater London council. That means that in docklands and the adjacent areas there is no proper mechanism for resolving the relationship between the road and rail systems. That is a curious matter, and it has been touched on by other hon. Members.

The Government are not prepared adequately to fund the public transport system for the ordinary people of Docklands and slightly beyond, but they are prepared to fund the road system so that private motorists and transport systems can operate with funds provided by the Exchequer and ultimately by the taxpayer. That is a matter for regret, and it is not just due to some basic ideological divide, but has consequences for the type of service that is provided by light rapid transit systems. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my hon. Friend the Member for Barking have spoken about some of the consequences that will begin to show after a time.

I draw to the attention of the House the matter of unstaffed stations which is not dissimilar to the situation on the Metro system in Newcastle. One of the problems is that some stations are not staffed, except by somebody at the other end of a video link. In the event of an energency or, even more trivially, vandalism, there cannot be a quick response. The system is suffering to the tune of about £1 million a year in trying to overcome the results of vandalism. That is a high cost to have to pay for lack of staff.

The King's Cross disaster shows the potential dangers of such a system. When the Minister is winding up, he should comment on that because he has a responsibility for the safety of the travelling public and for seeing whether the system is as safe as it should be.

If we fund the system on the cheap, if we do not put in the required level of investment, and if we do not design first-class public transport, we will face the consequences that have been seen in other areas. I understand that at a triangle junction the train has to slow down to about five miles per hour in order to get round an over-tight curve. That is rather curious in the light of the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South who talked about the extension at Canning Town and whether the Canning Town link should come in. The promoters of the Bill said that it could not be justified because of the loss of time and speed on the system. It is ironic to use that as an argument when parts of the system have been designed in that way because sufficient investment was not put in. A great deal of time is lost on those parts of the system where there are already over-tight curves.

Mr. Spearing: Those curves could literally be looked at during the examination of the Bill to see what constraints they impose on the frequency of service. I expressed surprise that there was not a forecast of less than four-minute intervals on the stretch that we are talking about. It is envisaged that there will be three units in a train, whereas at the moment there is one. The restriction on that curve and on the various junctions may well make it impossible to run more frequently. I do not know whether that is the case. My hon. Friend has pinpointed one of the "money-saving" areas that may put a restriction on the service on the route that we are talking about.

Mr. Lloyd: I am sure that the important point raised by my hon. Friend will be addressed in Committee. It also raises an important point about the way in which the transport system throughout London will be run if the LRT system is to be a model for docklands and for its extension to the immediate areas.

I was intrigued by the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney about the problem of noise. That seems to be a consequence of the system and the way in which it has been designed. It raises the very real question whether such a system would have been acceptable if a different mechanism from the development corporation had been involved in its design. One wonders how things would have turned out if local authorities had been involved in consultation and negotiation. I do not know about the negotiations between the London Docklands development corporation and the local authorities, whether potential noise pollution was one of the issues raised, or whether attempts were made to resolve that problem.

Mr. Tony Banks: It appears that the then deputy chairman of the London Docklands development corporation said that an extension would be built without steel structures. Perhaps the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) could comment on that. Obviously

[Mr. Tony Banks]

one would want to rely on the word of the then deputy chairman of the LDDC, but, of course, one realises that not all that glistens is necessarily gold.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend invites the hon. Member for Ilford, South to comment on that. Perhaps it is better for me to throw that ball into his court than to engage in what is clearly a London debate in which my intervention would not be totally welcome.

Mr. Spearing: One matter that is germane to the light railway and also of national importance is that my hon. Friend says that this might be a precedent for the future. Does he realise that if we wish to extend across the river to Thamesmead or Greenwich, or even perhaps to Lewisham, from the Isle of Dogs, as some people advocate, the method of financing that is being made available for this line might not be possible for those extensions? Perhaps the Minister will address that point in his winding-up speech.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend raises a point of fundamental importance and it is one on which I was about to speak. His intervention serves as a suitable introduction. The manner in which this system is financed is of interest not only to London, but to the whole of the country. In connection with my own city of Manchester, a light rail Bill is to come before the House in this Session. Similar Bills for the west midlands and west Yorkshire are also to be considered. One is to be considered for Bristol, although in that case it will be a privately funded system.

The means of funding and the way in which the Department of Transport intends to treat the relationship between the public and private sectors are matters of considerable importance. What happens in this scheme may well set a precedent for all schemes. The proposals for Greater Manchester are relevant to the Bill, because there is considerable concern about the consequences of the Department of Transport's position. The Department seems to be insisting on the introduction of large amounts of private capital for the Greater Manchester scheme. I do not ask the Minister to go down the Greater Manchester track, but I ask him to tell us about the ground rules for this development. What are the funding consequences for this development? Will this scheme establish some kind of precedent for LRT systems within London and, more generally, for systems throughout the rest of the country? The Minister owes the House a clear explanation about departmental policy on that issue.

Opposition Members believe that adequate funding of the public transport system serves the public interest, not only on safety but as to a consideration of the type of transport system needed and who will benefit from it. A public transport system should serve the needs of those who live in a constituency such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South, rather than to get people in and out of Newham and to wherever else they want to go for the rest of the journey. We want transport systems designed not only for yuppies and those outside the area, but to provide genuine access for people in the community.

The debate on the difference between the public and private sectors is of fundamental importance. On the Canning Town loop, where there was a cost incentive not to put the loop in, the private sector solution was not to put in the loop, but the public sector considered that the people of the community would be better served by having that loop.

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend is right to point out the need for transport systems that serve people in the east end, in particular, Newham, rather than the yuppies, for whom we know the whole system is designed. Is my hon. Friend aware that painted on a bridge over the Burdett road is a slogan that says "Toffs out", which aptly sums up the attitude of the people in the east end to the characters who are moving into the area?

Mr. Lloyd: The developers of the rail system and docklands ought to consider seriously the disenchantment among ordinary people in the community. If they believe that the systems are designed not for them but for outsiders, it will make for the worst possible future for social development and fundamentally undermine all the Government's promises about the benefits of the development for London.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend realise that the behaviour of the promoters and possibly of the Government—they may take a different view from the promoters; the Minister may say that he is neutral on the Canning Town loop—is highly symbolic? Not only did they cut out Canning Town, which is the hub of east London, but they did it on the basis of figures which may turn out to be specious. It is not just a question of not wanting to serve the people. When we want to serve them, the Government produce figures which may not stand up. We shall see what happens in Committee.

Mr. Lloyd: If the figures do not stand up, the position will be totally different, and I hope that the promoters will reconsider it. I hope that the Minister will tell the House that he is not neutral on the Canning Town loop and that he believes that public transport should serve the needs of the community.

Mr. Tony Banks: Do not hold your breath.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend injects a note of scepticism into the debate. Having listened to the Minister on many occasions, I believe that on the law of averages he will come down in the interests of the travelling public rather than commercial exploitation. Perhaps tonight will be the lucky night.

Mr. Banks: I bet my hon. Friend believes in Santa Claus, too.

Mr. Lloyd: I look forward to a visit from Santa Claus, were he to bring an adequate transport system to Greater Manchester. Fortunately, Santa Claus can rely on his own transport system. He does not have to rely on a road transport system that has suffered from under-investment.

Mr. Banks: He comes but once a year, rather like the No. 25 bus.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend tempts me too far into Christmas analogies. Those issues, which bring to the fore the choice between an adequate publicly funded transport system and a private transport system, are central to the success of the Bill and of the light rail system in docklands. I hope that the Minister will give us full details of what the Government and the Department propose to do. I hope he will say that funding will come from the public sector and that, when the choice is made between public and

private funding, the private sector will have to meet the most stringent conditions to ensure not only the safety of the travelling public but that the resources are adequate for the transport system and the public do not have to wait some miles away from the line wondering why they have been cut off. The Minister has a responsibility to give an answer to the important issues rightly raised by my hon. Friends.

8.45 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I am pleased tonight to be able to speak on behalf of the Government in support of the Bill to allow the construction of an eastern extension to the docklands light railway. The Second Reading was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), for which I am sure the House is grateful.

The docklands light railway is a bold and imaginative project, as has been said in the debate. It makes use of both new technology and new operating attitudes. It not only provides a new link to areas which have been poorly served by the existing public transport network in the past, but must also be seen as a crucial factor in the regeneration of the docklands.

The initial railway opened to the public at the end of August and, despite some technical problems, it is rapidly becoming an important and accepted part of the London transport scene. The Government's commitment to the initial railway was the catalyst for an upsurge in business confidence in the area, bringing major new development to the Isle of Dogs. We now have development on an unprecedented scale taking place at Canary Wharf and the developers have agreed to contribute £68 million of the £150 million costs of upgrading the initial railway and extending it to Bank in the heart of the City. Work is well in hand on this project which will link the DLR into the existing Underground network and offer a much improved service to passengers.

The links provided by the initial railway and the City extension between Bank, Tower Hill, Stratford and the Isle of Dogs means that the one remaining area suitable for major development in the docklands, the royal docks, lies beyond the present reach of the railway. The royal docks, as the House knows, is an area equivalent in size to the west end and the City of London, and has tremendous development potential. It represents the largest single area of docklands in line for regeneration under the LDDC's programme. The Government have given their approval to the future strategy for the royal docks proposed by the LDDC, which will turn nearly 700 acres of derelict land into a new employment, retailing, leisure and residential centre for London.

An extension of the docklands light railway from Poplar to Beckton is seen as crucial to the success of this exciting development by providing a fast and frequent link to the rest of London. Just as the initial railway has sparked development in the Isle of Dogs, so the eastern extension will help to revitalise the royal docks area. It is, moreover, not only business which will benefit from such an extension. The development in the royal docks will provide 7,000 new homes and some 48,000 jobs, and the railway will also serve the developing communities in the Beckton area.

Mr. Spearing: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I was about to refer to the points made by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), so perhaps he will allow me to make that reference. I was surprised that the hon. Gentleman attacked the way in which the LDDC is handling the planning and development. The Government's decision to establish the LDDC has led to a rapid transformation in the docklands. The success speaks for itself. As the pace of the regeneration increases, it will provide enormous benefits for existing residents, as well as others.

The scale of present and projected achievements would have been unimaginable without the LDDC. I recall very well visits that I have made to that area in the past, where it was assumed that dereliction was inevitable and would continue in the future. We now see a massive revival brought about as a result of the Government's initiative in that area.

Mr. Spearing: I am sorry that the Minister has not realised the case that Opposition Members have against the LDDC, if not against the Bill. He has shown that by his reference to "regeneration". Of course there is regeneration of the area, but not of the communities. Otherwise, the 48,000 jobs would be designed for east London as it is and not, as Canary wharf might be, the beginning of the end of the east London community. Apparently the Minister does not understand that.

How can people believe the development is for them when an elementary point like the Canning Town loop —which is for them—is denied by the LDDC and the promoters of the Bill? That is the proof of the pudding. It appears that that would not be more expensive and would not add more than a minute and a half to travelling time.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman referred to the need for 48,000 jobs designed for east London "as it is". As so often, the hon. Gentleman is looking backwards rather than forwards to the opportunities. The reality is that growth of employment is a fragile plant. It is difficult to plant and it is difficult to make it grow and succeed. It has not been successful in many parts of this country and elsewhere in the world even though immense resources have been poured in. In this case, very substantial progress is being made. In many cases, it is not a matter of jobs designed for the skills of yesterday. It is not a matter of the regeneration of dock work in the area or the regeneration of other established skills. However, jobs can be and will be created and they will have a tremendous effect on the prosperity of the whole area and not just benefit those who take the new jobs and are new residents.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not know whether the growth of employment is "a fragile plant". I think it is rather like a triffid. It is a non-existent plant in this country despite all the cosmetic working of the unemployment statistics. The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has made is that we are not trying to look back. Many of the people in the east end, living in what my hon. Friend described as the derelict docks area, are unskilled or semi-skilled. The new jobs coming to the area do not match those skills or lack of skills. Is the Minister prepared to say that there will be massive retraining for the people of Newham so that they can take advantage of the so-called 48,000 jobs—which we will believe when we see?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We had better stick to the railway.

Mr. Mitchell: I will resist the temptation to spell out all the schemes that the Manpower Services Commission and the Department of Employment will deploy for the purposes referred to by the hon. Member.

The Government set several conditions last year when we gave approval to London Regional Transport to lay the Bill before Parliament. We said that we would support the Bill on Second Reading only if we were satisfied that the cost of construction could be met without any additional public expenditure in any year and that there would be no significant risk that any of the costs would fall as a burden on LRT.

We are now supporting the Bill on the basis that the railway will be paid for from the higher land values accruing to the LDDC which the provision of the railway will generate. The LDDC's evaluation of that method of financing shows that the money raised in that way should comfortably cover the costs of constructing the railway.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) raised a wider issue. I concur with his view about the potential of light rail. The docklands light railway will lead a considerable field. As the hon. Gentleman said, there are already plans afoot in Greater Manchester for a similar development. He trespassed gently, and tiptoed on the edge of being out of order—I am sure that you would not have allowed him to cross that line, Mr. Deputy Speaker—when he asked about private investment in the Greater Manchester area.

We do not believe that it is right to call on taxpayers and ratepayers to pay the full cost when private investment may be available to avoid the unnecessary expenditure of a large amount of public money. My philosophical difference with the hon. Member for Stretford is that, for some reason that I have not yet been able to comprehend, he regards spending public money as a virility symbol. I do not. I seek to protect the public purse—the taxpayer and ratepayer—wherever possible if I can get that money and the necessary resources from the private sector. We have achieved that with the docklands light railway. Massive increases in land values will enable the cost of the docklands light railway to be met without a call on taxpayers or ratepayers.

The hon. Member for Stretford also raised——

Mr. Spearing: In a calmer atmosphere, will the Minister tell us how that will be achieved? I referred to it earlier, in case he has forgotten. I hope that he will tell us now—or guarantee to tell us later—how that mechanism will work. That could be very important for local conditions.

Mr. Mitchell: I think that I would rather not seek to spell out the detail tonight.

Mr. Spearing: Why not?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman suggested that I might give him fuller information at a later stage. I would like to do it that way, because I can then be sure of being accurate in describing the details of what is happening. It is sufficient to say that the provision of the docklands light railway is enhancing land values. That will enable the LDDC to sell land at a highly enhanced value and that enhancement will be the basis on which the project can be funded. I will spell out the process in detail later with refinements that I would not be competent to describe to the hon. Gentleman's satisfaction tonight. I do not want to mislead the hon. Gentleman by guessing at the detail. However, the broad principle is as I have described. The enhancement of land values will enable the railway to be paid for without a call on public funds.

Mr. Spearing: I want to state that this is bang in order. I want to refer to the precedent of the funding of the railway and this is the right use of the Second Reading in a kind of semi-Committee stage of the procedure. I thank the Minister for his courtesy and await the details with interest.

I infer from what the hon. Gentleman says—I do not want him to answer the question, because I understand his position—that it would be possible for the funding of the railway now to be made not directly from the developers who may be given planning permission for various projects, but from the resources of the LDDC which may accrue from the increased land values. I see that the Minister is nodding. I am grateful to him for using the words that he has used, because I feel that the matter is of some significance, with implications not only for the docklands light railway but for a national funding of transport of the type that the Government may have in mind for other parts of London and elsewhere.

Mr. Mitchell: I was about to say something about that. I have already referred to the reference by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) to Greater Manchester. There are also proposals in the Bristol area for a scheme which may well be financed entirely privately, and that again will be an interesting development. We are seeing the gradual re-emergence of a feature of the 19th century, when the private sector financed massive amounts of transport infrastructure without having to turn to taxpayers and ratepayers for the necessary resources.

This is an uncertain area. However, we are considering what is the right way forward for Manchester, and are watching the Avon proposal with interest.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the Minister answer a point of philosophy? What is the difference between investing in a public transport system such as London Regional Transport and investing in the roads? Why should one be supported exclusively by the private sector, and the other by the public sector?

Let me ask a more important question, which has implications both for docklands and more widely. Is the Minister saying specifically that the only public transport systems that will develop are those that can be funded by private-sector capital?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House would be well advised to defer any debate about general methods of financing transport systems, and stick to one Bill at a time. Can we get back to Beckton?

Mr. Mitchell: Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Let me say en passant that philosophically there is no issue between roads and rail. There is, however, the practical problem that we have not found a way for those enjoying enhanced land values as a result of a road being built to contribute towards its cost. Equally, those who suffer a drop in value do not receive a contribution.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether I believed that public transport should in future be developed only where it would be paid for by the private sector. That is certainly not the Government's position. The Government feel that, where there is a need for public transport, that need must be defined; subsequently, the question arises of how to pay

for it. It is, of course, right and proper that taxpayers and ratepayers should be sheltered from having to fork out if it is possible to secure private resources to achieve the same end.

Mr. Banks: I am intrigued by the philosophy that the Minister is spelling out this evening. Will he tell me why——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are running into precisely the difficulty that I foresaw: we are having a more general debate about financing methods of transport. That is not the matter before the House this evening. We are discussing the London Docklands Railway (Beckton) Bill, and I think that we should stick to it.

Mr. Mitchell: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing myself to trespass on your generosity and follow the hon. Member for Stretford down the byways of Manchester and into other areas, such as the philosophical differences between us, which I shall not continue to pursue.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of resources and safety. He did so in a responsible and reasonable manner, and I can give him the assurances that he seeks. There will be no cutting of corners on safety. However, while the hon. Gentleman's remarks were reasonable and responsible, that is not an attribute that anyone would apply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who made an intervention that I greatly resent, implying that the Government were in some undefined way responsible for starving LRT of resources to the extent that safety was imperilled. That is entirely without foundation. Now is not the time to debate the matter; I would be out of order to do so. However, I have to say that the hon. Gentleman's remarks were misleading, wrong and inaccurate, and that his charges are completely unfounded.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) helpfully pointed out a number of detailed matters about the route and access to stations, not only on his own behalf but for others. These are matters for the later stages of the Bill, and I am sure that the opportunity will be taken to consider those points carefully. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) made another point, but I think that in answering him I would be straying too far into a philosophical debate. I hope to answer him on another occasion.

There are a number of petitioners against the Bill, and they will have an opportunity to present their objections to the Select Committee. The Government do not object to the terms of the instruction to the Committee that has been tabled by the hon. Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, North-West and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). The Committee will be in a better position than we are tonight to examine in detail the issues involved and the other matters that have been raised by petitioners, and it will have the added advantage of hearing expert evidence.

I recommend that the Bill be given a Second Reading and allowed to proceed, in the usual way, to Committee for detailed consideration.

9.5 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): I shall not oppose the Second Reading of the Bill, for two reasons. First, the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) has accepted the instruction in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and myself. Secondly, we are not opposed to extending the railway to Beckton. We are in favour of it because we want a better railway.

Our main criticism is that the railway is most inadequate. Many people have called the DLR a toy railway. I have even heard it called a Mickey Mouse railway. It was graciously opened by the Queen, but when Her Majesty sat in the train it would not move. She was not amused. The ceremony was a debacle. I cannot think of a more fitting opening for this railway. It is the sort of railway that one might see in Disneyland. In fact, it is not a railway at all—it is an elevated tram. I do not want the House to think that I have anything against trams; they were a very good form of transport. When I have travelled abroad I have been to some cities that have excellent tram services. Their trams look more like a railway than this one.

Mr. Tony Banks: I share my hon. Friend's affection for trams. The transport planners made a major error when they removed them from London's streets. Did my hon. Friend ever do what I used to do—put a penny on the tramline so that the tram went over it, or did he worry about getting his bike caught in the tramrails? It used to frighten me to death when I was a child.

Mr. Leighton: I did not put my pennies on the line because I had a rather deprived childhood and did not have very many pennies. I found safer things to do with my pennies than to attempt to derail trams. However, I did have a great affection for the trams.

Our criticism of the railway is that it was inadequate to start with and is proving so now. I am certain that it will be shown to be inadequate in the future and that we shall have to rebuild and strengthen it, which will cost so much that it would have been better to build it properly in the first place. It is a false economy for the public purse, which the Minister claims to safeguard.

I have never heard a speech from a Minister quite like the one that we just heard. It was an astonishing speech. I know that the Minister is not responsible for the Bill, but we expect Ministers to do their homework and to know something about the provisions under discussion — particularly their financing. When the Minister was asked questions about the financing of the railway — this peculiar, unprecedented and unique method of financing —we were given no adequate answers. I took down two words. The Minister said, "I guess". I have never heard a Minister come to the Dispatch Box and deal in guesses.

Mr. David Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: I have one more rude thing to say about the Minister, and he might care to hear that before he responds. He guessed at the answer to the question about financing. When he was pressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) he said, "Well, I am not competent to answer." That will be seen in *Hansard*. I have heard many incompetent Ministers, but I have never heard a Minister admit that he is incompetent to deal with the matter under debate. Is that not astonishing? It seems to set the tone for the whole subject.

Mr. David Mitchell: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman misunderstood my point. I am not quite sure how much

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detail the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) wanted about the method of financing. I said that I did not want to guess at the details. It would be wrong for me to make guesses about details with which I am not familiar and which do not affect my Department. They relate to the activities of the Department of the Environment, which will ensure the raising of the money through the London Docklands development corporation.

I described to the hon. Gentleman the basic principle governing the financing of the proposal. Because of the arrival of the docklands light railway—this started even before its arrival—the value of land in the possession of the LDDC is increasing very rapidly. That land will be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of at hugely enhanced values, and those enhanced sums will be used to pay for the building of the railway. That spells out to the hon. Gentleman the basic principle, without any guessing or uncertainty. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman wants more details than that. I should be guessing if I gave him more details. No doubt he will wish to be fair and recognise that that is not an unreasonable position for me to adopt.

Mr. Leighton: I am grateful for that explanation. In a sense, the plot thickens, because the Minister has told us that his Department is not responsible. Normally the Minister dealing with a Bill comes from the Department that is responsible.

Mr. Mitchell: Either the hon. Gentleman is going out of his way to be unreasonable, or he has misunderstood the position. The LDDC will pay the bill. It will hand the money over to LRT. LRT is part of my responsibility and I will answer any questions concerned with that aspect of the matter. However, the precise details of the way in which the LDDC will carry through the principle that I have described—I think reasonably fully—to the House, is a matter for the Department of the Environment, to which the LDDC is answerable. I am content to deal with any aspects arising from LRT's promotion of the Bill—unless it is more appropriate that they be addressed to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne)—from LRT's side of the financing of the provisions or from its plans for development. Those are proper matters for the Department of Transport. The necessary funds will be provided to LRT from the LDDC. That money will come from the enhanced land values in the way that I have described. It is not reasonable for the hon. Gentleman to expect me to go further than that.

If the hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South want more detailed information about how the LDDC will realise that enhanced value, that is a matter to address to Ministers in the Department of the Environment. I shall be happy to secure additional information if it is relevant to the Bill and if the hon. Gentleman wants it, but it would be a little unfair, and that is not what he intends, to expect me to go further than that.

Mr. Leighton: I would not like the Minister to think that I was unreasonable. I am well known for being one of the most reasonable Members in the House. In fact, I suffer from reasonableness to a fault. I shall move temporarily from the finances, because I can see that I have touched something of a sore point.

Mr. Tony Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Leighton: I shall give way to my hon. Friends in a moment. I will just finish this point.

It is a point that interests me, and I will accept the Minister's offer to write to me or get his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to write to me. I am very interested in this novel, unique and, as I understand it, unprecedented method of financing a railway. I would certainly like to know the details and the mechanics of how this is done. I shall return later in my remarks to the, to use the Minister's phrase, philosophy of the financing of this scheme.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for further pursuing a point which, perhaps unwisely, I did not press enough earlier in the debate. The Minister is one of the more reasonable Ministers that I know, and I compliment him on that, but is it not clear that he is in a complete difficulty? Because of the urban development corporation set-up, which goes across all the hitherto habitual and agreed internal workings of this country, the Minister cannot provide the money. It is provided by this animal, the LDDC, and the Minister has confirmed the point that I made earlier. So it is an evolving Government policy on transport and inner cities that we have now stumbled on in the course of dealing with a practical Bill. That is the difficulty in which the Government find themselves. No wonder the Minister carefully said that he would reply to me by letter—they have not properly worked it out.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Perhaps my hon. Friend would cast his mind back to the time when the Greater London council ran London Transport. If London Transport at that time had proposed a major investment, it would have known in the minutest detail what it and the GLC wanted to do. With every other transport authority throughout the length and breadth of the country the Department of Transport wants to know in minute detail how the money is to be raised and used, but when we have the private sector involved we are now told that as long as it comes up with the ready cash it can do what it wants. Are we not going down a dangerous road?

Mr. Leighton: We are indeed, and the more we apply our minds to the matter the more disconcerting and worrying it becomes. It is this curious beast, the LDDC, over which there appears to be no democratic control and which is not accountable. Even the Minister says that he is not responsible for "it", that "it" does these things, and that he will have to ask other people in other Departments to supply the information. I see that he is nodding. I understand his position, but it is not the usual constitutional position that we are in.

Mr. Spearing: Exactly.

Mr. Leighton: There is another point here. All sorts of promises and assurances were given by the deputy chairman of this strange beast, the LDDC. The deputy chairman had an extremely good reputation in the east end of London. He had a lot of credibility with the community groups and the local authorities because of the courteous and punctilious way in which he responded to letters and queries. He was like an evangelist, selling the LDDC with enthusiasm and gusto which some of us thought might have been worthy of a better cause. He built up his credibility and people accepted his promises. He has gone

now. He was sacked within 24 hours of a rather curious television programme. I did not think that we believed in trial by television in this country, but remarks were made on television and the man was given 10 minutes to resign. There was no chance of a right to reply and no chance to put his side of the story. After all his work, he was sacked.

The Government and the LDDC have acted scandalously and disgracefully. Do those promises now stand up? Who will take the deputy chairman's place? Whoever it is will not be considered very credible by those of us who represent the people of east London. It will not be possible to replace John Mills and fill his boots. Do the promises given by this unaccountable, unelected, authoritarian body count any more?

Mr. Spearing: Is my hon. Friend aware that at a recent meeting of the Docklands Forum—a body of which we should take note, as was emphasised in another place—Mr. John Mills, acting as deputy chairman, discussed at length the problem of noise on the existing docklands railway and its relevance to the new railway? The Secretary of State for the Environment should ensure that the undertakings given by the deputy chairman of the LDDC are maintained.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend is right. I read the minutes of that meeting, in which the deputy chairman admitted that the noise exceeded the levels previously agreed. He said that that was because of the steel construction and he gave an assurance that that type of steel construction would not be used in the Beckton extension.

John Mills, whom many people trusted, has gone. Can we believe his assurances? That is an important question. He said that in Cable street the docklands light railway is noisier than British Rail. That is not how it was supposed to be.

The railway is inadequate. It was built, as the Minister said, to save the public purse. If one builds something second class and inadequate, one must add bits to it. One must rebuild it, which is always much more expensive.

I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) is here. I do not know whether she knows—she probably does because she keeps her ear to the ground very effectively—that discussions are taking place about adding bits on to the docklands light railway. One of the suggestions being strongly canvassed—it is alleged that decisions have almost been taken, so we shall have another Bill in the near future which will be the fourth on this subject—is to extend the railway to Barking. There is another suggestion to extend the railway under the river to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Mr. Spearing: Who is to pay?

Mr. Leighton: We do not know how we shall pay for this bit, let alone who will pay for extending the railway under the river. Who would benefit from putting a tunnel under the river? It would tax the Minister to say how we could enhance the value of the river.

Cheese-paring has led to all sorts of problems—noisy structures and unstaffed stations. At a time of mass unemployment we should employ people to do something sensible. When we travel on the Underground, there are no staff. The stations are desolate and empty.

Ms. Richardson: And filthy dirty.

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend is so right.

I was brought up in a London transport family. When my father left the Grenadier Guards, his first job was as a porter on the London Underground. I do not know whether hon. Members can remember porters. They were the people on every station who used to sweep the platforms, keep them clean and wash them with buckets of water. On some British Rail stations there were even gardens and flowers. Can you remember, Mr. Speaker, when there were waiting rooms with a cheery fire in winter? Can you remember, Mr. Speaker, when there were things called toilets on stations? If people had a long journey, they could relieve themselves on the stations.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am afraid that they still do.

Mr. Leighton: As my hon. Friend points out, the smell and the stink, especially on the Underground, prove that they still do. That is the result of not having any staff.

At the moment the DLR is like a bright new button. It is very attractive. But how long will that be the case if its stations are unstaffed? How long will it be before we get the graffiti and the vandalism? We have the new technology in the form of videos. A video might or might not be able to record what happens. It is cyclical, which I think means that it moves round—now we see it, now we do not. The video can only record a given station at a certain time before it moves round. But even if the video records vandalism, what can be done if there are no staff there? Therefore, cheese-paring is worrying, and the inadequate provision is the result of under-financing, which is a false economy.

Let me return to the question of money. I am seeking to be non-controversial. I do not want to upset the Minister. However, let me address that matter in a gentle way, looking at the philosophy behind it. There is no Government money for the Beckton extension. There is Government money for the roads in exactly the same area—£300 million. Obviously, there is a deep philosophical point behind all this. We have heard the Minister say that it is a philosophical matter. The only philosophy that I can see is that if something is for the private sector, the public purse is open and the Minister is generous — large dollops of public money for roads. When it comes to the public transport system, it is not open. But hang on a minute. The money is there if it goes west. The Minister gave us the figures—£150 million with £68 million being provided by somebody else. That means that he has opened the public purse and taken out £82 million to extend the DLR from Tower Hill to the Bank. I should like explained to me the philosophy behind opening the public purse if a development goes west, but shutting it if it goes east.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman cannot comprehend the simple fact that the public purse is making up a shortfall of what is not attainable from the private sector. In the case of the western extension, a certain sum was obtained from the developers of Canary Wharf, and the public sector made up the difference. In the case of the eastern extension, there is no need for the public purse to make up the difference, because the entire cost will be met by the enhanced land values, through the LDDC. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman found something philosophically difficult about that, but I find it simple and straightforward. Where we can get the private sector to pay, we do so, and where we cannot, we turn to the public purse. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that

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is wrong but wants to turn it the other way round, he is supporting his hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), who believes that public spending is relatively simple.

Mr. Leighton: I wonder whether the Government have been conned. I wonder whether the Government have stood the three-card trick. There are people in London who know how to work the three-card trick, and perhaps the gullible and naive Ministers have fallen for it. Who can say whether the people who have been willing to put up the £68 million were not willing to put up more? May I make an analogy? I heard Lord King say that he was willing to pay only £140 million to take over British Caledonian and make a monopoly. Then, when there was some competition from SAS, which is one of those half-public, half-private BP-type operations, he suddenly upped his offer to £200 million. Who is to say that the people who make huge fortunes out of Canary Wharf, which was the equivalent to building a second City of London, would not have put up that money?

The Government seem to look more sympathetically and generously, and their hand does not falter so much when it reaches for the public purse, when the money is going to the City of London, where people get salaries in telephone numbers, and where most of them vote Conservative and go home to areas such as Surrey and Sussex, the stockbroker belt. However, when the money is going east, to Beckton or down to Canning Town——

Mr. Spearing: It does not go to Canning Town.

Mr. Leighton: When it was proposed that it would go to Canning Town, when the original railway was suggested —the DLR—various options were put in consultation paper. One of those options was that it should go to Canning Town. When the consultation was held, most responses said that it should go to Canning Town. The people of Canning Town and the people of east London want it, but they are not to have it. I believe that that is a philosophical point which the Minister should take on board. He has been down to the area on several occasions and looked at it. I do not know whether he has spoken to many people there.

There is a lot of tension there, because people see those wonderful new apartments going up. If one has £500,000 to spare one can have one tomorrow. I hope that the Minister is not smiling. That is quite cheap for many of them. An enclave of very rich people are cheek by jowl with the people who live in the most deprived and squalid circumstances. I hope the Minister understands that that is the case. Those people want some benefit from these developments, and if the railway extension leaves them out they will see all the wonderful developments that we keep hearing about. A sum of £2·2 billion of private money has already been attracted into the LDDC area. The royal docks development will attract another £2 billion. Those are huge sums.

All that the people want is a little loop in the railway going to Canning Town. If they do not get it, what will they think about the development? They will have been left outside it. There used to be a saying that they will have missed the bus, but they will have missed the train, because the train will not go to them. They see the yuppies—that is an inelegant term—coming in, but how do they come in? The railway does not take only east-enders to the City. It carries people from Surrey and Sussex who are earning telephone number salaries in the City. They can either walk from the City to Wapping and the lovely apartments, or they can get the DLR. That happens on the extension to the west and is being financed from the public purse. However, in our area—the derelict area, as the Minister so delightfully called it—there is no public money, so we have an inadequate and second-rate service.

I must not trespass too long on this, but I must speak about Canning Town. Some of us feel strongly about areas such as Canning Town. I hope that Conservative Members do not think that Canning Town is some sort of joke. It is the heart and guts of the east end of London. It withstood the Luftwaffe, was praised during the second world war and had numerous visits from royalty. The people from that area are the salt of the earth.

We were originally told that the station at Canning Town would cost millions. That figure has now been reduced to under £1 million. The local authority has looked at the matter and said that it made a mistake and that the figure would be less than half that. We are told by those who know—London Regional Transport and the LDDC—that the station would serve 2,000 people. Those 2,000 people are represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South. I should like to pay a tribute to my hon. Friend for the vigilance that he has displayed on this matter. He pores over every detail all the time. I know of no one else in the House with a greater knowledge of transport matters. He was a member of the London county council transport committee for many years.

We miss the GLC now. When we consider the whole of the transport system in the east end of London we can see that the roads are overcrowded, and the east London river crossing will disgorge another lot of traffic into the transport system. There is no co-ordinated planning, and that is where we miss the GLC.

What have the Government and LRT got against the 2,000 people in Canning Town? Why can they not have their station? Are they not as good as the people at Bank and Tower Hill? My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South has done more than anyone on this matter. He is right to speak up for those people. I know that he will do so in future, and he will have our support.

9.38 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am greatly privileged to follow the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton). In many ways he has given us an accurate picture of the situation in the east end of London, specifically in the London borough of Newham, which I have the honour to represent with my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

The Minister was offended by something that I said. To get a spark out of this Minister is a tribute indeed. However, if he was offended by what I said he must understand that I was equally offended by his description of the docks as an area of dereliction. As one of the derelict Members from a derelict area, I can tell him that we strongly object to that. It is not an area of dereliction at all. There are still many jobs in the royal docks. It is not the fault of the people who live there that, because of economic circumstances, jobs deserted them as the port of London moved its activities away from the royal docks.

One of the most depressing and offensive aspects of the work of the London Docklands development corporation is that, in its great capacity to purchase land and thereby rob the people of the east end of their land, it is forcing out or closing down many firms that still operate within docklands. Rather than increasing employment in the docklands area, it is bringing about a net decrease. That is why hon. Members from Newham use such strong words when we hear the Minister give us the old advertiser's hype about what the wonderful LDDC is doing and how many jobs will be created. The Secretary of State plucked a figure out of the air. There do not seem to be any independent surveys or reports that substantiate the exaggerated claims about jobs. By way of intervention, I said to the Minister that the sort of jobs that are being talked about will not be suitable for the presently unemployed people of Newham, Barking and Tower Hamlets.

As you have probably gathered from the debate so far, Mr. Speaker, we are concerned because the DLR does not exist to suit the convenience of the people of the east end. If it were not for the explosions that have occurred within the City and the need to expand out of the City of London, I do not suppose that there would have been much talk about the development of the light railway system. Notwithstanding that, we in the east end are much deprived of amenities, although we are well served by a Labour-controlled council in Newham. Therefore, it will not be the policy of the London borough of Newham, its Members of Parliament or community groups there to oppose the Bill. We are anxious to see that there is the best possible provision in the Bill to ensure that the impact of the railway on existing residents is minimised.

Although many points have been covered in the debate, some have not been covered. I know that the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) wishes to make a few points in about four minutes' time, so I shall not delay the House beyond two more minutes—and a very fast minute has just passed.

The hon. Member for Ilford, South, who has listened most attentively to the points that have been made, will no doubt have registered Opposition Members' great concern about safety aspects with regard to the DLR. We are particularly concerned about the safety aspects of unstaffed stations.

Already at Shadwell, stones have been thrown into nearby residents' houses. A report from the Wapping neighbourhood committee, by the London borough of Tower Hamlest police adviser, serverely criticised many safety aspects at stations. The report stated that alarm buttons are either broken or deactivated because of misuse. Station entrances are not covered by videos. Ticket machines are not located in visible areas. Stations are open all night, thus allowing vandalism, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East mentioned. The report referred also to the aberrant scatalogical behaviour of some passengers who use the stations and the fact that videos are scanned by the same person who is responsible for overseeing the whole operation of the railway from the control room at Poplar. As my hon. Friend said, cameras are operated only on a cyclical basis; there is no constant cover.

We want to make sure that, when the Bill is considered, the lessons that have been learnt up to now are taken into consideration. There is a great deal of concern. The cost pressures that are being exerted not only on this railway but on London Regional Transport generally are leading to a diminution of safety standards within the whole transport system.

It is unnerving to sit on a train that does not have any staff that one can see. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) has said, it is especially unnerving for women. Anyone who uses the existing railway system, as I have done on several occasions, will notice the absence of women. I am sure that one of the major reasons is that women feel unhappy and unsafe on such a system.

It is remarkable that we talk about cutting staffing levels on public transport, such as buses and railways, but, when it comes to the better class of travel, air travel, a major selling point is the service that the passengers receive. I do not see why a person travelling on a No. 25 bus should not equally be welcomed aboard by a steward who says that he will be travelling from Stratford to Victoria at approximately ground level, who will give the estimated time of arrival, traffic conditions allowing, and then serve refreshments. Indeed, duty-free goods could be offered. In a light-hearted fashion I am trying to say that I do not see why public transport such as buses and railways should continually cut comfort and safety when other forms of transport emphasise those things. I hope that the hon. Member for Ilford, South will at least acknowledge our concerns, especially those about transport safety.

9.45 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): By leave of the House, I should like to try to answer one or two of the points that have been made in this helpful debate. I am sure that many of those points can be considered in much greater detail in Committee, but I should like to deal with one or two now.

The question of the Silvertown loop obviously causes considerable disagreement about its actual cost. the information that I have is that the construction costs would amount to £5·9 million; the additional time factor would involve an extra £2·3 million and the running costs another £4·7 million. Therefore, the total additional cost of fitting in that loop could be—I emphasise "could be" —£12·9 million. I am sure that hon. Members will have the opportunity to explore and compare those figures more in Committee.

There is no suggestion that this is a developers' railway. Other facilities are available to people who live in the Canning Town area. The interchange at Western Gateway with British Rail will be a great help to those people, as will the train and bus facilities that will help those passengers who wish to join the route to move west. Such matters will be dealt with in Committee. Indeed, they have already been considered and there is no question of ignoring the needs of the people in that part of London.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I know that he does not have a lot of time. Although the issues of cost and timing can be argued in Committee, does the hon. Gentleman accept that his interpretation of its not being a developers' railway is not accepted in east London? If we do not get the Canning Town route, that will be looked on as cocking a snook at the people of east London, and the railway will be interpreted as entirely for developers.

Mr. Thorne: I hope that that will not be the outcome. I am sure that those hon. Members who serve on the Committee will have an opportunity to express themselves then.

I should have liked to go into the question of costs in much greater detail, but time does not permit, other than to say that I understand that the total cost is likely to be about £136 million. It is expected that that sum will be paid by the London Docklands development corporation during the course of the work, so that there will not be any further cost to the taxpayer. The extra value that will accrue to the land owned by the LDDC will enable it to pay that sum of money. That is an important factor, and whether one agrees with that philosophy or not, it is a point that my hon. Friends will appreciate.

I listened with care and interest to the reasoned speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). I share his concern regarding noise; indeed, that matter has been raised on a number of occasions. He mentioned light shining into homes and certainly I have had experience of that problem in my constituency as a result of car headlamps and inconsiderate supermarket operators. The right hon. Gentleman also expressed his concern about unmanned stations.

I compliment the people who live in the area where the docklands light railway is based, on the absence of graffiti so far at the stations. The people in the area have behaved extremely responsibly and I commend the people living in the east end for the way in which they have not abused those stations. I hope that that will continue to be the case.

Policing the railway has been mentioned and that will be dealt with on a central basis and from a central control centre. Either the transport police or the Metropolitan police—whoever is in the right location—will be called upon immediately. I believe that their response will be extremely encouraging and that they will be able to deal with whatever arises.

Some hon. Members have mentioned the need for videos. Certainly the train captains on the docklands light railway have been extremely successful and I believe that they are appreciated by the passengers. Indeed, I am sure that the hon. Members representing Newham and Tower Hamlets have received a favourable response from their constituents who have used this service.

The Government have given a £60 million contribution towards the cost of funding the extension of the railway into the City. That connection into the City is a key factor for the whole network—indeed, the prosperity of the region relies on that connection. The extension will be expensive, despite the fact that it is a short extension, because it will run through a tunnel. It would be wrong to say that the Government lay out money for the roads rather than the railway. Road fund taxpayers consistently complain that they do not see a return on their money and that they pay out a lot more money than is laid out on the roads. Indeed, the road users have made a contribution towards this railway.

Mention has been made of what the ex-deputy chairman of the LDDC said about steel. I am not quite sure to what he was referring, because certainly steel will be required in the structures. Perhaps he said that not so much steel will be required in the structures in the extension out to Beckton when compared to the first phase of the development. Undoubtedly, however, steel will be required to reinforce structures, especially those above ground. It is important to remember that the corners and angles of the proposed construction should be reduced. Another worrying feature about the Silvertown loop is the degree of noise generated by such loops. The loop that passes around the Beckton gasworks is more gentle than the loops elsewhere on the network; the reason for that is to try to reduce the amount of noise generated.

I believe that I have covered most of the points that have been raised. I cannot help the hon. Lady the Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) about the origins of the name of the area known as Cyprus. I can only assume that that was the area where products from the island of Cyprus were landed. Indeed, I think that some settlers from that island also settled in the area. That is the best information that I have been able to get for the hon. Lady.

I am glad that hon. Members on both sides of the House welcome the Bill. I believe that it is a step in the right direction. I am delighted that, in the future, we hope that it can be extended elsewhere. I hope that we can now give the Bill a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed.

Ordered,

That it be an Instruction to the Committee on the Bill, That it report to the House on the evidence presented to it concerning the adequacy, or otherwise, of the characteristics and capacity of the proposed railway in relation to the likely demands placed on the railway by existing and planned development in and around the area of the Royal Docks.—*[Mr. Spearing.]*

London Regional Transport Bill

Order for consideration, as amended, read.

9.55 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): The London Regional Transport Bill has met most of the objectors' objections, apart from the outcome of the Pudding Mill lane issue. That has also been programmed, but there remains the issue of how it will be financed.

The remaining features of the LRT Bill are generally to be welcomed. Hon. Members on both sides will look forward to some of the improvements proposed in it, especially those that make a positive contribution to the safety of the network. I hope that, if we do not make as much progress as I would like on the Bill tonight, we shall be able to return to it soon, because it has some important features.

Pudding Mill lane is an important matter. The demand on the docklands light railway is such that some of the doubts in the past that it could be funded properly are beginning to evaporate. I hope that in the not-too-distant future it will be possible to raise the additional funds. We want to make provision for the extra facility of the dualling of that part of the track to cater for the extra facility moving into and out of Stratford. That is to be welcomed. The provisions concerning the length of trains, the amount of land required and the additional proposals to modify the legislation that is already in existence are to be welcomed. I hope the House will soon have an opportunity to put the measure on the statute book.

9.57 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): We have little time left in which to consider the Bill. I am sure that as and when it returns to the Floor of the House, my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who so assiduously represent the borough of Newham and its people, will wish to raise the important issue of the financing of the Pudding Mill lane stations.

I want to take the two remaining minutes to address the issue of the Angel tube station, which, to a certain extent, is covered by the Bill. However, the provisions of the Bill will not be implemented by London Regional Transport, because that body's thinking about the future development of that station has progressed since the Bill was first brought in. The Angel tube station, which serves a large number of my constituents, is one of the more outdated and inefficient stations in the London Regional Transport network. I see that one of my constituents, the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell), who I know uses the Angel tube station frequently, is nodding his assent to that.

The two principal objections that my constituents have to the condition of the station concern, first, the inefficient operation of the lifts, and, secondly, the danger posed to passengers by the island platform nature of the station, especially at rush hour, when there is a lot of extra pressure because of the new office developments in the area pouring a large number of extra people into the station. I fear that the danger to those people is acute.

London Regional Transport's new proposals for escalators to replace the existing lifts and for the removal of the island platform to make station safer and more convenient for passengers are to be warmly welcomed. I hope that when the London Regional Transport (No. 2) Bill comes before the House all hon. Members will give it a warm welcome and a swift passage.

In the meantime, it is important to recognise that the provisions in the Bill that is before us are inadequate. London Regional Transport has recognised that, has revised its proposals, and has come up with something that is much more satisfactory and which will be to the benefit of my constituents.

It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

To be further considered upon Thursday 17 December.

Representation of the People

Mr. Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the two orders on representation of the people. I must tell the House that I have not selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen).

Resolved,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) (No. 3) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 6th May, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) (Miscellaneous Changes) (No. 4) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

CIVIL AVIATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Air Navigation (Noise Certification) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

MEDICINES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Medicines (Exemptions from Licences) (Carbadox and Olaquindox) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 25th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Amendment Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 18th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

Outward Bound Trust

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

10.3 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise a matter that affects two charitable bodies. I am calling for a measure of justice between them. By appointment of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, I am chairman of the trustees of the Community Projects Foundation, which is a charitable body that exists to apply community development techniques to social problems. It has been in existence for 20 years and some hon. Members have been connected with the foundation during those years. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) was one of the first directors of the organisation in its original form.

The sequence of events that I shall describe occurred in 1986. One of the projects that is organised by the Community Projects Foundation is in Dundee and is called the Dundee work start scheme. In the course of its work, which was to help unemployed people in an area of Dundee with a high incident of unemployment, a journalist was contracted to write a pamphlet that showed how the ideas that had been developed in the scheme might be extended to include the prospect of work overseas. In the pamphlet he used the term "outward bound activities" without using capital letters. In a summary at the end of the pamphlet he included in a list the term "outward bound training".

The people in the project then became aware of attempts to obtain a copy of the pamphlet. I shall shortly describe those attempts. After a time a copy was supplied to the person asking for it, and it appeared that that person was no less than a representative of the solicitors of the Outward Bound Trust, who objected to the fact that these terms had been used in the pamphlet. There was a terse exchange of correspondence and we were accused of unauthorised use of the terms. It was said that there was damage to the good will and the name of the Outward Bound Trust. The director of the Outward Bound Trust spoke in an affidavit of protection of the trademark. We believe that this was not correct and we found ourselves, in attempting to contest this, facing a writ. Our director received a summons.

At that point it became obvious to me that we had to proceed to a settlement. Despite the legal advice I had been given, it appeared that, as the Community Projects Foundation is almost wholly dependent upon a grant of the voluntary services unit of the Home Office, that being taxpayers' money, it could have been putting at risk some £20,000 by proceeding to legal action. I did not feel that that was proper for a charitable body funded by the taxpayer. Settlement was eventually reached out of court, which nevertheless meant that the Community Projects Foundation has lost in legal costs to both its own and the Outward Bound Trust solicitors a sum in excess of £6,500.

I do not doubt the good work that the Outward Bound Trust does and has done for many years; I make no assault on that whatsoever. Nor would I object to its right to defend its legitimate interests if it believed they were threatened, but it could have dealt with the matter altogether differently.

While this may not be the main thrust of my argument, I maintain that there was not really a case to be brought by the Outward Bound Trust against the Community Projects Foundation. The term "outward bound" is in free use by practitioners of education and training, almost as a generic and often figurative term. I believe that people would be genuinely surprised to be summonsed for using the descriptive term "hoovering the carpet". By the same analogy, it is absurd that a term which has come to be used as widely as outward bound should be the subject of threatened legal action.

In attempting to look at how widely the term is used, various examples were uncovered. In an article in *The Guardian* education section, Michael Schweitzer, a former Gordonstoun pupil and bursar of Atlantic college, wrote:

> "You won't find a comprehensive not doing some element of outward bounding. The Outward Bound Schools are less important now—the dye has come off and run into the mainstream of schooling."

I uncovered a more absurd example, which refers to a training programme for zoo-bred rare monkeys to prepare them for the return to the wild state in Brazil. The language used is:

> "seven tamarins were enrolled in a primate's outward bound, a back-to-basics training programme."

One could add to those examples many times over to show that it was preposterous that there was thought to be a basis for any action. The advice I received was that there was no basis for action and that no damage had been suffered by the Outward Bound Trust.

The point to which I draw the attention of the House is the conduct of the Outward Bound Trust in handling this matter and the conduct of its solicitors, Messrs Humphreys and Co. of Bull Wharf, Redcliff street, Bristol, B1. I find it difficult to describe that firm of solicitors, on the basis of their handling of this, as other than grasping and deceitful. I believe that their conduct has been entirely unethical and ought to be reported to the Law Society. There was a totally undercover approach to the foundation in the search for a copy of the pamphlet. At no time was there a straightforward communication from the Outward Bound Trust, its director or chairman, simply to ask for this and say why they were asking for it, or to exress any concern.

The unorthodox and deceitful approach appeared to begin with Mr. Ian Fothergill, the director of the Outward Bound Trust. In an affidavit that he signed in 1986 Mr. Fothergill states that he instructed the trust's solicitors to try to obtain a copy of the material. Thereafter he states in the affidavit that in July 1986 Mrs. S. Nicholas, an employee of Humphreys and Co. telephoned the Dundee office of "Work-start Overseas" and asked to be sent some publicity material. She did not identify herself. Then, according to Mr. Fothergill, at the beginning of August 1986 a second telephone call was made by Mr. Humphreys giving the name Jenkins, asking to be sent publicity material. It is incredible that a firm of solicitors should behave in that way and moreover that they should do so at the behest of an organisation like the Outward Bound Trust, which we have always believed to be an entirely reputable organisation. Further attempts were made in other telephone calls on an anonymous basis.

The first that the foundation knew that a problem existed was when a formal letter arrived from Messrs Humphreys and Co. The solicitors for the foundation felt throughout their dealings with Messrs Humphreys and Co. that they appeared to be dealing with lawyers who were bent on trouble, who did not appear to want to hurry to a settlement. Was the behaviour of Humphreys and Co.

directly condoned by the Outward Bound Trust? Was it controlling the solicitors or were the solicitors simply taking hold and running with it?

Some clue about the nature of the solicitors can also be found in the fact that, when the settlement was reached, they filed costs of £7,057·15, which were deemed by the foundation's lawyer to be absurd. It was recommended that at further expense the matter should be taken before a taxing master, and that happened during the course of 1987. The amount was reduced to £4,483·21. That was a sign of the excessive approach adopted by that firm of solicitors, with or without the express approval of the Outward Bound Trust.

The question is not whether that was the right way for the Outward Bound Trust to behave towards the Community Projects Foundation. However, when Mr. Fothergill states in his affidavit that as director of the trust it is one of his responsibilities to follow up and prevent the use of the name "outward bound" by third parties who without authorisation use it to refer to activities that are unconnected with the trust, he should discharge that responsibility on a totally even-handed basis.

I discovered that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) described his impressions of the 1986 Labour party conference in an article in *The House Magazine*. He included a passage reading:

> "So conference is really a multi-function event, a meeting with old friends, a test of the mood of the party, a rally, an Outward Bound course (I survived), a beer festival and a launching pad for egos and ideas".

I understand that the hon. Gentleman was not pursued by the Outward Bound Trust or its solicitors.

On 5 January 1987, an article appeared in *The Independent* by its labour correspondent, Mr. David Felton. It described courses run by Ashridge management college. It included a passage which referred to "outward-bound type activities" without using capital letters. I sought the views of the editor of *The Independent* and was later assured by Mr. Whittam Smith that he had not been sued by the Outward Bound Trust.

It appears that the Outward Bound Trust may be selective in whom it seeks to tackle in terms of any alleged infringement of its trade mark or familiar name. If that is so, it is an absolute disgrace, because in this case the trust was picking on a body that is almost entirely reliant on taxpayers' money: money given for a specific purpose, which has ended up in the hands of solicitors. That is a scandal, and it shall not go unnoticed by those who support the Outward Bound Trust—who include Her Majesty's Government.

My hon. Friend's Department funded the trust to the tune of some £13,000 in 1985. Presumably a similar amount was spent in 1986, and it has also received grant from the Scottish Office. I find it incredible that a body that is supposedly trying to do good work in the community should tackle another body with a similar purpose, as the trust did, to cause such a loss.

In raising the matter on the Adjournment, I seek not only to draw the matter to wider attention, but to suggest to my hon. Friend that, if the Government continue to fund the trust, they seek assurances on its future conduct and establish whether it will refrain from taking further action of this kind. I believe that justice would truly be done if a sum no greater and no less than £6,528·91—the amount of taxpayers' money needlessly wasted by the trust—were deducted from its future grant, and perhaps, through the realms of Government, brought back into the coffers of the Community Projects Foundation, so that it could do its work as the Government intend.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): Let me begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) on his success in obtaining the Adjournment debate. In the traditional role of Back Bencher, he has raised some serious issues.

Until as recently as July, I was the Minister responsible for the youth service. In that role, I became increasingly aware of the valuable part that voluntary youth organisations can play in assisting young people to become responsible adults. The ministerial brief for the youth service has now passed to my nobie Friend the Baroness Hooper, but I am handling tonight's motion.

The debate provides me with an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the voluntary youth organisations, and to reaffirm the Government's commitment to supporting and encouraging their work. My noble Friend's responsibilities in the Department of Education and Science include supervision of the grant aid of about £3 million a year which the Department makes available to 64 national voluntary youth organisations. At present, grant is given to support the headquarters administrative costs of those organisations, new developments in their work and the capital cost of regional and national projects.

There is a wide range of such organisations, national and local. Some, such as the major uniformed organisations, are household names, and most of us have experienced their useful influence, either directly or through our children. It is estimated that 90 per cent. of children and young people have some contact with a voluntary youth organisation in their lives, and that at any one time those organisations reach 6 million young members and users. About half a million adult volunteers are generally recognised to be involved in their work.

Some of the household names among those organisations are particularly famous; some are less well known, but they have a very large membership. Others—the Outward Bound trust is one—have established a reputation for undertaking a particular type of challenging work with young people, and, in some cases, with adults.

It is for the trust and other voluntary bodies to define the essence of their work and the routes that they believe will best lead to success in working with young people. Each organisation has an individual approach, but one element of this work is taking young people away from their day-to-day concerns and facing them with challenge. Those challenges have often been in the natural environment—trekking, mountaineering, orienteering and learning survival skills.

One of the keys to the success of these organisations is that young people are given opportunities to think about their experiences and achievements as individuals and as a team. This helps to increase understanding, confidence and motivation. Increasingly, different challenges are being introduced, including those that arise from giving social service in hospitals, homes for the elderly and disabled, and work with other young people.

I did not detect in my hon. Friend"s remarks a wish to call into question the value of the Outward Bound Trust's work. What I have said shows the value that is placed by

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

the Government on the work of that trust and other organisations working in like sectors and, more generally, our support for development, in local authority and voluntary sectors, of the youth service and of constructive activities that increase young people's confidence, motivation and skills.

My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot offer a qualified opinion about the use by one organisation of a term that is directly or indirectly associated with another. That is not a matter for Ministers.

My Department gives headquarters grants for specific purposes and on condition that they are applied solely for those purposes. The grant that my Department has made available to the Outward Bound Trust represents only a part of its total income—less than 10 per cent. of its income for headquarters operations.

We have yet to determine the total amount available for distribution for headquarters grants for the 1988-89 financial year, but we have begun to consider individual organisations' applications. We are currently considering the Outward Bound Trust's application for grant for 1988-89. The House will understand that I am unable to say what the result of that consideration will be. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall carefully consider all relevant factors, including income that it receives from other sources.

I undertake to draw this debate to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 11 December 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Scotch Whisky Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

9.36 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): As a non-alcohol drinking Scot, I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

At this stage, I wish to declare that I have no interest other than that of a constituency Member with a number of Scotch whisky firms in his constituency. The provisions in the Bill are sought by the Scotch Whisky Association, trade unions, management and workers employed by the Scotch whisky associations. I understand from my conversation this morning that they are also sought by the low strength producers. The provisions are judged to be essential and deemed to be in the best long-term interests of the industry.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The hon. Gentleman would be misleading the House if he said that the Bill, in its present form, is sought by the Association of Low Strength Whisky Producers. That body still objects to one clause, and if the hon. Gentleman thinks otherwise, he has been misled.

Mr. Walker: I have no wish to mislead the House. I am only telling the House what I was advised of earlier this morning. Any hon. Member who was up early enough to see the television programme will have seen me appear with a spokesperson for the association; it was on his advice that I made my comments. The last thing that I would wish to do is mislead the House.

The provisions are judged to be essential and deemed to be in the best long-term interests of the industry and of its customers, some of whom, I believe, are Members of this House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Equally, the provisions are judged to be in the interests of "UK Ltd." which will benefit, first, from the huge amount of tax collected from the Scotch whisky industry; secondly, from the thousands of jobs and stable employment that the industry provides; and thirdly, from the massive contribution that the industry makes each year to the United Kingdom export market.

It is important to note that the Bill will provide a legislative framework and that the implementation of the provisions will be triggered by orders before Parliament. We are talking about an enabling Bill. Before Ministers introduce orders, the practice is that they consult fully and widely with all interested parties. It is at that time and not before that deep and detailed arguments about such matters as the alcoholic spirit level take place. I shall return to that point when I deal with clause 2.

The first provision, clause 1, deals with the prohibition of the production in Scotland of whisky other than Scotch whisky. The Scotch whisky industry supports that provision. I hope that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) will confirm that.

The background is that, in June 1982, the European Commission submitted to the European Council of Ministers proposals for a Council regulation which, inter alia, would contain a definition of whisky. As no recognised definition applied throughout the Community, the Scotch Whisky Association and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food supported the proposals.

On that point, I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench who kindly gave me advice and assistance in the preparation of the Bill.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my hon. Friend reassure me in relation to one worry about clause 1? In future, we may have a certain uniformity about whiskies. The present strength of whiskies is their diversity. Some of us like to drink Teachers and some like to drink Glenfiddich. Is there any danger that individuality will be lost because of clause 1?

Mr. Walker: I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that there is no danger of that happening. The blending of the different brands gives them their uniqueness. Also, the different distilleries that produce different quality whiskies, particularly malt whiskies, give them their distinction. The unique qualities of Scotland's highland water, barley, and the people who produce the whisky, produce many different varieties of quality to suit individual palates. My remarks are based on theory, because I am not a whisky drinker. All the evidence clearly is that that is what happens.

As I said, the Scotch Whisky Association and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food supported the proposals. Other major spirits such as gin, brandy, rum and so on were also to be covered by the Commission's proposals. The plan was that the EEC definition of whisky should be no less stringent in its terms than the current United Kingdom definition, on which the definition of Scotch whisky is based. However, as matters developed, it became clear that it would probably not be possible to achieve that objective. I shall try to explain why that is so later. In addition, it had been acknowledged and recognised for some time that the present United Kingdom definition of Scotch whisky is laid out in general terms and that it would be prudent and wise to have a revised definition.

So we had a European and United Kingdom definition problem. There was a need to remedy that by having a revised definition that would more precisely reflect the current practice within the industry on which the worldwide reputation of Scotch whisky as a quality product is based. It was also understood that the developments would result in a material difference between the anticipated Euro-definition of whisky, which is reflected in clause 3(1) of the Bill, and the revised definition of Scotch whisky which the industry seeks.

I should like the House to note that it is fully accepted within the EEC that the United Kingdom is entitled to have a definition of Scotch whisky that is more detailed than the broad Euro-definition of whisky, but that, per se, would not prevent the production of Euro-whisky in Scotland. So we would be faced with the concurrent

[Mr. Walker]

production in Scotland of Scotch whisky and Euro-whisky. The latter product could be described as whisky, a product of Scotland. At best, that could create confusion and, at worst, could damage the worldwide sales prospects of the Scotch whisky industry.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The hon. Gentleman is making a carefully thought out, admirable speech. On the matter of sales, does he recall that, less than a year ago, Buchanan's in my constituency, who made Black and White, was closed as a result of the Guinness takeover? That meant that the whisky that was supplied to this very House was no longer available. I am pleased to support the Bill. The only remaining whisky producing employer in my constituency, Lawsons, have asked me to do so.

Mr. Walker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his useful intervention and his support. Of course I fully understand the heartache that followed the decisions that were taken. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to make comments about Guinness at this stage. He will agree that I have probably made more than my fair share in the past. I agree with the hon. Gentleman: the industry is much too important for one to allow a single narrow issue to affect one's judgment about whether to support the Bill.

There was a danger that the worldwide prospects of Scotch whisky would be damaged. The reason is clear. Throughout the world, the description "Scotch whisky", whether expressed directly or indirectly, is taken to relate to whisky from Scotland. All who seek to pass off their whiskies as Scotch whiskies habitually do so by marketing them in a manner that suggests that they were produced in Scotland. In such circumstances, it is highly improbable that customers would be able to recognise the difference between a product that is described as Scotch whisky and a whisky that is said to be produced in Scotland but which is not described as Scotch whisky.

The existence of lawfully produced whiskies in Scotland that are not entitled to fit the description "Scotch whisky" would weaken the essentially geographical meaning of the description "Scotch whisky". That would make the worldwide defence of Scotch whisky much more difficult, if not impossible. That is why all Scots — there is no division between us on the matter — consider that the issue must be determined. We are determined to ensure that there will be no way in which Scotch whisky can become a type of whisky that can be produced anywhere. Otherwise, a product such as Scotch-type of whisky or Albanian or Afghan Scotch whisky could be produced in countries other than Scotland. That is why the Scotch whisky industry wishes to have this marvellous product, which has exports worth over £1,000 million a year, which directly provides employment for 16,000 people and many more indirectly, and which contributes £1,000 million in taxes and revenues to the Exchequer, is given the protection that a quality product of that kind merits.

The concept of protecting indigenous quality products is not new. Champagne has enjoyed such protection under French law since 1934. That is why we in the United Kingdom should legislate to protect Scotch. The provisions in clause 1 of the Bill should be in place before the EEC regulations open up the possibility of Euro-whisky production in Scotland.

Clause 2 relates to the sale of Scotch whisky. It prohibits the sale as Scotch whisky of any spirits that do not conform to any definition of Scotch whisky. It also provides for the setting of a minimum alcoholic strength below which Scotch whisky shall not be sold. It is important for the House to recognise that there will be differing views as to the limit at which the minimum alcoholic strength should be set. It is also important to note that nowhere in the Bill is a minimum strength laid down. The clause gives Ministers the power to table orders. That will happen only when Ministers judge it right to do so, and then only after the full and proper consultations with interested parties have taken place.

The Scotch Whisky Association, which represents a substantial majority of whisky producers in Scotland, definitely wants the provision. As I said earlier, I was told this morning — I believe that in substance that information was fairly accurate — that the association which represents low-strength producers is also in favour of setting a minimum standard. The difference between the two associations or groups is the level at which the standard should be set. I understand that there may be good technical and marketing reasons why a particular level may be used or preferred. Although I am no expert in such matters, I have been told that that has something to do with the quality of colour and taste, which may be affected by extremes of temperature — something that must be considered properly when one realises that the product is sold everywhere, from the Arctic to the Equator and on to the Antarctic. However, the difference between the two groups is not at this time large. As I understand it, it is less than 3 per cent. proof.

As I have said, I have no direct knowledge or expertise, have no view and make no recommendation on this point. I advise right hon. and hon. Members that this matter should be left to a later date when Ministers can decide. It is important that we should not limit Ministers' room for manoeuvre in their negotiations in Europe by attempting to obtain pledges on any specific level of alcoholic strength today, nor should the House decide to allow the Bill to go into Committee, should we ask for such pledges during the later stages of the Bill's passage through this House or in another place.

Clause 3 deals with the definition of Scotch whisky. Hon. Members should note that the present United Kingdom definition of Scotch whisky will remain in force until superseded by a revised definition. Under the present arrangements, the process at the distillery results in a distillate of spirits being produced which is stored, in oak casks of a capacity not exceeding 700 litres, for at least three years. Anyone who knows anything about Scotch whisky will be aware that many Scotch whiskies are matured for periods much in excess of the minimum three years.

On distillation, I should also draw hon. Members' attention to the significant difference between the current proposed requirements for Euro-whisky and the present requirements for Scotch whisky. That concerns the use of added enzymes during the distillation process — a practice that at present is not carried out in Scotland. The revised definition that the industry seeks would exclude the use of added enzymes, thus reflecting present industry practice. However, as I understand it, the definition of Euro-whisky is likely to permit the use of enzymes.

On maturation, I understand that there have been moves in Europe that may be attempts to have the period

reduced below three years. Distillers in the Scotch whisky industry regard three years as the absolute minimum period. That could become another area in which substantial differences between Euro-whisky and Scotch whisky develop.

Following maturation, the alcoholic strength of Scotch whisky is reduced to the required bottling strength by the addition of good Scottish water. Water and spirit caramel, which is used to standardise colour, are the only substances to be added after maturation in the Scotch whisky industry. The industry, and especially the distillers, believe in the continued uniqueness and "naturalness" of Scotch whisky as a product and wish to see the process that contributes to that set out in a revised definition of Scotch whisky. They also believe that the definition of Scotch whisky must reflect current practices and be capable of enforcement by the authorities. That is why the clause is in the Bill. Hon. Members should also note that any offence under the provisions of the Bill will be the subject of civil law proceedings. There is no provision in the Bill for criminal law proceedings.

Clause 4 deals with the provisions as they affect Northern Ireland, as covered by the Northern Ireland Act 1974. Clause 4 is necessary because of the unique legislative situation that exists between this House and Northern Ireland. Clause 5 deals with the commencement and extent of the Bill.

There has been much misleading comment in the press and elsewhere about the Bill. Some may have been designed to highlight fears, real or imagined. I hope that my remarks thus far will have set at present most, if not all, of those fears.

The Scotch whisky industry is much too important to Scotland for anyone to treat it in a cavalier or flippant manner. Unlike coal and oil—other industries that are important in Scotland — whisky as it is presently manufactured and sold world wide by the Scotch whisky industry can go on for ever. I repeat that it can go on for ever, because it is not a finite resource — it is a renewable resource.

The pure Highland water, the barley of Scotland and the skills and experience of the work force are as Scottish as sporrans, Hogmanay, the bagpipe or the kilt. However, if we do not protect it, we may one day find that, echoing the words of Robert Burns, Scotch whisky has been acquired by others. After all, it is no secret that for some time the Soviets have laid claim to some of Burns's poetry and songs. Does anyone doubt that in future we may find Moscow Scotch whisky being sold or that this famous product, which has built a worldwide reputation and sales on its quality and brand name, may somewhere, some time, be piled high and sold cheap?

I remind the House that 85 per cent. of all Scotch sold is sold outside the United Kingdom. What other United Kingdom product can lay claim to sales on that scale? [HON. MEMBERS: "None."] Yes, none. What other product manufactured in Scotland can claim that over 90 per cent. of everything produced is sold outside Scotland? [HON. MEMBERS: "None."] No other Scottish product can lay claim to that. What other product employs 16,000 people directly and generates £1 billion in revenue and taxes for the Chancellor of the Exchequer? No other product can make those claims.

The importance of the Scotch whisky industry to Scotland and to the United Kingdom cannot be overstated. That is why the Scotch Whisky Association, trade unions, management and employees, as well as hon. Members representing all the political parties in Scotland, and one from England, support and are sponsors of the Bill. I understand that other hon. Members from England support the Bill, but we have only one such sponsor.

Scotch whisky is more than a whisky. It is part of Scotland's heritage and folklore. It is used as a medicine to cure many ills. As a toddy, it can dispel colds and 'flu. In porridge, it can drive out the freezing cold of Scotland's winters. It lubricates the larynx and helps parties go with a swing.

It takes something extremely important to unite the Scots. It takes something very important to bring so many Scots to this Chamber on a Friday morning and to make Scottish Members travel overnight on the sleeper from their constituencies to be present this morning. I thank those Members who have made that sacrifice and who have come down especially for this debate today.

The Scotch Whisky Bill is too important to be caught up in any parliamentary manoeuvres that may be designed to frustrate other legislation or to promote narrow sectional interests. That is why other Scottish and English supporters and I are today asking the House to allow the Bill to proceed into Committee.

9.59 am

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I have taken an interest in this subject for some years, because, in common with many other hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies, I have a number of constituents—about 2,000 — employed in the whisky industry. They are anxious that, for their long-term future, a proper definition should be established for the product that they are proud to manufacture. They are also anxious that that product should maintain a quality that is recognised throughout the world.

One of the major problems faced by the whisky industry is created by what can only be called adulterated whisky. One does not have to travel far to appreciate that problem. If one travels to France and visits the supermarkets at the Channel ports that are designed, in many respects, to attract trade from Britain, one can find products purporting to be whisky. That whisky can have as low a strength as 28 per cent. proof. That creates problems for the whisky industry and it is important that those problems are considered today.

Whisky is categorised as one of the luxury products. Whisky distillation represents a tremendous investment because we all know that, under the existing excise regime, the maturation of the more expensive brands is an extremely costly business for firms. Those companies seek to produce high-quality products, attractively packaged and aimed at the upper end of the market. It is extremely frustrating for those companies, which incur massive expense in the promotion of their products, to find that they have been undercut by stuff that can only be called "hooch" by those who like a dram or two.

There are already whiskies of a variety of strengths on the home market that are allowed to be sold in this country because of the absence of an adequate definition of strength. We need to have that adequate definition to protect the consumer. Some of the so-called whiskies sold in Britain are sold at a strength that attracts lower excise duty. In many instances, that whisky is sold in bottles that are smaller than the standard size. Consequently, when a consumer goes into a supermarket in Britain seeking to

[Mr. Martin O'Neill]

buy what he would consider to be a low-cost Scotch whisky, he is not getting a bargain. If he goes home and gets out a calculator—one needs a calculator because the arithmetic is not simple—he will realise that he has paid proportionately more for a smaller bottle of a lower strength whisky than he would for a standard bottle of Bells or whatever.

The inferior product is undermining the integrity of Scotch whisky at home and abroad. I welcome the Bill, but if I were to be so bold as to seek an amendment, I should quibble about two matters. One is that the Bill does not take the opportunity—it may not be appropriate to do so—to outlaw the bulk export of malt. That is one of the great problems faced by the whisky industry and many of my constituents are concerned about that. Indeed, in Alloa the United Glass plant makes the bottles for the whisky industry and for a large section of the country's drinks industry. My people would be very pleased if we not only outlawed the export of malt, but insisted that every drop of Scotch whisky that left this country was in a bottle made in Scotland. We would be hard pressed to find a bottle of Cognac that had not been bottled in France. Indeed, that bottle would be made in France.

The Bill provides us with the opportunity to set in motion the means whereby we can assure the definition of Scotch whisky and the integrity of the product. By such measures we can secure its export opportunities in countries such as Japan. Some three weeks ago I visited that country with a parliamentary deputation. As a result of a GATT directive we are looking to the Japanese Government to open up their considerable market to the free and fair import of Scotch whisky. The present high tax regime in Japan means that whisky costs in excess of £80. Inferior Scotch is exported to that country and it attracts less tax. Therefore, it undermines the high-quality brands that seek a market there.

I look forward to the Bill coming into effect as soon as possible. I am aware of the problems that will be encountered within the European Community regarding such a definition, but I hope that it will be speedily agreed upon. Indeed, I hope that the figure of 40 per cent. proof can be established because that is the figure used for all respectable Scotch whiskies.

A variety of figures have been bandied about, and it is up to the Commission, in conjunction with our Ministers, to negotiate that matter. Although the Parliamentary Under-Secretary is a Yorkshireman, I know that he is concerned about the best interests of Scotch whisky. Indeed, I imagine that he would declare a consumer's interest in that product. I hope that he will recognise that we in Scotland would seek a 40 per cent. proof definition. However, it is not appropriate for us to insist today on that or on the other measures that I have described.

I know that there are divisions within the Scotch whisky industry about the bulk export of malt. However, distilleries that export malt are now achieving pariah status in the industry. They are undermining the integrity of the product by their actions. Indeed, in many ways they are similar to people who seek, for the basest reason, to adulterate the product, and they are going against many of the basic principles of the consumer movement.

It is ironic that one of the blending houses linked with the production of lower-strength Scotch has associations with the co-operative movement. I am happy to be a member and supporter of that movement. I was always led to believe that one of the fundamental principles of the co-operative movement was the protection of the consumers' interests. Indeed, in their early documents, the Rochdale Pioneers emphasised that they were against the adulterations of products. I find it difficult to understand why that movement should be associated with the retailing of an inferior product. In the home market that inferior product is helping to undermine a product which is endeavouring to move up market and to attract the highest profit that can be obtained in the world's drinks market. That market is large, and Scotland and the United Kingdom generally are entitled to claim a share of it.

I know that a number of my hon. Friends wish to participate in the debate and I should like to think that we shall all support the Bill. I hope that we can get it through Committee and leave it to Ministers to get the EEC to resolve the remaining problems. If that happens, whisky will have the footing that it deserves.

I shall not talk at any great length about the Guinness saga, but we all know that the industry has been through a traumatic time, from which it is now recovering. We need the foundation of a clear and adequate definition of the product to enable the industry to continue and to secure the employment prospects and the revenue that the country needs and our people deserve.

10.9 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I want briefly to give warm support to the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who I know has taken a great personal interest in the whole subject, and who recently had helpful discussions in Japan.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan was right to say that we should not go into the difficulties of the past couple of years that have affected the structure of the industry, because we want to look forward to future development from the current base line, which seems much more favourable than it was a little while ago. I am glad, too, to see the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) in the Chamber. He and I seem to be running campaigns, week by week, on every subject under the sun—yesterday the railways, today whisky. As joint chairman of the all-party Scotch whisky group, I am glad to see that the treasurer and secretary of that group are also here. That shows how much all-party support there is for the Bill.

Sadly, I have no constituency interest to declare. I must be one of the few hon. Members representing a Scottish constituency without a distillery or bottling plant. However, I am included among those who enjoy their dram from time to time. All of us in Scotland and in the United Kingdom have a clear responsibility to see that this most important product from Scotland continues to develop in the most favourable possible way.

We can discuss the issue under the title of the three Es —employment, exports and the Exchequer. As regards employment, all of us, particularly those who have pressed for rural development over many years, appreciate the great importance of the distilleries throughout Scotland, especially in the north and the islands where alternative employment is scarce. The distilleries have been the focal point, and we must do everything possible to ensure that they have every opportunity to develop and increase

employment, which we know in recent years has been falling, because the distilleries have had to close. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North was able to highlight the important fact that, whatever the Bill does, it certainly will not affect the distinctive taste of the different blends and malts that come from Scotland, because that is one of the most attractive aspects of whisky.

The second E—exports—has an importance that is clear to all of us. Without the export of Scotch whisky, our balance of payments would have a sad look to it.

The third E—the Exchequer—concerns the important issue of the duty that is payable and all the complicated formulae that accompany it. I am glad that the Chancellor did not increase the duty or even deal with an ad valorem increase last year. That was certainly of great value to the Scotch whisky industry, but it is in no way to underestimate the other aspects in which the industry is interested, such as stock relief, and so on. The Scotch Whisky Association has effectively made the case each year to successive Chancellors, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has a good case for continuing his decision of last year not to increase duty. Such an increase would be counter-productive if it reduced exports, which are so vital to this country. Duty must be seen in the light of exports, because home consumption is very important, too.

The Bill, which my hon. Friend presented so excellently to the House, does not require a great deal of additional explanation from those of us who are privileged to be its sponsors. It is right that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should make regulations defining Scotch whisky generally and regulating the methods of distilling and sale, always with the important proviso that we have already mentioned today—that the distinctive blends and malts that come from Scotland must be in no way affected.

It is right that we should be able to strengthen our position in world markets. I have already mentioned the importance of resolving the Japanese question, which is now looking much more favourable in terms of import duties. The Bill will also enable Ministers, with the advice of the Scotch Whisky Association—one of the most effective trade associations in this country—to make regulations and definitions for this country and to standards that will help our position in the EEC.

Part of the Bill covers the issue of the strength of whisky, which will be regulated after full discussions. It is important to have a minimum standard. When a person buys a whisky, he expects it to be of a certain strength. We have already discussed taste. If he wants to dilute his whisky with water, so be it. That should not be done for him in the bottle beforehand. That matter should be clarified, and the approach of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North will, I hope, be accepted by my hon. Friend the Minister later, because it will be beneficial to the future production and sale of whisky in this country.

As with so many other foods and drinks, it is absolutely right that we should examine carefully what we are putting on sale in the shops. In no way must we ever allow the quality and standard of Scotch whisky to deteriorate. My hon. Friend was wise to bring in the Bill. I know that it is welcomed by the Scotch Whisky Association and many companies and distilleries thoughout Scotland, and I join many other hon. Members in wishing it well and a speedy passage into law.

10.17 am

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): My hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who is a sponsor of the Bill, renders his apologies to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) for his absence due to other commitments, and I am here to speak on his behalf.

It is not often that the hon. Member for Tayside, North and I agree on something, but today there is cross-party agreement on this major issue. As the hon. Gentleman quoted our national bard in his opening remarks, he will forgive me one brief nationalist point. Regularly, at Burns' suppers and on St. Andrew's day, we use the toast:

"Freedom and Whisky gan thegither!"

We are discussing an industry which is vital to Scotland and the United Kingdom economy, as has already been said by several hon. Members. This is not an occasion for raising some of the other issues that affect the industry, but are not touched on in the Bill, such as what has happened to the revenue assistance for distilleries, or the taxation system in general. We must examine the Bill and what it can do for a vital industry.

We see the Scotch whisky industry not only as a source of wealth creation, but as a symbolic part of our heritage in Scotland. Many people immediately associate Scotland with whisky, and we want the product to be preserved and to keep its quality and standards in high esteem throughout the world.

I plead a special constituency interest. I am glad that I am speaking before what the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has called the "liquid dungeons" open, because I wish to refer to the distilleries in my constituency of Moray and after I have read out the names of the distilleries hon. Members might be tempted to go and taste this golden product. It is worth remembering that 60 of Scotland's 110 malt whiskies come from the Grampian region, and many of them are used for blending with grain whiskies from elsewhere in Scotland.

The distilleries in the Moray constituency are the Aberlour-Glenlivet, Miltonduff-Glenlivet, Dufftown-Glenlivet, Inchgower, Pittyvaich-Glenlivet, Strathisla, which produces "100 Pipers", The Glenlivet, Benriach, Caperdonich, Glen Grant, Longmorn, Glen Moray-Glenlivet, Glen Spey, Glenfarclas, Glenfiddich, Balvenie, Glenrothes, Tamdhu-Glenlivet, Auchroisk, Knockando, Strathmill, Mulben and Macallan.

Scottish Malt Distillers Ltd. is based in Elgin in my constituency and has overall responsibility for Aultmore, Benrinnes, Cardhu, Cragganmore, Craigellachie, Dailuaine, Glendullan, Glen Elgin, Glenlossie, Linkwood, Mortlach, Glenburgie-Glenlivet, Tamnavulin-Glenlivet and the Tomintoul-Glenlivet distilleries. From that list hon. Members will see that I have a very special interest in the Bill.

Not all those distilleries are currently in production. Some have been mothballed over the years and it is our firm hope in Moray that all our Speyside malts will again go into production in the next few years. It is fair to emphasise that the industry is not a major direct employer in the area, because the distilling process is not labour-intensive. That is because of the developments that have taken place in the industry. However, it is a major indirect employer in my constituency. We have grain production for the maltings and, of course, for the whisky itself. There

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

is also employment in the transportation, bottling, packaging and marketing of the product and it is vital to our tourist industry in Speyside.

I hope that many hon. Members will take the opportunity to visit Speyside and follow the whisky trails. Perhaps in each distillery they will be offered a sample of our wonderful product. The industry is vital to all the ancillary industries that I have mentioned and is, therefore, of great significance in my area. It would be helpful to the House if I read out one or two comments that have been sent to me about the Bill by some members of the industry in my constituency. A letter from Scottish Malt Distillers Ltd. says:

"I hope that you will give this your full support as the introduction of the proposed E.C. legislation would lead to a more lax Definition of Scotch Whisky, therefore damaging our industry."

A letter from Chivas Brothers Ltd., says:

"The premium aspect of Scotch Whisky is quietly being eroded and this must be stopped."

The director of the company says that he is also its technical director and has 25 years' experience in the industry and is involved in the various stages of the technical definition of whisky. He says that it is important to support the definition of 40 per cent. v/v. A letter from the Grant distillery at Glenfarclas, Ballindalloch, says:

"As an independent distilling company we believe that this Bill is most important to protect the good name of Scotch Whisky, not just in the U.K. but also overseas, where unfortunately there seems to be more and more bottles of 'Scotch Whisky' appearing at ridiculously low strengths, and of dubious quality which are giving the industry a bad image."

Those few comments from some of the producers in my area emphasise the importance of the Bill which I hope will have the full support of the House.

It does not seem long ago that we had a dispute with the EC about the definition of the water that we were using in Scotch whisky. There was a long wrangle in the European Parliament and the Commission about whether the purity of Scottish water was suitable for including in this product. Fortunately, we won that battle, because the burns and the streams of the Speyside valley and the other valleys in the Scottish highlands and islands give this wonderful product its distinctive nature. We must constantly safeguard our industry against legislation emanating from other places which could destroy its image and purity.

The Bill is important to an industry which has gone through a traumatic phase. There is no doubt that the takeover bids by Guinness, the insider dealing and Department of Trade and Industry inquiries have undermined the general confidence of Scotland's whisky industry. Although the Bill deals only with smaller aspects of the industry, it will give the industry a foothold to start rebuilding the confidence that is essential to ensure progress in revitalising the industry and eradicating the slightly tarnished image that it has had in the past few years. I am happy to give my full support to the Bill.

10.24 am

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on being successful in the ballot and on his acumen in choosing this subject for debate. I can think of no better purpose than the one that he is pursuing, because it will put right many things that are wrong in the important product of Scotch whisky.

I hope that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) will forgive me if I do not follow her because she has great expertise and I should be lost in trying to emulate her speech. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) spoke about what are called low-strength whiskies which have on the label the words "low strength". I think he said that anything below 40 per cent. should be marked as low strength. The words he used were a bit strong, because he said that a product below 40 per cent. proof was adulterated. It is surely strange to say that whisky that is marked as 40 per cent. alcohol and 60 per cent. water is satisfactory, while ruling out as adulterated a product of which the water content is 61 per cent. and the alcohol content 39 per cent. I have received representations from the Co-operative Society in Leicester about some successful brands that the hon. Member for Clackmannan would call adulterated.

All hon. Members recognise the importance of Scotch whisky to our export trade. I think that it exceeds the export value of any other single manufactured product in Britain. It is vital not just to Scotland, but to Scotland's well-being. Sometimes Scotland is thought by many people to be a burdensome responsibility for the rest of the United Kingdom. However, I can assure hon. Members that the Chancellor of the Exchequer greatly welcomes the fantastic contributon that the duty on Scotch whisky makes to his Budget. As I say, it plays an important part in our export trade.

Clause 3 enters into certain details. In line 35 it refers to the need for wooden casks. Details of that sort, the length of time for which whisky should be matured—three years in wooden casks—and the exact capacity of the casks are writing into stone factors that can change fairly rapidly. I mention that because for some years I worked in a brewery. Only 30 years ago the use of anything other than wooden casks in a brewery was unthinkable. I am not a beer connoisseur, although I know that many hon. Members are, but 30 years ago such a connoisseur would have said that beer could not be produced unless it was fermented in wood.

I shall not mention the brewery in which I used to work, but only a year or so ago in that brewery there was not a wooden cask in sight. The whole process is now entirely mechanised and no manpower is visible. However, the brewery's sales have increased substantially, with no loss of quality.

Mr. O'Neill: I think that the hon. Gentleman is confusing two different products. The point of modern brewing is for the beer to be in the casks for as short a time as possible; therefore, it does not matter what kind of cask is used. It is more a matter of convenience. Whisky, however, matures in the cask, and there is an interaction between the spirit and the wood. The casks are sherry casks, which are treated so that they give Scotch its particular flavour. In this instance, beer and whisky are incompatible. The definition is necessary to give the product the consistency that lies at the heart of the Bill's purpose.

Sir John Farr: I bow to the superior knowledge of the hon. Member for Clackmannan, who earlier made such an interesting and informative speech. All I can say is that

such matters change. In some continental countries, such as France, it used to be thought that the best brandies and wines could not be produced in anything other than an ancient, well-matured wooden cask. However, vineyards are now producing wines in containers that would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

Often, the ancient casks to which the hon. Gentleman referred, which are imported for the purpose, impart a favourable flavour to the final product. On the other hand, many modern materials are available that provide the same sort of restful quality, but impart no flavour whatever. I dare say that some parts of the Continent are already changing to such methods.

It seems a bit risky to write the following three requirements into the Bill. Besides the requirement for wooden casks, clause 3(1)*(b)* stipulates a maturing period of at least three years. Surely that period could change well within our lifetime. It also requires a capacity not exceeding 700 litres a day. That capacity has customarily been used—I suppose that it is about 150 gallons—but, again, it could change in time.

Clause 2(1)*(b)* refers to an order which is to be made concerning consultation on the alcoholic strength of Scotch whisky. Before I can support the Bill, I should like an assurance that such consultations will be meaningful. I received a deputation from the Leicester Co-operative Wholesale Society a few days ago. Its members are concerned about what will happen to their excellent low-strength whiskies—that is, whiskies containing less than 40 per cent. alcohol—if an order is made that rules that any whisky whose alcoholic strength is below 40 per cent. is not Scotch whisky. The House will, I think, require an assurance from my hon. Friend that proper consultation will take place among all the interested parties—not simply the ancient Scotch distilleries described by the hon. Member for Moray, but some of the distilleries that produce low-strength whisky. I should like their views to be taken into account.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: It may be helpful if I make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that the distilleries themselves do not produce whisky with a low alcohol content; they produce at the same volume all the time. Low-strength whisky is whisky that has been watered down in a later process.

Sir John Farr: The hon. Lady's intervention shows again how valuable it is to have an expert in the House. I accept her explanation, and apologise to the House for my mistake. My point, however, is that those who produce and sell whisky regarded as below strength today should not be put out of business by an order that makes 40 per cent. the final figure.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North has been concerned about Euro-whisky. He explained very clearly that he intends to try to introduce legislation that will give a proper definition of Scotch whisky before an attempt is made in the EEC. I understand that the EEC is trying to define what it calls "spirituous beverages". The EEC's definition of whisky provides for the generic production of something called whisky which would permit the use of substances such as synthetic enzymes in the preparation of the spirit. Scotch whisky, as produced in Scotland, is not produced by such processes, and one of the main objects of clause 1 is to ensure that Euro-whisky cannot be produced in Scotland. No doubt the whole House will approve of that attempt.

I would not be so arrogant as to say that we have won over the EEC, but we are directing it on what the proper definition of Scotch whisky should be, and once the Bill goes into Committee, which it will do shortly, that will be the end of it. Nevertheless, I do not know how effective the Bill will be in a court in relation to European law.

Mr. Bill Walker: It will be much more effective to have legislation in place than not to have any legislation.

Sir John Farr: As I have said, there is no doubt that my hon. Friend's Bill will go through today. I cannot imagine that anyone will object to it. However, it is useless for us to consider that, simply because we give a proper definition of Scotch whisky, that will be the end of the matter.

As my hon. Friend the Minister will know, there is a drug called carbadox, which was banned in Britain because it could cause cancer in the rearing of pigs. On 17 June this year, *The Guardian* reported that the EEC had ruled that the drug must be put back on to the market:

"There will be no appeal and the Ministry of Agriculture admitted yesterday that it is powerless to prevent UK pig farmers from feeding the drug, known as carbadox, to their animals."

The drug was the subject of a study by United Kingdom Government scientists, who advised as long ago as 1985 that it should be banned because it was a "genotoxic carcinogen". *The Guardian* explained:

"Feed-mill and farm workers were most at risk because they handled large quantities of the drug and even minute amounts of cancer-causing agents present health risks."

The United Kingdom Government were taken to the European Court of Justice in March this year, where it was ruled that the drug must be used in Britain. Dr. Tim Lang, director of the London Food Commission—quoted in *The Guardian*—said:

"It is outrageous that a drug company can use its muscle in the EEC to overturn the British ban."

I am merely saying that with this background there is an interesting parallel to be drawn between the definitions of Scotch whisky and Euro-whisky.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): Much of what my hon. Friend says is correct, but much is a muddle. Carbadox has nothing to do with Scotch whisky. Scotch whisky is one of the purest of products and carbadox is a drug.

We have legislated to ensure that carbadox will be handled by workers in agriculture in a way that will be safer than hitherto. More especially, the containers that hold the product will be clearly, if not fiercely, labelled. I shall be surprised if anyone goes within 10 ft of such a container when he sees the labelling on it. Labelling is important also when dealing with Scotch whisky. That is why part of the debate has been directed to the strength of whisky. To muddle the two issues is mischievous.

Sir John Farr: I cannot describe my hon. Friend's contribution as being particularly helpful. I am not seeking to muddle the debate. My purpose is to make it clear that when we legislate in this place we often find that our legislation is overruled by the European Community. No one can argue with that. Indeed, the Community has recently overruled the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the use of carbadox, a dangerous product, which we shall now have to use. The Community may well overrule what we decide this morning by introducing to

[Sir John Farr]

member states its definition of Euro-whisky. I consider that to be a reasonable parallel, but I note that my hon. Friend the Minister shakes his head.

Another example is firearms legislation. A Bill is shortly to be presented to the House on firearms, and the Community is producing a ruling that will enable all EEC member countries to transmit weapons and ammunition freely around the Community. Our firearms legislation could be in the same position as our definition of Scotch whisky.

As I have told the House, I received a letter from Mr. Harvey of the Leicester Co-operative Society Ltd. It is dated 7 December. He states in his letter that he regards the Bill as a threat to lower-strength whisky, and refers to a recent article in *The Sunday Times*, in which reference was made to Highland Abbey. He writes:

"It is important to remember that the SWA"—

the Scotch Whisky Associaton—

"exclusively represents the interests of Scotch whisky producers, which are not necessarily the interests of our customers, the Scotch whisky drinkers."

Mr. Harvey is of the opinion—I believe it to be correct—that the SWA wants to outlaw whisky brands that are under 40 per cent. by volume. He claims that the SWA

"considers that anything less will undermine its members' businesses."

I support the view of the Leicester Co-operative Society Ltd. that the outlawing of lower-strength whisky would be damaging to its trade. Hon. Members may have seen an article in an issue of *Which?* on the examination of a number of various whiskies by independent analysts and customers. It is interesting to note that of the whiskies tasted, customer preference placed three Co-op brands in first, second and third positions. The whisky that took first position is called Heatherdale. Second place was taken by the Co-op's Arden House, a brand that the hon. Member for Clackmannan would describe as adulterated whisky as its strength is below 40 per cent. by volume. Third position was taken by the Co-op brand that is known as Majority. The brand that achieved fourth place was Safeway's five-year-old. It is apparent from the analysis in *Which?* and from *The Sunday Times* report that appeared not so long ago that there is a good deal of customer preference for Scotch whisky that has a lower alcoholic content than full-strength whisky.

Mr. Bill Walker: I understand my hon. Friend's concern about United Kingdom customers. If our only concern was for them, I think that his remarks would be pertinent and extremely relevant. However, I remind my hon. Friend that I have made it clear that over 85 per cent. of all Scotch is sold outside the United Kingdom. It is the protection of that export trade and what it contributes to "United Kingdom Ltd." that lies behind the Bill.

Sir John Farr: I agree with my hon. Friend. On the other hand, there is a school of thought that it would be helpful, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan has said, if low-quality whisky were not exported in bulk. If more bottling were done on site in Scotland, we might get rid of the problem of low-quality whisky being exported.

The Sunday Times article bore the heading,

"Weak whisky cuts no ice with Scots".

It referred to Highland Abbey, which has been well reviewed and received by a number of connoisseurs. Another article that appeared in *The Times* referred to an increase recently in what it described as "low-strength whisky sales". As Mr. Harvey wrote, there is no doubt that it is

"increasingly important in today's health-conscious society, where the emphasis is on lower alcohol drinks and healthy eating."

That is the background to his argument that the Co-op should be able to retail a lower-strength whisky. The letter continues:

"It also means we can offer a range of products at prices to meet the budgets of the majority of our customers."

The increase in the sales of lower-strength whiskies in recent months has been about 8 per cent., and there is no doubt that lower-strength whiskies have a corner of the market. My hon. Friend the Minister should take cognisance of that when the Bill is considered in Committee. There is no way in which lower-strength whiskies can be frozen out, as it were.

It has been said that if there is lower-strength whisky on the market, there will be those who will sell it as full-strength whisky. It is argued that it will be difficult for consumers to know whether it is low or full-strength. This may not be the appropriate time to talk about possible alterations to the Bill, but that problem could be overcome if all Scotch whisky, whether low-strength or not, were to bear a label containing the alcohol content under the brand name with the letters and figures of the alcohol content being at least 1 in high. With such labelling, customers could see for themselves the alcohol content of Highland Abbey or any other whisky. I understand that there is a requirement now for the label to contain the information that the brand is a lower-strength whisky. This information often appears in print of an insignificant size and type, however, and does not really catch the customer's eye, especially in a crowded bar where perhaps the staff are in a hurry. In these circumstances, the customer can be taken for a ride.

Once again, I wish to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North on what he seeks to do. I think that the Bill will be extremely helpful. The Scotch whisky industry is essential to Britain. We in England often say that we could get along without Scotland, but England certainly could not get along without Scotch whisky. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his initiative and on the ability that he has demonstrated in introducing the Bill.

10.49 am

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I offer my congratulations to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on introducing the Bill. There is considerable pressure on hon. Members who draw a high place in the ballot to take up various matters in a private Member's Bill that are currently of concern. The hon. Gentleman has done the United Kingdom a favour by introducing his Bill, and in doing so has advanced a strong argument for the preservation of part of Scotland's heritage. I am slightly worried that the hon. Gentleman is a non-drinker, but only because I am now his next-door neighbour in London. I was hoping that during the festivities we would extend our Scottish neighbourly custom of having a dram. I am sure—indeed, I know—that he keeps whisky in the house

Mr. Bill Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way—he is my hon. Friend, in many different ways. May I

assure him that I always have a stock of whisky at home and in my flat and that he is welcome to come any time and have some?

Mr. McKelvey: It is comforting to know that in sheer desperation I just have to knock down the bathroom wall to get to the necessary supply in an emergency.

We must consider the facts about Scotch whisky. It has been said that it is Scotland's most enduring natural asset, and long may it be so. I happen to think that it is also one of Scotland's most endearing natural assets. We should do everything in our power to protect both its reputation and the thousands of jobs which provide employment for our fellow Scots. Some 16,000 people are involved directly in manufacturing, distilling, blending and bottling of whisky and we can at least double that figure with all those involved indirectly in the whisky trade, whether in transport, selling or the other ancilliary aspects of distribution.

We cannot deny the tremendous achievements of Scotch whisky. It is with some sadness that I tell the House that I was terribly disappointed that only two weeks ago when the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in Scotland he described the Scots as uninventive. One of our famous inventions makes the Chancellor of the Exchequer more than £900 million a year in excise duty and VAT. As has already been said, Scotch whisky is Great Britain's greatest export earner. Despite recent claims that the computer industry has overtaken us, it was quickly pointed out that many of the computer parts were foreign-made. Our whisky is made in Scotland with Scottish products.

I do not want to reflect on some of the difficulties of the whisky industry, but in the early 1970s and certainly up to 1979 there was a serious hiccough in the sales of Scottish whisky. Because some whisky distillers and companies had not done sufficient market research on sales, they had excess whisky on their hands, so the prices had to be lowered. Many jobs were lost because distilleries had to be mothballed to deal with the problem of over-production. I am glad to say that since 1979 the trend has been reversed, and again we are taking our share of the world markets. The achievement of £1 billion in export earnings every year is, indeed, tremendous.

I must declare an interest because my constituency includes the Johnny Walker bottling and blending shop, which happens to be the biggest in Europe, if not in the world. It is our single biggest employer. Nine hundred people are involved in the bottling and blending shop and there is the further advantage that visitors who come to Kilmarnock are always made welcome. They are shown round and never depart without tasting or receiving a small gift of the product. If anybody wishes, for whatever reason, to visit Kilmarnock, he should not leave without visiting Johnny Walker's blending and bottling shop.

Because of the tremendous progress in mechanised blending, even if we were to increase our output, it would not necessarily mean more jobs. We are worried that, if there were a threat to the Scotch whisky industry, we could lose jobs, but if we underpin this legislation we shall at least establish these jobs for many years to come. Therefore, I strongly support the Bill.

Many things have been said about Scotch whisky. On St. Andrew's night I had the privilege to propose a toast to Scotland at the Kilmaurs bowling club. As there is little to be said about St. Andrew's, I spoke about our famous national spirit. In my research I found a small piece which is attributed to James Hogg, who was a bit of a poet and certainly a philosopher in the mid-eighteenth century, by Christopher North, whoever he was. It is entitled — I have taken some licence with the title — "The Real Scotch Whisky". If I lapse into the vernacular, the *Hansard* writers should not worry because I shall send them a copy. James Hogg said of the real Scotch whisky:

"Gie me the real Scotch, and I weel believe I could mak' drinking toddy oot o' sea-water. The human mind never tires o' this fine spirit any mair than o' caller air. If a body could just find oot the exac' proper proportion and quantity that ought to be drunk every day, and keep to that, I verily trow that he might leeve for ever, without dying at a', and that doctors and kirkyards would go oot o' fashion."

As I said in Kilmaurs two weeks ago, often those from outside Scotland think that we Scots indulge ourselves in the consumption of our famous golden spirit, without considering that we are patriots for mankind. We are trying to find the exact formula which will give us life for ever. Therefore, we should not look down on those patriots, either those who have passed into another world because they never found the exact formula or those great Scotsmen and women who at present are trying hard to find the secret formula.

One only has to look at this diagram of a bottle of Scotch whisky to see how important the issue is to the Exchequer. An ordinary bottle of whisky costs about £7·75, of which £5·74, or 74 per cent., is returned directly in VAT and excise duty to the coffers of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. That is an enormous tax on the consumer and one which I am sure the Exchequer finds valuable. The Chancellor has squeezed tax to the limit from the Scotch whisky industry. I plead with him in future, if possible, not only to hold tax at the present level, but to reduce it so that we can sell more.

Obviously, there is confusion about the strength of Scotch whisky. I am not saying what the minimum strength should be, but everyone in the industry should realise that, if we do not have a minimum level, the whole Scotch whisky industry is in danger. Even whisky producers that have a corner of the market—the group of people who sell what they call low-strength Scotch whisky—would be eliminated. That would happen if in future no minimum level was set, which would protect the production of Scotch whisky throughout.

That is not the major point of the Bill, although the low-strength producers claim it is. The strength of the Bill lies in the fact that we shall be able to arm our Ministers with enabling legislation, which will strengthen their hands——

11 am

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am reluctant to interrupt private Members' time, particularly the witty speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) — all the more appropriately, as it is exactly opening time.

I should like to know, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether you have received any representations from the Secretary of State for Social Services or any of his junior Ministers in response to the representations by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), seeking a statement from the Department on the news today that, on the instructions of the Prime Minister, messengers are being sent all around the country—all three countries—

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

to tell health authorities that they must become bad payers for the rest of the financial year, to eke out the meagre supply of funds that they have received.

It is a most important and indeed sickening development when the Prime Minister refuses to answer questions in the House on the Health Service, recites a lot of statistics and then furtively sends her officials round the country to tell health authorities that they must stop paying up and make themselves an even worse proposition for many small suppliers. We all know that the Health Service is a bad payer to most of its staff. Hitherto, it has never been a bad payer to its contractors——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. I can answer the hon. Gentleman in one word—no. No application has been received from any Minister for a statement today.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you guide us on how we can bring about a statement, perhaps at 2 pm today, in view of the fact that the House gave the Prime Minister an opportunity yesterday to make her feelings known on how the National Health Service might deal with its financial problems? In view of the inevitable widespread concern when people read in the newspapers today that the Prime Minister is telling the NHS to renege on its contractual agreements with its suppliers, instead of allowing the Government to do what most people would think right—to provide more——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that hon. Members are tending to use points of order to make political points, which is strictly out of order. I shall be strict on that. I have made the situation known. No application has been received. I refer the Opposition Front Bench to the usual channels in relation to any statements in the House.

11.2 am

Mr. McKelvey: I was talking about the minimum strength of whisky and the need for future legislation to establish exactly what that minimum should be. It is evident from the Scotch Whisky Association literature that it would prefer the level to be set at 40 per cent., as it has been established in Scotland for many years by custom and practice. We shall have to see how that argument develops.

We must protect not only the reputation of Scotch whisky but the magic and mystery that we attach to its flavour and strength. One matter continues to concern me, and I have been quoted on it for many years. I deplore the transportation of bulk whisky into foreign parts. It is not simply our transporting bulk whisky that can be adulterated by adding water that concerns me, but when it is adulterated by some countries which add their own whisky blend they are giving that blend the respectability of Scotch whisky, which it does not deserve.

I recognise the argument of those who indulge in that practice, that jobs could be lost if it were ended. They may lose jobs in the short term, but in the long term we risk losing not only the reputation of our whisky but the jobs of all those who are now involved in that precious industry for Scotland.

I think that the whole House will congratulate the hon. Member for Tayside, North on his Bill. I honestly believe that no one who has the interests of either Scotland or the Scotch whisky industry at heart could contemplate any form of blockage on the Bill. To do so would be to play games with the livelihood of countless thousands of people in Scotland. Jobs are scarce enough in Scotland, and we should not want to jeopardise them in any way.

The modest cottage in which I live lies two miles downwind of the Johnny Walker distillery. The wind carries the marvellous scent of the whisky there when the blending process is taking place. I say this seriously, because some people would say that we should consider the health aspect, particularly in relation to the consumption of alcohol. The people in my village of Kilmaurs are rosy-cheeked. They are famous for the fact that they live for a long time. I think that that is partly due to the fact that they are breathing that marvellous additive that comes along the air tunnels from the whisky blending shop at Johnny Walker. Kilmaurs is considered locally as a health resort. The fact that the small village contains three pubs probably adds to that.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Tayside, North and am delighted to be a sponsor of his Bill. I, and I am sure the whole House, wish it every success.

11.8 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I am sure that the whole House will have enjoyed the speech that we have just heard by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), will admire the way in which the hon. Gentleman was able to put in a few commercials for a certain not unknown brand, and will envy his living circumstances.

I hope that the House will tolerate another contribution to the debate from England. My qualifications for taking part are, first, that before I entered the House I was very much involved in the export trade, selling whisky overseas, especially to Japan and Hong Kong. Secondly, I am parliamentary adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association, and I declare an interest accordingly.

The Scotch Whisky Association represents the vast bulk of the Scottish whisky industry which, as we have heard, sustains some 16,000 jobs directly, and many more indirectly. It produces over £1 billion annually in export earnings, a figure that is steadily increasing, and exports to some 190 overseas markets, despite various trade barriers erected in a number of countries, not least Japan. The industry very much welcomes the recent GATT decision about Japanese trade barriers and looks to Japan to implement the GATT ruling rapidly.

The industry produces some £900 million for the Treasury in duty and VAT. The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun drew attention to the fact that some 74 per cent. of the retail price of a bottle of Scotch whisky goes straight to the Treasury. This is a very discriminatory imposition. About an ounce of whisky contributes nearly 18p in duty to Her Majesty's Government. There is a similar amount of alcohol in 2 oz of sherry, which contributes only 12p. The alcoholic equivalent in wine bears a burden of 10p duty. Half a pint of beer, which is another alcoholic equivalent, carries a duty of 9·5p — as against 18p for whisky. This is a grossly unfair burden for the whisky industry to carry. It has one of the highest rates of duty throughout the Common Market.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, to whose contribution we look forward later in the debate, will

convey to the Chancellor of the Exchequer the industry's feeling of injustice about the duty that it pays. It also feels that corporation tax bears unfairly upon it because the industry does not enjoy any stock relief, although the law requires that the product must be matured for at least three years.

This is the background to the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I wonder whether nobility can go higher than for a teetotaller to introduce a Bill of this character, and all credit is due to my hon. Friend for doing so. I can confirm that the Scotch Whisky Association warmly welcomes the Bill and hopes that it can help to secure its passage through both Houses, as it will benefit the industry and the consumer.

Whisky is particularly in our minds at this time of year. There are few people with a harder task in this House than you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and your colleagues. We are looking forward to this time next week when we go into recess. I hope that you will have the opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, during the recess to put your feet up, relax and enjoy a glass or two of whisky. To do that, and perhaps to give one or two presents, you may be purchasing whisky in the next week or two. I do not know whether you buy it here in London or at home. You may care to go to a shop less than a half a mile away, where you will find that the standard brands are being sold at about £8·89 a bottle. You may do better in the suburbs or the provinces, but that does not alter the argument that I wish to produce from the figures.

The unsuspecting shopper may notice that, as against the standard brands at £8·89, there are on another shelf perhaps less well known labels offered at £7·99. A careful examination of the labels on those bottles will reveal that they contain only 70 cl of whisky, as against the standard brands which contain 75 cl. The sum of £7·99 for 70 cl is equivalent to £8·56 for 75 cl, which makes it rather less of a bargain than one might have thought at first. That problem will be met by the EEC regulations which were discussed in the House a few weeks ago in an attempt to obtain a standard size for whisky bottles.

That still leaves us with the problem of the difference in strengths. Everyone who has spoken in the debate—and, I suspect, everyone in the Chamber—is familiar with the process by which whisky is produced, but some of those people who take an interest in our proceedings may be less familiar. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), who has temporarily left the Chamber, has shown that he does not perhaps have the fullest knowledge of the process.

I warmly endorse the invitations extended by a couple of Opposition Members who have distilleries and bottling plants in their constituencies. Anybody who has the opportunity to do so should visit a distillery or a blending and bottling plant because it is important to understand that the blended whiskies which we are accustomed to drinking are the product of matured malt whiskies from various distilleries throughout Scotland—some of which have been listed this morning—and grain whiskies. It is the technique by which these whiskies are blended and the different types and proportion of malt used which produce the final product and account for the fact that there are so many different whiskies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said in his opening speech, there is not the slightest danger of uniformity. It is the delight of the industry that there are so many different whiskies. It is fascinating to go around a blending plant, to see the huge vats into which both malt and grain whiskies have been poured and to see them being mixed by mechanical means or by compressed air. If one climbs to the top of one of these vats, opens the little porthole and takes a sniff or two, I guarantee that it will clear any cold or other ailment from which one may suffer.

The product is put into casks, where it matures for three years. That is an important part of the blending and maturing process. After three years, and perhaps a good deal longer, the bottling process starts. However, I would never recommend anybody to take a glass of whisky straight from the cask because, if one tried to drink it, it would take the roof off the top of one's mouth, as it is almost pure alcohol. The next stage is to add water to reduce the alcohol content. It should be good Scottish water, not the London stuff which has been through umpteen kidneys beforehand. One does not need to be an expert to appreciate that the quantity of water added will determine the final alcohol content.

By tradition, content has been described in volume terms. The usual expression used nowadays is 40 per cent. alcohol by volume. That is the usual strength of most of the so-called standard brands. As the Scotch Whisky Association represents virtually all whiskies, I must be careful not to mention one whisky and omit another. The standard labels, marked as 40 per cent. alcohol, will be known to hon. Members. Some products on the market have been watered down rather more to give a lower alcohol figure.

The product which I mentioned earlier which is contained in a 70 cl bottle is not such good value if one works out what it would cost if it were a 75 cl bottle. If one studies the label carefully, one will see that it is a 30 per cent. whisky. If we take out our calculators, as the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) suggested, we find that the 75 cl bottle of 30 per cent. whisky costs £8·56, yet if it were 40 per cent. whisky it would cost about £11 a bottle; so the 30 per cent. whisky is not quite the good value which it appeared at first.

We do not propose a standard strength, but it is important to have a minimum strength, and that is precisely what the Bill would allow. It does not specify the strength, but is an enabling Bill which will allow the Minister to specify a minimum strength that will be agreed by the industry. The consumer will know exactly where he stands and people will not be misled about what they are buying. I cannot underrate the importance of the strength aspect. On the continent, whisky is sold at 30 per cent. or even 25 per cent. by volume, which must lower the standing of Scotch whisky in the market and harm it nationally and internationally. Whatever minimum strength is agreed, it does not follow that all producers will conform to that figure. Some will, but others may prefer to promote a prestige product that is above the minimum strength.

It should be made clear — my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough has misunderstood this—that almost anyone can produce whisky. Any of us could go out and buy grain whisky and some fillings from a malt distillery and produce our own Scotch whisky. I am sorry that my hon. Friend is not here. "Farr's Finest" has a certain ring to it.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sims: "Foulkes's Finest" would be an alternative.

Mr. Foulkes: That is not why I wanted the hon. Gentleman to give way. How does he reconcile what he is saying with the definition of whisky in the Finance Act 1969, which states that

"the expression 'Scotch whisky' shall mean whisky which has been distilled in Scotland"

and says that it must be matured for three years in casks in warehouses.

Mr. Sims: I said that anyone is at liberty to blend and bottle his own whisky under his own label, but it must comply with all the requirements. If my hon. Friend wanted to produce "Farr's Finest", he would have to do it in Scotland, just as you would, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you wished to produce "Boothroyd's Best".

That is an especially important aspect of the Bill, which I warmly welcome for the reasons that I have given. The other provisions allow for a clear definition of Scotch whisky and ensure that only that product can be produced in Scotland. EEC regulations will be introduced to define whisky, but it will be different from Scotch whisky. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North talked about Euro-whisky. Whatever its name, others may wish to produce it. Indeed, some products which are described as whisky are already produced and available on the continent. The important thing is that Euro-whisky should not be produced in Scotland. There could be much confusion between Scotch whisky and whisky produced in Scotland, and it would undermine the standing of Scotch whisky.

The Bill is good for the Scotch whisky industry and for Scotland. It is good for the United Kingdom because of the enormous export earnings produced by Scotch whisky. It is good for the consumer. On all those grounds. I urge the House to give it a Second Reading.

11.24 am

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): Like other Opposition Members, I do not suppose that I will often support a measure presented by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), but I am happy to support this Bill because, as we have heard many times today, it is of paramount importance to the Scottish whisky industry, especially in terms of employment and the export market.

Whisky is a matured, high-quality spirit and the success that it has achieved overseas has been due to its image, reputation and quality. Its image and reputation should not be put at risk. Indeed, they should be strengthened, and that is what we are about to do with the Bill. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North said, we need a definition that reflects more precisely current practice in the industry. It is especially important to allow no room for the argument that Scotch is a type of whisky that can be produced anywhere. Its acceptance as a generic or semi-generic description would lead to the emergence of peculiar brands. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Albanian whisky. We cannot allow inferior products to be sold on the back of the reputation that Scotch whisky has built up over many years. It is not anti-EEC to try to define Scotch whisky. We must try to protect our national product.

Whisky is Scotland's No. 1 value-added export and the industry provides direct employment for many people, not least in my constituency. The economic viability of Islay and Jura would be destroyed if the long-term future of the industry was threatened. Campbeltown is an area of high unemployment and derives great benefits from its distillery. There is a significant spin-off in indirect employment, especially in the islands. On Islay, many people contract with the distilleries, and the ferry and air services are crucial. Five Islay distilleries provide housing for people in small communities. Draff, which is barley after normal malting, and cumins, which is the dry residue of barley after malting, provide local farmers with a high-protein cattle feed at a reasonable price. That helps them, because they need not import it, at high cost, on the ferry.

The distilleries are very much part of the life of the island. They provide amenities such as reception centres for the local people. Bowmore distillery has agreed to allow a surplus warehouse to be converted into the longed-for swimming pool and has said that the pool may be heated by the wastage heat from the distillery. That is good conservation.

As we have said already, the distilleries and their products make an invaluable contribution to tourism. The names of the distilleries are poetry. The names of the distilleries in Islay are sheer magic — Bruichladdich, Bunnahabhain, Coal Ila, Lagavulin and Laphroaig. I will help the *Official Report* with the names. The whisky is made there from beautiful, crystal-clear water, from the barley and from the peat that is burned at a special temperature which we will not reveal.

Of course, the Bill was not brought to the House to encourage overindulgence. Taken in moderation, as we have already heard, the spirit lives up to the real name for whisky—Uisge beatha—which means the water of life. Whisky is the water of life. It is used medicinally, not just as a sedative but as a vaso-dilator. As we heard from the hon. Member for Tayside, North, whisky has been immortalised in poetry by our national bard, and we have waxed lyrical about it today, perhaps because it is Friday and the weekend.

Yesterday I spoke about the Bill to someone in Islay who said that when a shopkeeper in Bulmore stands in front of his shop and sees smoke rising from the distillery, he knows that that means a good week for trade. If, God forbid, he saw no smoke for a long time, he would think about closing down. Whisky has been immortalised in poetry. The much-loved, late Angus MacIntyre of the island of Mull described in a poem the 1941 sinking of a ship called "The Politician", with a huge cargo of whisky aboard, which foundered off the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides. It was also immortalised by Sir Compton Mackenzie in his famous "Whisky Galore".

I will not read all of the poem now—perhaps I will give a good rendering of "The Politician" another day—but the last verse—remember that the name of the ship was "The Politician"—reads:

"A Slainte"

—that means good health in Gaelic—

"now for Churchill,
His name I proudly call,
But the Barra politician
Is the greatest of them all."

I, too, give my wholehearted support to the Bill.

11.33 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): We have something of a travelling circus, but I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie). The hon. Lady and the Minister of State, Scottish

Office were in my constituency on Tuesday at the very pleasant ceremony of the launching of the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry The Isle of Mull.

First, I wish to offer my compliments to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on his fine Bill. The Bill, if it is passed, will give a solid measure of protection to an important Scottish product and industry. Every speaker today has emphasised the industry's importance to Scotland. At the same time, I have a good deal of sympathy with some of the comments and observations recently voiced by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), and I sincerely hope that he manages to catch your eye today, Madam Deputy Speaker. I also hope—he may not thank me for this—that my hon. Friend will be selected to serve on the Committee. Where balance and analysis are concerned, he will play an important role of scrutineer and interlocutor or, perhaps some would say, inquisitor.

Mr. McKelvey: Or troublemaker.

Dr. Godman: Or troublemaker.

All hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have emphasised the importance of the whisky industry. Naturally, that view is shared by those who work in the industry and its ancillary industries. For example, distillers insist that they buy their barley from local sources, and that is the same for many other products used in the industry.

In common with other hon. Members, I have received a memorandum from the general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, Mr. Campbell Christie, in which he says:

"I am sure I do not need to spell out to you the importance of the whisky industry to Scotland, both in terms of direct employment and the vital export revenues which the industry brings us. You will also be aware that over the past few years the industry has gone through something of a recession, from which it is only now slowly beginning to recover."

He goes on to offer a comment, with which I am sure we all agree:

"What is completely distinctive about Scotch whisky is its quality."

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), in a debate last year, gave us a very fine definition of the product. He said:

"Pure, good quality Scotch whisky can only be made in the right circumstances, in the right place—in Scotland."—[*Official Report*, 3 February 1986; Vol. 109, c. 122.]

However, as the hon. Member for Tayside, North rightly sets out in the Bill, we need a much stronger definition. The hon. Member for Gordon welcomed the promise made by Guinness plc to establish its headquarters in Scotland. I know that the hon. Gentleman has strong views on that issue. When he spoke about that promise, he spoke in good faith. Unfortunately, Guinness subsequently responded with what the French call "mauvais foi", which, in plain English, we call bad faith. In my view, that company could repair to some extent its reputation in Scotland by taking a number of initiatives.

We know that the whisky industry, in order to survive, must export its product. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North said in his excellent opening speech, Scotch whisky is the most widely exported spirit in the world. That was confirmed in the recent Fraser of Allander report, which echoed what the hon. Gentleman said about the industry having an unmatched export record. Indeed, the Bill seeks, among other things, to sustain and increase that remarkable export performance. Guinness, as the largest exporter of Scotch whisky, should, in my view, send its products abroad by way of Scottish ports. It was the company's avowed intention to use Scottish ports where adequate services were available. The chairman of Guinness and others in the Scotch Whisky Association should know that we have first-class services and facilities at Grangemouth, Dundee, Leith and other ports. Front Bench discretion prevents me from mentioning one first-class port—the Greenock container terminal on the lower Clyde—which has an excellent work force and fine facilities. I say to the chairman of Guinness and others, "Honour that intention and you will redeem some respect for your company in Scotland."

The Bill will be subjected to close scrutiny in Committee, but I wish briefly to comment on its clauses now. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North said, clause 1 is all-important because of the proposed EEC definition of whisky. The distinction between the definitions is, and should be, profound, and both consumer and producer must be given that degree of protection. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, champagne has had a defensive ring around it in French law since 1934. I recall that champagne producers went to court in England a few years ago to defeat an invasion of so-called Spanish champagne—which some people say should be avoided. I shall not comment on that. I simply echo the comments of the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute about all things being "taken in moderation". After a fine meal, I recommend a malt rather than a continental drink such as cognac. I cannot recommend a brand, but malt is a finer way to end a meal than indulging in foreign drinks. There can be no objection within the EEC to our whisky being accorded the same legal status as champagne and cognac.

I think that I am right in saying that clause 2 causes my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley understandable concern.

Mr. Foulkes: I hope to catch the eye of Madam Deputy Speaker later, but I would like to explain now that my concern is not that there should be a minimum—we all agree on that—but at what level that minimum should be set. A number of producers, including Glen Catrine in my constituency, produce an excellent blend of whisky—that is the important point—at 37·2 per cent. That is why we are arguing the case. The Scotch Whisky Association is still maintaining that the minimum should be 40 per cent. That is the only point of debate, because we all agree that there should be a minumum to protect the good blended whisky made in Scotland from the poor imitations coming from other parts of the world.

Dr. Godman: I have a good deal of sympathy with my hon. Friend's comments. Perhaps he would care to buy me a wee dram of Glen Catrine after the debate. The setting of a minimum level of alcoholic strength may well have serious implications for those whom my hon. Friend represents so admirably in the House. I hope that the Minister will assure us that the Government will seriously and responsibly consult all interested parties before any decision is taken.

I wish to say only a brief word about clause 3, because I am anxious not to spend too much time at the Dispatch Box. We believe that in principle it makes good, sound sense.

[Dr. Godman]

The Bill reflects the serious concern that the hon. Member for Tayside, North has consistently shown for this important Scottish product and industry. I need hardly say to him that that watchful concern is shared by Opposition Members. I commend him on his Bill and wish it well.

11.43 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I wish to join in the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on bringing the Bill to the House and underlining the importance of the Scotch whisky industry. By doing so he has also initiated a great many after-dinner speeches on this Friday morning, and they have been very welcome.

I have no constituency interest to declare, other than that in Todmorden, Hebden Bridge — *[Interruption.]* Everyone else has mentioned just about every village in his or her constituency, so I will. In Todmorden, Hebden Bridge, Ripponden, Greetland, Norland, Brighouse and Rastrick, we all drink and appreciate whisky. That is why we are determined not to let Scotland slip away from the United Kingdom. We want to keep her firmly bound to us. We cannot do without either Scotland or its whisky.

Scotch whisky is probably the best known spirit in the world, and for good reason. The spirit is produced from cereals, and it can be made in many countries. However, there is only one Scotch whisky, and it is universally acknowledged to be the market leader. Some foreigners may wonder why that is so. I shall not dwell on the special characteristics of spring water, because the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) lyricised about that. There are many hon. Members better placed than I to do that. Nor will I hold forth on the enormous variety of shapes of pot stills and the subtle differences in the malt whiskies that were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) — who has probably popped off to investigate some to them.

However, I will say that, while the industry is endowed with those natural and traditional characteristics, it is also extremely diligent in ensuring that the production techniques are faithfully preserved and that short cuts that might damage quality and lead to short-term profit are avoided. Of course, that does not mean that the industry is unwilling to move with the times—far from it. It has shown considerable marketing flair and has produced a wide variety of blends at varying price levels. In recent years, it has successfully developed and extended the luxury end of the market with single malts that are proving so popular with consumers worldwide. The quality that derives from the production and maturation techniques has been consistently maintained and never compromised.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister also has responsibility for Wales. Although I agree with everything that he said in praise of Scotch whisky, will he also acknowledge that there is a growing Welsh whisky industry and that, provided that it stays in Wales, it poses no threat to the Scotch whisky producers of Scotland?

Mr. Thompson: I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, is here. He will have heard all the points made outwith the Bill this morning, which were genuinely concerned with specific Scottish issues. He will deal with those. It would be wrong of me to go down the Welsh path without having a Welsh colleague by my side to listen to the debate.

Scotch is sold in more than 190 markets and brings great export revenue. I was glad that the hon. Member for Moray did not tax me on how and where we are spending that revenue. Indeed, revenue used to be collected by Rabbie Burns himself—as I am reliably informed by my hon. Friend the Minister sitting next to me, although I am not sure whether he is actually on my left or my right. There is one major problem in producing virtually any product that is regarded as the best of its kind, and Scotch is no exception. It is the great temptation for others to counterfeit it and pass off different and inferior whiskies as Scotch whisky.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned the champagne battle. Although Spanish champagne is, of course, different from French champagne, it is quite nice and quite acceptable in its place —although not as acceptable as Scotch at any time.

The industry spends substantial sums each year identifying counterfeit practices throughout the world and seeking legal retribution in foreign courts. It does that to protect the good name of Scotch, on which the export success of the product so critically depends. The main purpose of the Bill is to support and underpin — the important word used by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) in his witty and wide-ranging speech—that effort.

Clause 1 of the Bill restricts the production of whisky in Scotland to Scotch whisky. I make no apology for repeating that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North explained, the industry seeks that restriction because it foresees a real danger of lower quality whiskies conforming to the Euro-definition being produced in Scotland when the EC regulation defining spirit drinks is adopted. There is no doubt that such products legally marketed throughout the world as "whisky—produce of Scotland" would be bound to be confused with genuine Scotch and thus erode the quality image of Scotch on which its export success is built.

While recognising the genuine concerns, the Government would have preferred a rather less protectionist solution. One solution might have been to require better labelling, but this would have covered only the sales on the domestic market, leaving the major export market, which accounts for 80 per cent. of Scotch production, wholly unprotected.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I have tried to hear most of the speeches so far, although I apologise to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) for being absent for the earlier part of his speech. Could the Minister be a little more forthcoming about the Government's position on standard of strengths? Does it assist the Government to have whiskies marketed in the United Kingdom under the 40 per cent. proof mark? Would it not be better for the Government to state clearly that 40 per cent. is their bargaining position from which they will not be deflected?

Mr. Thompson: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern, but if he will be patient I am coming to that question in a sentence or two.

We have also had to recognise that there is much competition between distillers and brands in the industry. The Government concluded that the only practical way to safeguard against the dangers that are foreseen is that proposed in clause 1.

The other main provision of the Bill is clause 2. The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) clearly expressed the fears of those who are worried about minimum strength and weaker whiskies and the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—I hope that he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker—expressed a slightly different point of view. Clause 2 contains an enabling power to define Scotch whisky, and the definition will include a minimum alcoholic strength at the point of sale.

The minimum strength provision causes some concern among those who bottle Scotch whisky at strengths below the traditional 40 per cent. In answer to those concerns, let me make a number of points. First, the Bill does not specify a minimum strength, which is, in any case, currently under discussion with the EEC for all spirit drinks. The hon. Member for Clackmannan urged the EC to move a little quicker so that we may have that definition.

Secondly, there is general agreement among all the interests on the need to specify minimum strength at a level to be determined; everybody wants that nailed down. Thirdly, I assure the House that if the Bill is enacted the Government will wish to consult all those interested before moving to regulations.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister specify that, if the Bill is enacted—I hope that he will still be the Minister then—the Association of Low Strength Whisky Producers will be consulted? Does he still have an open mind about what the minimum strength might be?

Mr. Thompson: It is an extreme form of flattery for an Opposition Member to hope that a Minister will continue to be a Minister. I had already made up my mind that I would consult widely, and those consulted will include the gentlemen to whom the hon. Gentleman refers. I have spoken to them before and I recognise their genuine fears. However, we must protect Scotch whisky; that is why the Government have decided to support the Bill.

Mr. O'Neill: The European directive will be in the context of an alcohol limit being set for a variety of drinks in the Community. Will the Minister bear in mind that the figures 35 and 37 are being bandied about for drinks emanating from other parts of the Community where that is the traditional strength? As the Minister said, 40 per cent. is the traditional strength of Scotch, and it would be wrong to set a figure that disregarded the normal practice of each country.

Mr. Thompson: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that does not come within the scope of the Bill. However, I shall bear in mind exactly what he said in making an order specifying minimum strength.

The Government accept the need for an enabling power. The clause also provides for Ministers to define Scotch whisky. This would replace the existing definition in the Finance Act 1969. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute was right to say that the definition must be clearly understood. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North explained, the aim is to lay down a more precise definition of exisiting practice. I assure the House that the Government will consult all interested parties before making an order. Hon. Members will note that it is intended that the enforcement of the measures should be through civil sanctions rather than the criminal law. That is thought to be more appropriate for the protection of the industry's interest.

I praise the Scotch whisky industry's initiative and energy in defending its interests world wide, as my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries and Tayside, North explained. I thank them again. This has been to the benefit of the whole United Kingdom economy and not just the Scottish economy—in terms of exports, excise revenue and employment. The industry has good reason to be proud of its input to the EC's case to GATT on the liberalisation of the Japanese spirit market. The Government have lent their full support to this objective and, following the conclusions of the GATT panel, we will be looking to Japan to implement the panel's report in the near future.

Consistent with our overall support for the industry's exports, the Government will support the Bill, which we view as a practical measure that should help to ensure the future prosperity of the industry in Scotland.

11.58 am

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I am sure that on this occasion my constituents will forgive me for being on the same side as the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). There is an exception to every rule, and this is, I hope, an unforgettable exception.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for referring to the fact that I came down to London overnight. I had a pressing constituency engagement yesterday but I came down overnight by train because the Bill is fundamental to my constituency and to the whisky industry in Scotland. The importance of the whisky industry for direct employment in Scotland and in earning valuable export revenues cannot be underestimated. Two thousand individuals in my constituency are directly involved in the whisky industry. I stand to be contradicted, but I do not think that any other hon. Member has more constituency interest in Scotch than I have. I shall not echo the poetic words of the hon. Member for Tayside, North. Is he the 20th-century bard or a pale imitation of William McGonagall? I leave hon. Members to decide that question.

During the recess, I visited many distilleries and bottling plants in my constituency. The overriding impression that I gained from such visits was of the sustained co-operation between management, workers and unions, to the maximum benefit of the entire industry. Thare are two major employers in my constituency. One of them is the IDV Company, whose plant is at Strathlevin bonded warehouses, and the other is Allied-Lyons, with its subsidiary, Hiram Walkers. I shall refer to Hiram Walkers because I visited that plant most recently.

As most of us know, Hiram Walkers produces Ballantyne's whisky, which has a unique worldwide reputation. During my visit to the plant, I spoke to management and unions and also examined the company's industrial relations record over the previous 10 years—a record which bears examination from any quarter. It was achieved by the direct involvement of workers and unions in the company's affairs. That is to be seen and recorded in terms of the Scotch whisky industry. Hon. Members should not take my word alone for that fact. This week,

[Mr. John McFall]

I engaged in conversation with many individuals, such as the managing director of Hiram Walkers in Dumbarton, Mr. Cunningham, the convenor of shop stewards, Mr. William Moffat, and also the regional organiser of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union in Scotland, Mr. Jim Morrell. They told me that there is full co-operation in the industry. That is why the industry is successful and has ridden through the recession of the previous few years. It is essential to recognise that union participation in the industry is important. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North can join with me along the way in regard to the Scotch Whisky Bill, I ask that he join me in underlining the fact that direct union involvement and participation in the industry is essential.

Mr. Bill Walker: I hope that I made it quite clear that the performance of the whisky industry was the direct result of co-operation between workers and managers. If I failed to do that, I have no hesitation in saying that it is an example to the rest of Scotland.

Mr. McFall: We all know that the trade is under threat as never before. There is competition from a wide range of drinks, especially wines and light spirits. We do not want others to sell inferior products on the back of the reputation of Scotch whisky. That message must go out loud and clear.

With the legislation, we want to demolish the argument that Scotch whisky can be produced anywhere as a Scotch-type whisky. That is not and cannot be allowed to be the case. Scotch whisky is essentially geographical in the same way as cognac and champagne in France. We look for equivalent legislation to protect our basic industry.

The prohibition of production in Scotland of whisky other than Scotch whisky cannot be over-emphasised. For generations, Scotch whisky has enjoyed a unique status throughout the world. It has been marketed to produce an image—for example, water being poured through peat bogs to give Scotch whisky a special, peculiarly Scottish quality. I refer also to the maturing process. Whisky is stored in special kegs for years. That has helped to create an almost mythical quality about the drink.

In supporting the Bill, I suggest that we shall help to preserve the purity of Scotch whisky by providing a legal definition for the spirit. We shall sustain the reputation of the image, sales, and—I declare a constituency interest—a great many jobs in Dumbarton. Like other hon. Members, I congratulate the hon. Member for Tayside, North on the prescience that he showed in introducing the Bill. I wish him well.

12.4 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I am very grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to take part in this important debate. The importance of the debate is reflected in the number of Scottish Members who have taken the trouble to stay behind in Westminster today to lend their support to the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). I do not say that in a light fashion. Scottish Members in particular do not wish to stay in this place any longer than they absolutely have to. We have many important constituency interests with which we could deal in Scotland today. It shows the importance that we attach to the matter that we have forsaken such interests to stay here to take part in the debate.

The statistics of the Scotch whisky industry speak for themselves. There are 16,000 employees in 100 distilleries and associated blending and bottling plants. The industry is one of the most significant export earners of the United Kingdom. As many hon. Members have said, sales of Scotch whisky in 1985 were worth £1,000 million.

It is not just a matter of statistics. It is important also to recognise that, as North sea oil production decreases in significance, we shall need to fill the consequent gap in the balance of trade and the balance of payments. Scotch whisky has been making a growing contribution to our balance of payments over recent years, in spite of its own troubles, and it is vital that it continues to do so. We must never forget that Scotch whisky is Scotland's main export and it undoubtedly needs and deserves the protection that the Bill seeks to give it.

Many hon. Members have direct constituency interests in the further progress of the Bill. I am not least among them. In my constituency Stewart's Cream of the Barley has a major plant than turns out more than 1 million cases of whisky every year and employs more than 100 workers. It is the brand leader in Northern Ireland and is in the top six in Scotland. It is expanding its overseas markets in France, Canada, Norway, Italy, Japan and elsewhere. It is clearly in my constituency's interests that I should do what I can to protect jobs and the production of whisky in Dundee. It is equally in the interests of other hon. Members to pursue their constituencies' whisky-related interests. I hope that hon. Members who do not have a direct constituency interest — the Minister mentioned that he was one — will still realise the importance of supporting such a major Scottish industry. For example, employment in the whisky industry dwarfs that in the Scottish steel industry. We must not lose sight of that fact. The protection of the Scotch whisky industry is a matter of vital interest to Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole. I hope that all hon. Members will realise that fact and will see the significance of lending their support to ensure that the Bill makes progress.

The industry is confronted by a range of problems, many of which are beyond the scope of the Bill. Prominent among those problems is the growing competition from other drinks, containing more or less alcohol, which is allied to the problems of controlling the quality and protecting the image of whisky as a product on the world market. I think that everyone agrees that little if anything can or should be done in legislation to protect Scotch from fair competition.

We all recognise the market problems that affect Scotch whisky. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, as sales grew, apparently without end, there was undoubtedly complacency among the management of the industry that that growth would continue indefinitely with little or no effort on its part. At that time, stocks continued to be laid down for sales that were anticipated as long as eight years in advance. Therefore, when growth stopped at the end of the 1970s, there was an accumulation of unsold stocks. That led to overproduction, which led to closures, layoffs and short-time working. The industry must sort out those problems itself, with the support of all those who are anxious to see its future guaranteed.

There is competition from wines and light spirits and even from the new American-based craze for coolers. That

is natural and acceptable, and requires a commercial response from the industry. Equally, the industry must come to terms with the increasing tendency among consumers to turn away from alcohol altogether. Actions to discourage drinking and driving and to encourage moderate, rather than excessive, consumption are not only realities to which the industry must face up, but are developments which all responsible opinion should welcome and support, as I am sure the Scottish whisky industry does.

We should be clear on what the Bill is not about. It is not about feather-bedding the industry and trying to protect it from fair competition or about turning a blind eye to the many serious social and health problems that affect the drinks industry. It is about seeking to protect the quality and image of one of our most important manufacturing products which creates desperately needed employment and wealth for this country.

The growth in sales of significantly under-strength whisky must be a matter of concern to everyone who wishes to support the integrity of our national product. Until recent years there was never any doubt about the quality of the product that was on offer when one paid for a bottle of whisky, although one might have moaned about the price. Indeed, I can remember my father singing, "Twelve and a tanner a bottle", at Hogmanay with tears running down his face. However, I must admit that I think that he was referring to an earlier time.

We may also moan about the measure in which the whisky is sold across the bar. However, I do not think that any of us doubted what we were getting when we paid our money in bars and off-licences. Sadly, that is no longer the case, especially overseas. I accept that the United Kingdom market is different from the overseas market. In France, for example, whisky products of well below even the 30 per cent. proof level are sold to consumers via supermarkets. We must confront that serious problem.

The drinks market is an increasingly competitive environment. New and cheaply produced drinks flood on to the market in competition with the more traditional products, such as Scotch whisky. On one level, it is obvious that the increased competition requires a commercial response from the industry. However, before any such commercial response can be made, it is important that Scotch whisky is clearly and specifically defined so that consumers know what it is and how it differs from other spirit-based drinks.

Without a proper definition of Scotch whisky, there is a danger that more whisky-type products will come on to the market, many of which will bear little or no resemblance to the real, traditional product, but will, nevertheless, be marketed under the brand name of whisky. As the hon. Member for Tayside, North pointed out, it may be marketed as "whisky, a product of Scotland". That would lead to unacceptable confusion in the market place, where consumers would not know what they were getting for their money. Serious damage would be done to the reputation and sales of Scotch whisky and that would directly affect our national interests.

Therefore, to defend itself, the industry requires a clear definition of Scotch whisky. I believe that all hon. Members who are present agree that an agreed minimum alcoholic strength limit is required to guard against the widely varying alcoholic strengths of other whisky-type products on the world market.

Mr. Corbett: I understand exactly what my hon. Friend is arguing in terms of minimum strength. However, will he bear in mind that if clearly labelled lower-strength whisky were available, it might make some contribution to dealing with the medical problems of alcohol abuse and misuse and especially that of under-age drinking?

Mr. McAllion: I am not certain that the labelling of under-strength whisky would make any contribution to the health and social problems that are associated with the drinks industry. I do not accept my hon. Friend's point. There is a need for an agreed minimum alcohol level for Scotch whisky. I understand the anxieties about the Scottish firms that produce whisky with proof levels slightly below the traditional 40 per cent. that is generally supported by the industry.

In common with most hon. Members, I support the retention of the 40 per cent. proof level. However, whether that level is 40 or 37·2 per cent. is not the issue—that can be solved at a later date. We must give Ministers the ability to establish a minimum alcoholic strength for Scotch whisky when they conclude their negotiations with the EEC. It is vital that when consumers buy Scotch whisky they can perceive that it is a product with a minimum alcoholic strength and that anything below that strength is not Scotch whisky.

I find myself in the strange situation of agreeing with the hon. Member for Tayside, North. Normally, there is little that he and I agree on. However, I am greatly encouraged that, for once, the hon. Gentleman has introduced legislation that supports the official policy of the Scottish Trades Union Congress. At its last conference, the STUC published a policy document:

"Scotland, A Land Fit for People"

which stressed the urgency of establishing a legal definition of Scotch whisky to protect its quality and, in particular, to protect it from the growth in the sales of under-strength whisky.

Sir John Farr: The hon. Gentleman said that he thought that a minimum level should be set and he referred to a possible level of 37·2 per cent. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that some successful low-alcoholic whiskies are below 35 per cent. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that he is right to say that the figure of 37·2 per cent. should be the recommended minimum?

Mr. McAllion: I understand that two proof levels of Scotch are on sale in the domestic market. The majority are 40 per cent. proof, and the 37·2 per cent. proof whiskies include High Commissioner and other brands. There are no other whiskies on sale in the domestic market and low-alcoholic whiskies are clearly labelled as such. The problem arises in the world market with Japanese and French products that have a 28 or 25 per cent. proof level. They sell under the label of whisky and we must combat that.

I am delighted that the hon. Member for Tayside, North, having won the ballot for private Members' Bills, has introduced a Bill which supports STUC policy. I am sure that that reflects his earlier career as a trade unionist in Dundee when he was on the buses.

The Chamber has become something like poets' corner today. We have had repeated references to the national poet, Rabbie Burns, the Ettrick poet James Hogg and the Barra poet—I assume that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) was referring to the island rather

[Mr. McAllion]

than the market place in Glasgow. However, I was offended when my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) made a comparison between Dundee's national poet, William McGonagall, and the hon. Member for Tayside, North. McGonagall would be deeply affronted to find himself compared to a Tory Member of Parliament. I know that McGonagall was a great supporter of our national drink. Had he been alive today and seen the threat faced by our national drink, he would have put pen to paper in support of protecting the quality and the image of Scotch whisky. I hope that we will all get behind McGonagall and support the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

12.18 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Earlier the Minister said that this has been an interesting and entertaining debate, and I believe that we must primarily thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) for that. In some ways, this has been a topsy-turvy "Alice Through the Looking-Glass" debate, because my hon. Friends have found themselves having to support the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). My hon. Friends' commitment to the Scotch whisky industry is shown by the fact that they are able to swallow not the whisky, but their temporary association with the hon. Gentleman.

The debate has been a bit topsy-turvy, because until now only the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) —a Conservative—has argued the case on behalf of the excellent Arden House whisky produced by the CWS. As some of my hon. Friends have pointed out, to have a teetotaler from Tayside quoting Burns in favour of whisky, instead of McGonagall, is also somewhat unusual. My concern and that of a number of my constituents and the Association of Low Strength Whisky Producers relates to clause 2(1)*(b)*. That is the only part that creates any problems.

Before I elaborate, I declare three interests, none of them pecuniary. First, I have the blending and bottling plant of Glen Catrine in my constituency. One of its directors, Graham Taylor, was part of a deputation that the Minister met earlier this week. All members of that deputation said that they had nothing but courtesy and kind consideration from the Minister. I am grateful to him for that. Glen Catrine produces High Commissioner whisky at 37·2 per cent proof. That is an excellent blend of whisky. The plant also produces another whisky called Glen Catrine at 40 per cent. proof. It is exactly the same, with a little less water added to it. The blend and the quality are the same—only the amounts of water and alcohol are different. One hundred and forty employees depend on Glen Catrine for their employment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun and the Minister, who repesents part of the area, know, the Cumnock and Sanquhar travel-to-work area has the highest level of unemployment in Scotland. So the jobs at Glen Catrine are vital to my constituents. I am sure that my hon. Friends understand that.

I am a Co-operative-sponsored Member of Parliament, but I receive no financial assistance from the society, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall), who is also sponsored by the Co-op, knows well. The Co-op produces Arden House, that excellent blend of whisky, at 37·2 per cent proof. While on the subject of the Co-op, I reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) that it is as concerned about consumerism and protecting the interests of the consumer now as when he first joined the Leith Provident, or read the messages there for his mother, before it was taken over by St. Cuthbert's some years ago. I hope he will accept that assurance from me.

I have another constituency interest. William Grant's blending, bottling and distillery firm is in my constituency. It is concerned about the Bill, as a member of the Scotch Whisky Association. It is one of the few family firms still producing Scotch whisky and still based in Scotland, unlike many of the others that have been referred to—Guinness, Allied-Lyons and all those multinational, huge conglomerates that are based outwith Scotland. Grant's headquarters and operations are in Scotland, and it is an excellent firm. I would not wish anything in the Bill to harm the interests of Grant's. It provides employment in the Girvan travel-to-work area, which has the third highest unemployment level in the whole of Scotland. I am equally concerned about that. I have to weigh in my mind, as I hope all hon. Members will weigh in their minds, the interests of the producers of 40 per cent. proof whisky as well as the interests of the 37·2 per cent. proof producers.

Mr. O'Neill: I am listening with interest to my hon. Friend, but I am still waiting for justification for the 2·8 per cent. reduction in alcohol content. As I understand it, the only justification is that it enables the product to be sold more cheaply in order to undercut the standard-rated whiskies.

Mr. Foulkes: I shall come to that point. My hon. Friend has sat through the whole of the debate so far and I shall be here until the end of it.

Having declared my three interests, I should like to ask one or two questions that I hope the hon. Member for Tayside, North will answer when he replies to the debate. What is the purpose of the Bill, except in relation to minimum strength? Questions have been asked and statements made about that, but there has been a lot of padding and paraphernalia. In an intervention I mentioned the current legislation about Scotch whisky. The hon. Member for Tayside, North will know that that legislation followed the report by a Royal Commission in 1909. The most recent legislation is contained in the Finance Act 1969. That makes quite clear the current legal definition of Scotch whisky. It says:

> "Spirits which have been distilled from a mash of cereals which have been:
>
> (i) saccharified by the diastase of malt contained therein with or without other natural diastases approved for the purpose by the Commissioners of Customs and Excise".

That control by Customs and Excise is important to maintain the quality of Scotch whisky. That control is the same in the Glen Catrine distillery as it is in the William Grant's and in all the other distilleries. The definition goes on:

> "(ii) fermented by the action of yeast; and
>
> (iii) distilled at less than 166·4 degrees proof in such a way that the distillate has an aroma and flavour derived from the materials used, and which have been matured in wooden casks in a warehouse for a period of at least three years."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan and other hon. Members have said, the three-year storage and maturation in sherry casks are important elements in the quality of Scotch whisky.

About the Scottish element in Scotch whisky, the Act says:

"'The expression "Scotch whisky" shall mean whisky which has been distilled in Scotland.'"

That is the current legislation and the Bill adds nothing to it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan said, the Bill should contain sanctions against those who export malt whisky in bulk. That includes members of the Scotch Whisky Association. Some of those people are double-talkers because they say that they are out to protect Scotch whisky and its reputation abroad, but they export the malt and make possible the production of imitation Scotch whisky by countries that use that malt. It is quite intolerable that the people who are responsible for undermining Scotch whisky by bulk exports should question good Scotch whisky that is made, bottled and blended in Scotland. If the Bill contained sanctions against that it would have my enthusiastic support.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North knows that there are not many real jobs in the distillation of whisky. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) represents a part of the country in which I grew up. I know the area, although I was a bit too young for whisky when I lived there. She knows that most of the jobs in the industry are in blending and bottling and in the supply of bottles, labels and boxes. It is the blending and bottling that we must keep and develop in Scotland as well as the distilling. The real damage to the reputation of Scotch whisky is caused by bulk exports, and the Bill does nothing about those.

I have a letter dated 12 November from Colonel Bewsher of the Scotch Whisky Association. I have not met him recently but I have had discussions with him in the past. The first and, presumably, most important reason that he gives for the Bill, which the hon. Member for Tayside, North has introduced at the request of the Scotch Whisky Association, is to move the definition in the Finance Act 1969 to a more appropriate locus. That is a strange reason. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can tell me why such legislation is more appropriate in a private Member's Bill than in a Finance Act.

I conclude that the whole purpose of the Bill is to set the scene for the introduction of a minimum alcohol level or to give the Secretary of State the necessary powers. As I have said, I am not opposed to that, but I have my suspicions, because I know that the Scotch Whisky Association wants the alcohol level to be set at 40 per cent. —a call that has been repeated by some hon. Members today. I think that the reason is nothing to do with cheap whisky coming from or being sold overseas, using malt that has been exported in bulk. In some cases, the association has been party to that. The reason is that the giants of the Scotch Whisky Association, which have included such names as Guinness, Allied-Lyons, Argyll and Lonrho, are the real owners of the Scotch whisky industry. The people of Scotland are not the owners, except in the case of firms such as Grant and Glen Catrine.

The giants want to squeeze out the small producers, such as Glen Catrine, which are successful in producing good-quality whisky with an alcohol level of 37·2 per cent. Glen Catrine has a 7 per cent. share of the whisky market, and is very popular. High Commissioner has become the 14th most popular brand in this country, without the help of advertising, simply because customers demand it in the shops.

Mr. Corbett: I understand my hon. Friend's feeling about the availability of whisky with less than 40 per cent. alcohol. Is he satisfied, however, that everyone who buys the brand that he has mentioned knows that he is buying an under-strength whisky, or does he believe that steps should be taken to alter the marking on the label to make absolutely sure? Does my hon. Friend think that some publicans may attempt to sell under-strength whiskies in their bars as full-strength whiskies?

Mr. Foulkes: I agree about the labelling. At present, the labels say that the whisky is under strength, but not in very large print. As I believe was mentioned by the hon. Member for Harborough, the figures showing alcohol by volume are also not very large, and I would support action to remedy that. The consumer movement, the Co-op and other producers would certainly agree.

As for the publicans, some of them get up to all sorts of tricks. In Scotland, however, many people who go into pubs ask for whisky by name, and they know the brand and the strength of the whisky that they are given. I am not so sure about English consumers; they are so sophisticated that they put all sorts of things into their whisky. I recently saw someone put Coca-Cola into it, which is a frightening thought.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion), I do not want the alcohol level to fall below 37·2 per cent. Problems arise with lower-strength whiskies. However, I am talking about good-quality blends. The hon. Member for Harborough mentioned the *Which?* survey, which showed that some of the most popular brands with experienced whisky tasters were the lower-strength whiskies with an alcohol level of 37·2 or 37·5 per cent., because they were such excellent blends. Some people may have seen yesterday's report in the *Daily Record* in which Scotsmen said exactly the same.

I have a more recent example than that, as my hon. Friends the Members for Dundee, East and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun know only too well, because at my kind invitation earlier in the week they came to taste and test whisky at 40 per cent. and 37·2 per cent. They enjoyed both brands and could not tell the difference between them. Much to the surpise of my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, he got it completely wrong. That surprised me as well.

Mr. McAllion: It would be unfair of my hon. Friend to mislead the House. He said that my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and I were unable to distinguish between the two strengths. In fact, we were able to make the distinction, but we got things the wrong way round.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for underlining my point and making it clear to the House that he thought that the better whisky of the two was the low-strength whisky. I can assure the House that the tasting took place early in the morning and that my hon. Friend had not been drinking before the tasting.

I think that the House should be worried by the precedent of enabling legislation containing such wide powers. I have great respect for the Parliamentary Secretary, but he will not always be in his present position.

[Mr. Foulkes]

I hope that he is the Parliamentary Secretary for as long as the Government are in power, but I hope also that that will not be for very long. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that qualification.

Why is 40 per cent. the magic level? I am grateful to the Minister and to the hon. Member for Tayside, North for not arguing that it should be so considered, but that has been the argument of one or two of my hon. Friends and of the Scotch Whisky Association. The Sale of Food and Drugs Act 1875 and the Licensing Act 1921 specified a minimum strength for whisky of 35 deg. under proof. The hon. Member for Tayside, North will know that that is 65 deg. proof. This minimum is applied to whisky, gin, rum, brandy, and vodka. It was the tradition to bottle at three strengths, which were 65·5 deg., 70 deg. and 75 deg. As we have adopted the new definition of alcohol by volume, these strengths have been converted to 37·5 per cent., 40 per cent. and 43 per cent. In some instances 37·5 per cent. has become 37·2 per cent., which is nearer to 37·14 per cent., which is the exact equivalent of 65·5 deg. proof.

Mr. Bill Walker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will remember that in my introductory remarks I said that I understood that the strengths now in use substantially throughout the industry are the result of experience of selling the product and retaining its quality worldwide. That is the essential element that underlies everything in the Bill.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Some 43 per cent. whisky is still produced. There are some who like stronger whisky and ask for it deliberately. That is their preference. Duty is calculated on the absolute alcohol level, which means that duty is much higher on 43 per cent. whisky than on that imposed on 40 per cent. and 37·5 per cent. whisky. That makes the lower-strength whiskies cheaper, and that means that a bottle of low-strength whisky can be bought for less than £6. In some instances that is the only way in which people can afford to buy a bottle of whisky. If it is always to be produced at 40 per cent., and only 40 per cent., there will be some who will not be able to buy it. Witness the growth in the sales of High Commissioner, Arden House and other low-strength whiskies.

As one who wishes to encourage people to drink whisky, I recognise that the product has now to compete directly with vodka, Bacardi and other modern and, unfortunately, increasingly popular drinks. For the miner in the working men's club, the girl in the dance hall, or whoever, it is sometimes the price of a drink that has a particular attraction.

At present, Bacardi is the largest-selling drink in the world, selling 229·2 million bottles at 37·5 per cent. proof. Smirnoff vodka is the second largest, selling 169·2 million bottles also at 37·5 per cent. proof. Surely so long as whisky is a good-quality blend, it should be allowed to compete in one form in the same market as Smirnoff vodka and Bacardi.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North, again in an intervention, spoke about exports and the world market. Not all whisky which is sold abroad is at 40 per cent. I have here a label, not for Glen Catrine or CWS whisky, but for the whisky of a member of the SWA—for Haig's fine old Scotch whisky produced at Markinch in Scotland and guaranteed wholly distilled and matured in Scotland. Unfortunately, it is bottled in Australia. This Scotch whisky, produced by a member of the SWA, has 37·5 per cent. alcohol by volume. I am led to believe that Australians are as hard drinkers as the Scots. Why is 37·5 per cent. the alcohol level for whisky in Australia? It is presumably because it is popular and Australians want to buy a bottle of whisky at a reasonable price. Haig is satisfying that demand in this particular case.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman, whether deliberately or unintentionally, is again suggesting that this particular brand sold in one particular country reflects the 85 per cent. of our exports. He knows that is not true. May I remind him that in an earlier intervention I mentioned different climatic conditions as a variable, and the conditions in Australia are different from those in north America?

Mr. Foulkes: I was not seeking to mislead the House; I was merely saying that all whisky exported is not at 40 per cent. A large amount that goes to Australia is at 37·5 per cent.

The Association of Low Strength Whisky Producers is arguing to give customers a choice between 37·5 per cent. or 37·2 per cent., 40 per cent. and 43 per cent. Why not have different-sized bottles? We could have litres, 75 cls and 70 cls bottles. What is important is that the bottle is clearly labelled and there is no attempt to confuse customers. I would support any legislation or regulation which ensured that there was no attempt to confuse or to cheat customers. Bottles must be labelled absolutely clearly.

The SWA in its letter stated:

"there was a need to tighten the definition . . . to reflect . . . current practice."

"Current practice" includes 37·2 per cent. and 37·5 per cent. Seven per cent. or more of whisky consumed in Britain is at that level, and there is an increasing demand for it.

I agree with the SWA that we do not want widely differing strengths. We do not want the 30 per cents., the 25 per cents. and Albanian whisky. I even received a bottle of Argentinian whisky the other day, for reasons which hon. Members may guess. Fortunately, I did not drink it, but gave it to someone as a present. [HON. MEMBERS: "Typical."] Yes, it is typical.

I would not object if we set one of the three acceptable levels as the minimum, and I know that the Minister has some ideas on this. Indeed, that would not in any way harm the production of Grant's excellent whiskies and the other excellent whisky about which hon. Members have spoken. I do not understand why anyone—I hope it is not the hon. Member for Tayside, North—including the Scotch Whisky Association, is trying to squeeze out Glen Catrine. What can anyone have against an operation that is providing jobs in my constituency? What can anyone have against CWS or Edward Butler? Those are three of the main producers of slightly lower-strength whisky.

Mr. McKelvey: I believe that there are people who drink High Commissioner because they like the flavour of it, but my hon. Friend should reflect on this. If all whiskies were set at the minimum level of 37·2 per cent., which equals the proof of High Commissioner, would not the advantage that it now has over the market disappear? Alternatively, is my hon. Friend confident that, because those people buy by taste, they would continue to buy High Commissioner?

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend has made a good point. The whisky at Glen Catrine is produced at two levels. At 37·2 per cent. it is called High Commissioner and at 40 per cent. it is called Glen Catrine. Glen Catrine whisky sells well to people who can afford to pay for that higher-strength whisky. I am confident that it will continue to expand. It would be open to members of the SWA to produce lower-strength whisky as well as to compete directly against High Commissioner and Arden House. We would have to accept that. It would be perfectly understandable if they did that. There is a market for it as long as it is a good-quality blend. All that it contains is a little more water, but it is still a good quality blend, as I think my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun agreed when he had a drop of it the other day.

We want Glen Catrine to expand and develop. Unemployment is at 28 per cent. in the Cumnock and Sanquhar area. There is potential for expansion and development, and I hope that it will not be strangled because of the vested interest of the big boys in the SWA, the headquarters of which and almost all of whom are domiciled out of Scotland. We are all concerned about that. I commented about Guinness recently. I think that the hon. Member for Tayside, North had some appropriate things to say about Guinness.

Mr. Bill Walker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman once more, but I hope that he will remember that I have had substantial support from Opposition Members for any activities in which I have been involved in the Scotch whisky industry in the past. I hope that he will also remember that one was an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman.

Mr. Foulkes: I never forget those things. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for underlining that.

I am grateful to the Minister for saying that he has no set view about what the minimum level should be. It is just a matter of the principle of setting that minimum level. I know that he has given sympathetic consideration to the views represented by the Association of Low Strength Whisky Producers. He gave me an assurance that if the Bill is enacted, he will consult that association. I am sure that that consultation will be genuine. Opposition Members have been concerned about consultation in education and other areas recently, where no account has been taken of the views represented. However, I am sure that the Minister will take account of the various pressures. I am keen to find any way to outlaw the low level that is giving Scotch whisky a bad name.

I hope that I shall have the opportunity to table one or two amendments in Committee to see whether we can give some protection in law to the people and the interests that I represent. If proper account is not taken of those considerations in Committee, I shall hope to talk at greater length at a later stage, and not just make a short contribution as I have done today. On that basis, I should not press to total opposition the concern that I have about one part of the Bill, which was introduced by the hon. Member for Tayside, North and is supported by so many of my hon. Friends.

12.49 pm

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the sponsors of this outstanding Bill. For an English Member, this has been a very interesting debate — I might call it positively picturesque. I enjoyed the description of the whisky-laden air in the village of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). Some people say, "Oh, to be in England," but many people would echo my thoughts of, "Oh, to be in Kilmarnock," when I heard that.

It is with a certain trepidation that I rise to speak, even briefly, in a debate which has essentially been a Scottish debate. But aside from the fact that my late mother was a Black Douglas and I have an "e" on the end of my name, my only reason for speaking is as an English Member, many of whose constituents are consumers. In Winchester and Alton, for example, and in many other constituencies, there are enormous numbers of consumers of whisky who have a great interest in ensuring that the standard of Scotch whisky is maintained. Not only do they enjoy drinking whisky at home, but when they order Scotch—which is a worldwide name of standard and quality—they expect that quality even when they are abroad.

I strongly support the Bill. I do not see it as featherbedding. I see it as enhancing quality. I think that it will be widely supported even outside the production side in Scotland itself.

May I close by referring to the poem that was so beautifully quoted by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie)? I feel sure that the late Sir Winston Churchill would agree entirely with the poet. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North and wish him all good luck in the further progress of the Bill.

12.51 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on winning first place in the ballot and on introducing this Bill. He has shown much dedication to the subject. I know that we are not supposed to mention names in the Chamber, but it is wholly appropriate for someone called Walker to introduce a Bill on Scotch whisky. His mother must have made a mistake when she called him Billy instead of Johnny. My only criticism of the hon. Gentleman is that he did not lay on a tasting for hon. Members. Indeed, I criticise my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) for not extending to other hon. Members the general tasting that he mentioned so that we could all have spoken in a more expert way in the debate.

This is an important Bill because the whisky industry employs about 16,000 people. I have a constituency interest in that many of my constituents like to drink Scotch in the pub. Indeed, one of them especially—my wife—likes a wee dram. She told me that she got the taste for Scotch when she first came to London in 1977 in the mayor's parlour. I was a Waltham Forest councillor then and I took her into the mayor's parlour, where she was offered a whisky. Now that my local authority is under such financial restrictions from the Government, including rate capping, anyone going into the mayor's parlour would be lucky to get a glass of designer water, let alone a glass of Scotch. This is a serious point. Rate capping has an adverse effect on the Scotch whisky industry, because if it was still served in the mayor's parlour, more people might get a taste for it and become hooked on it.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

My wife likes to mix her whisky with a drop of dry ginger. I asked her whether, because she mixed her drink, the inferior strength brands made any difference. She said, "Oh no, no, no, everyone can clearly tell the quality of the Scotch in a mixed drink." I merely throw in that point for the House to consider when discussing strength and quality, because it is as important to protect the quality.

I am concerned about the influx that might occur under the new EEC regulations. Indeed, I understand that even Japan wants to expand its Scotch industry—although it is a strange name for a Japanese whisky. We must block any threat to the Scottish industry and the quality of Scotch whisky.

The EEC definition of "spirituous beverages" permits the use of substances such as synthetic enzymes. As all experts know, the Scotch whisky produced in Scotland certainly does not include that process. Euro-whisky will diminish the quality of Scotch. As the Scotch Whisky Associaton has rightly said, it could be dangerous and confusing. It will be cheaper than, but inferior to, Scotch whisky. It is important to take that into account when discussing the Bill.

Lower strength Euro-whiskies in pubs could be a nightmare for trading standards officers. The Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards said:

"The law at the moment is so lax and the descriptions are so vague that it almost comes into the area of unfair trading."

It wants better controls.

The *Sunday Times* of 8 November, under a headline

"Weak whisky cuts no ice with Scots",

described lower strength whisky as

"a drop of the soft stuff."

It said:

"Trading standards officers also warned that the new Scotch could be sold in pubs as full-strength whisky at full-strength prices. The clear temptation will be for unscrupulous landlords to display the bottle on the dispenser with the label out of view."

The *Sunday Times* said that it had consulted an expert, who said that, although it was not the same quality Scotch, it had very clever labelling.

Mr. Corbett: I am currently sitting on the Licensing Bill Committee. Does my hon. Friend accept that, if landlords try to mislead customers in the way that he has suggested, it will be an offence? However, I absolutely accept what he said about the difficulties of councils in employing proper numbers of trading standards officers. Will he comment on a point that I have already raised a couple of times? Are there not advantages in having less than 40 per cent. proof whisky, provided that that is clearly stated on the label?

Mr. Cohen: I shall indeed deal with the point about lower strength whiskies. It is right that landlords should be prosecuted if they breach trading standards law. Indeed, the Sale of Food and Drugs Act 1875 still applies because it lays down that the product sold should be of the nature, quality and substance demanded.

Unscrupulous landlords may endeavour to get away with it and the difficulty is catching them. When one goes into a pub and asks for a pint of beer, the barman or bar lady sometimes says, "OK," and goes round to the other bar to pour out the drink out of sight. There is a distinct danger of that happening with whisky if the landlord is unscrupulous. Indeed, we could replace the famous workers' song about the man who watered the workers' beer with a song about the very fat man who watered the workers' whisky.

The expert quoted in the *Sunday Times* said that the weaker whisky would not fool a true Scotsman but that it would fool many English, and, I suppose, Welsh, men and women.

That would be unfair to the public, as well as being a nightmare to trading standards officers trying to implement the rules; it would make their job much harder. While sales of weaker whisky could be a source of easy profit for unscrupulous landlords, they could damage the long-term interests of the stronger Scotch industry as a whole. I am worried about that aspect of low-strength whisky sales.

I have heard the controversy about lower-strength whisky this morning, but I think that we could find a way out of this problem in Committee. Let me throw in my suggestion. A three-tier system could be put into operation quite easily. The first category would include Scotch whisky of 40 per cent. proof or more, which is proper Scotch of the best quality. The second tier could consist of Scotch containing 37·2 per cent. alcohol, which is close to the 65 per cent. proof mark, providing—this is the essential point — that it was brewed in Scotland, if brewed is the right word——

Mr. McKelvey: Distilled.

Mr. Cohen: I am sorry; that was a terrible gaffe, for which I apologise.

The whisky would have to have been distilled in Scotland with Scottish water. Lower-strength whisky would have to be clearly marked as under strength. At the moment, the labelling is inadequate. It needs to be made clearer that the whisky is under strength. Those two categories could both be on sale and, as long as they were made in Scotland, the system could be of benefit in affording protection to employment.

Mr. McKelvey: I understand my hon. Friend's argument, although it would create difficulties in legislation. I used to serve as the chairman of a licensing board. I cannot recall anyone ever being prosecuted for selling large measures or over-strength whisky. All the prosecutions arose because whisky had been adulterated or because customers had been sold short measures. That is why it is important to establish a minimum base. If people wish to double the alcohol content, that is of no concern to us or to the whisky industry. However, the minimum has to be set, to protect the quality of Scotch whisky.

Mr. Cohen: I fully appreciate my hon. Friend's point. I am stating two minimums, one for the best quality and one for a slightly lower quality. Such minimums would protect my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if there are two standards of whisky, the passing-off problem could be substantial? He may not be aware that the former chairman of Bell's used to say that an awful lot of whisky other than Bell's whisky went through Bell's bottles in unscrupulous hotels and pubs. Does he agree that, if his proposal were to be accepted, there would be a great risk that much low-quality whisky would go into Bell's, Johnny Walker and other high-quality brand whisky bottles?

Mr. Cohen: That would clearly be a danger. I talked about the problems for trading standards officers in the first place. I was thinking particularly of the problem of the inferior whisky that will come from the Common Market, and perhaps from Japan. It is a problem. Nevertheless, if we set the second minimum at 37·2 per cent. alcohol content, we would still guarantee a reasonable quality for Scotch whisky. As the hon. Gentleman said, there is always the danger of low-quality whiskies being put into high-quality whisky bottles, even if we set the minimum at 40 per cent. proof. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

My main purpose was to try to protect jobs in the industry and also to protect the Scotch industry as a whole. The main purpose of doing that is to have a stricter regime — it would be the third tier — against foreign Scotches, particularly EEC Scotches. Such a regime should be quite strict. It would have to be done through labelling. The Government must promote more effective labelling. That applies also to the second grade of Scotch that is produced.

Even more important, the House has legislated in respect of the labelling of foreign whiskies. I have thought of some titles. I even pondered whether they should be called whisky at all. In no circumstances should they be called Scotch. That would seriously mislead the public. If they are to be called whisky, perhaps they should be called EEC whisky, so that people would clearly know what they were getting. They could even be called subnormal whiskies because, of course, they would be subnormal in character. I concluded that they should be labelled "whisky and water"—in equal sized lettering—so that people would know that that is what they will get with the lower grade EEC whisky.

My point about water gave rise to some thought. The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) talked about the quality of water in Scotland as opposed to that in England. We must also consider the quality of water on the continent. It must be a worrying factor in regard to the sort of brands that are produced. Because of the Government's policies, water in England is becoming increasingly polluted. The Government have not been effective in countering water pollution. It would be terrible if water pollution were to extend to Scotland and have an adverse effect on the Scotch industry. It is important for the Scotch whisky industry that the Government clean up the water supply in this country.

Although that was a diversion, I think that it made an important point. I concluded that the inferior EEC and Japanese whisky that comes into this country should be labelled "whisky and water" in equal-sized lettering and should, perhaps, have a higher duty placed on it.

Mr. John Marshall: The hon. Gentleman referred to labelling a subnormal whisky an "EEC whisky". That may well suggest what he feels about the EEC, but does he not realise that consumers outside the European Community know that Scotland is in the EEC and may regard an EEC whisky as a pure genuine Scotch whisky?

Mr. Cohen: As I have said, my interest in the debate is to protect the Scotch whisky industry and the consumers in my constituency who like to drink that whisky. The hon. Gentleman has embarked on a dangerous course if he is seeking to allow inferior EEC whisky into this country and to flood world markets. That poses a danger to the Scotch whisky industry and to the many jobs to which I have referred. Despite the EEC regulations, there may well be a case for putting high duties on any lower-strength whiskies that the EEC may seek to bring in.

In the past, the United States has embarked, and at any time could do so again, on a trade war with the Common Market or Japan. It has placed restrictions on EEC products by using "retaliation lists". However, when the United States had those retaliation lists, it was quick to take Scotch whisky off the lists so that it could be imported into the United States. The United States may well decide in the future that inferior Scotch whiskies do not have such significance and may then produce its own Bourbon. The Scotch whisky may get caught up with those other inferior EEC whiskies and be included on a hit list that the United States might produce in a trade war with the EEC, and that is a dangerous prospect.

I have tried to keep my remarks as brief as possible, but those are the main points that I wanted to make and I think that they are important. I hope that Scottish Members will forgive me for taking up time in the debate. I know that this is primarily a debate for Scottish Members, but I wanted to make those important points about this vital industry and to try to protect the jobs in the industry and the consumer, the man in the pub in Leyton who likes a nice Scotch.

1.13 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): When I first entered the House, I received one piece of advice from a colleague. It was, "Hide from the Chief Whip if you have ever been to Scotland in your life, at least until the Scottish Grand Committee has been fully staffed by volunteers." Therefore, it is with great trepidation that I rise to speak in this debate, having listened to the interesting speeches made by Scottish Members.

I was especially interested in the speech by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), although at first I thought that there was some discrimination in what he said, as did the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), because a whisky tasting took place in this House for Scottish Members——

Dr. Godman: It was not in this House, but in the St. Ermin's hotel.

Mr. Marshall: Well, a whisky tasting took place in the St. Ermin's hotel. That hotel is run by a fine public company, started by a Glaswegian, Mr. Stakis. The whisky tasting took place at the hotel, but only hon. Members representing Scotland were invited. We are constantly told by those Members that not enough Members representing England take an interest in Scottish affairs. However, that was an occasion when every hon. Member representing England could have gone along to show their interests in Scottish affairs. Who knows, we might have been more expert at discriminating between the 37·2 per cent. and 40 per cent. whiskies.

Dr. Godman: They could not have been any worse.

Mr. Marshall: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman believes that the Members representing Scotland were so bad, but perhaps that suggests that they had all consumed the 40 per cent. proof whisky.

Mr. McKelvey: I am a Scotsman who was not only able to distinguish between the low-level under-strength brands and the other three brands, but was also able to distinguish between the three proprietary brands.

Mr. Marshall: I hope that the hon. Gentleman was well rewarded. I hope that he was not rewarded with a bottle of Arden House—that brand appears to demonstrate a nostalgia for "Dr. Finlay's Casebook". I do not know whether a whisky of that strength would be a just reward for an hon. Gentleman with such skills.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on his good fortune in the ballot and upon his wisdom for introducing such a non-controversial Bill. It is only right and proper that he should have introduced the Bill because his interest in the Scotch whisky industry is long established and the Bill also reflects his constituency interests.

When one visits Perth, one remembers that it is the home of Bell's—the foremost Scotch whisky brand in the United Kingdom. I am sure that all hon. Members would pay tribute to the remarkable ability of Mr. Raymond Miguel who transformed that brand from having a small share in the United Kingdom whisky market into the pre-eminent brand. The other brand located in Perth is Dewars. That brand was number three in the United States, but it is now the pre-eminent brand in that market.

It is right and proper that my hon. Friend introduced the Bill, especially as, in 1986, he had the foresight to campaign for the independence of Bells when it was subject to a bid from Guinness. It is unfortunate that the leader of the Liberal party supported Guinness rather than Bells.

We have heard of the problems that face the Scotch whisky industry. One problem is the fact that Japan is not very kind towards the Scotch whisky industry. I believe that the United Kingdom and the European Economic Community have reached the stage when we must take a tougher line with the Japanese. If the Japanese will not allow Scotch whisky to compete on fair terms in the Japanese market, we should restrict Japanese imports to the United Kingdom and the EEC. The EEC represents an important part of international trade and it has the clout to act against the Japanese.

Sir John Farr: My hon. Friend may be interested to know that, a couple of years ago, the former Labour Member for Glasgow, Govan, James White — a conscientious Member of Parliament — and I had occasion to approach the Japanese regarding the way in which they were pirating Scotch whisky. That whisky was blended with large amounts of foreign substances and sold to the unsuspecting public in the far east as genuine Scotch. That has caused considerable concern to hon. Members on both sides for a number of years.

Mr. Marshall: I concur with everything my hon. Friend has said.

I was going to move on to the subject of bulk whisky exports, which was mentioned so movingly by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). He quite properly talked about employment in distillation and in blending and bottling in the whisky industry. He said that blending and bottling produce much more employment than the distilleries, but it would have been more correct to say that, because the distilleries were formerly situated in small villages in Scotland, there was all too often no alternative employment. So, when the Distillers Company had to close down a number of distilleries, there was no chance of the people concerned being offered alternative jobs. I hope the Scotch whisky industry can look forward to a brighter future now that its ownership has become clearer.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley was right about the danger inherent in bulk whisky exports. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) has just pointed out, bulk whisky exports can be used to produce ersatz Scotch whisky, which can then be passed off as almost the same thing. I well remember, about two years ago, stopping over in India when flying to Hong Kong. We went for a walk and saw that the whisky being sold bore the legend:

"Only for sale in the state of Madras".

That was as near being Scotch whisky as the umpiring in Pakistan is to being unbiased. I was glad that it was to be sold only in the state of Madras.

Wherever one looks outside the United Kingdom, one sees various phoney Scotches being passed off as Scotch. I remember once going to a distiller's house in St. James's square and being shown a whole range of labels of ersatz Scotch whiskies, which had no doubt partially come about because of bulk whisky exports. So I agree with everything the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley said about the problems created by bulk whisky exports.

The second problem referred to today was that of taxation. I regret that there has been no member of the Treasury team here today to listen to what was said on that subject. There is a real danger that excessive taxation will kill the Scotch whisky industry. The law of diminishing returns applies, and I hope there will be no increase in whisky taxation in next year's Budget.

There is a real risk, too, that the quality image of Scotch will be destroyed by low-quality products. Worldwide, it is the quality products that people really want. I am not terribly impressed by High Commissioner which may have a quality-sounding name, but I suspect that it is not quite of the quality of The Famous Grouse. In the United Kingdom market, The Famous Grouse is roaring ahead and gaining market share at a dramatic speed. I am sure the vast majority of whisky consumers have heard of The Famous Grouse, but they think that High Commissioner is the poor unfortunate who has been trying to sort out the problems in Pakistan.

In the United States market, the Scotch whiskies that are doing well are Dewars, J and B, Johnny Walker and other premium brands, rather than the nasty ersatz Scotches that some people have discussed today.

I pay tribute to the work of the Scotch whisky industry in Europe. Wherever one goes in the European Community, one can see that the Scotch whisky industry is doing well. I am told that one of the most rapidly expanding markets for Scotch whisky is in Spain. Another rapidly expanding market is France, where Johnny Walker and J and B are doing surprisingly well. In all those European markets, the quality Scotch has been successful because that is what the European consumer prefers.

In Japan, the Scotch whisky industry has to compete with the law greatly biased against it. The Scotch whiskies that have done well there are those in the gift trade which, by definition, sells to the top end of the market. Wherever we look in the world, we see that it is the quality Scotch whiskies that people want. I hope that the House will give

the Bill a Second Reading because it will help the industry to defend its livelihood and its trade marks against the attack from low-quality whiskies.

In my visits to distilleries and to other parts of the Scotch whisky industry, I have always been impressed by the quality and devotion of the work force. I have also been impressed by the quality of labour relations in the industry. Some of our other great exporting industries have strikes; hon. Members will remember strikes in the motor car industry at Ford or British Leyland. However, it is rare to have one day lost in the Scotch whisky industry. The industry's success in avoiding strikes and the loss of days through ill health may well advertise the medicinal qualities of Scotch whisky. Perhaps a wee dram at the end of a day's work encourages people to come back the next day and keeps them in good heart.

The industry has a fine reputation and a fine history of skill and devotion to standards. In this interesting debate, hon. Members from all parts of the House have paid tribute to the history and to the future of the Scotch whisky industry. I hope that the Bill will be passed unanimously so that the industry can defend its standards and its markets as it has done so successfully in the past. As hon. Members have reminded us, the Scotch whisky industry has an export trade of £1,000 million. It is a great national asset and it is up to the House to defend that asset with every power at hand. The Bill deserves to be passed unanimously.

1.26 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on raising this topic. By listening to most of the debate, I have been on a steep learning curve. I was delighted to find, by courtesy of the Scotch Whisky Association, that it is not injurious to health to drink whisky with oysters or with other shellfish and that that is an ancient superstition for which there is no foundation. The association says:

"A personal experiment will furnish the proof."

The booklet provided by the Scotch Whisky Association asks the fascinating question: what is the worm? I am sure that hon. Members from Scottish constituencies will have a ready answer. I do not want to run an "Any Questions" session, but the term "worm" intrigues me. The booklet tells me:

"The Worm and its surrounding bath of cold running water, or worm-tub, form together the condenser unit of the pot still process of manufacture."

Alas, as an old pencil journalist, I have a passion for old-fashioned methods of production and I was saddened to read at the end of that paragraph:

"The worm is being replaced gradually by the more modern tubular condenser."

Apart from a visit to the bottom of a very deep and dark pit in the Fife coalfield, I can claim no Scottish connections. I am happy to tell hon. Members that my most frequent acquaintance with Scotland comes when I have a glass in my hand. I like to think that it is one sign of maturity, but perhaps it is only because I am getting older that the palate dictates malt whisky rather than blended whisky. It may surprise Scottish Members to know that that is an experience and a learning process for many of us who were born south of Hadrian's wall. I was born very far south of it, in Western Australia.

Generally in England, we have to go through the process of appreciating whisky over the years. I have come to appreciate very much the pronounced bouquet and taste of malt produced from the pot still method. Again, I have learnt this morning, although I suppose that it should have been obvious to me, that as the method of production of malt whisky does not enable a continuous production process, bottles from the same distillery and with the same label, although similar, are not identical.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of a bar on these premises that boasts one of the finest choices of malt whiskies in London. I do not doubt that there are connoisseurs and experts who, even if blindfolded, could not only name the brand of malt that they were drinking, but probably make a good stab at comparing it with one that they had drunk three weeks or, perhaps, six months ago. If my hon. Friends from Scotland would like to take me in hand so that I can learn the business properly, I should be a more than willing recruit.

I am trying now to parade my ignorance. I did not know, for instance, that there were four different types of malt whisky. I knew about the Islay malts—I have spent many a happy evening with one or two of those—but I did not know about the highland malts, lowland malts and Campbeltown malts which, regrettably, are produced only by the single main distillery on the Mull of Kintyre.

We have been told about the superb export record of Scotch whisky. Exports now exceed £1 billion a year. Some countries, of course, have stricter attitudes towards alcohol use and abuse. If one is fortunate enough to be travelling on an aeroplane or a ship to Norway or Sweden, and quite properly purchase a bottle of whisky in the duty-free shop, it may be worth almost its weight in gold. I ran into someone who had worked in Sweden, where, he said, the cost of living was very high compared with that in Britain. The better to make ends meet, he and a friend used to take in their allowance of Scotch whisky. Without any hassle, he could regularly get six or seven times the price that he had paid on the boat. That did him good, and it did the Scotch whisky industry no harm, because it spread the real stuff into parts that it might otherwise be difficult for it to reach because of the pricing policy.

I have been asking some of my hon. Friends, in particular, about the alcohol level argument. Some hon. Members want a 40 per cent. alcohol "bottom" in what can properly be called Scotch whisky. My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) — he always seems to me to have three constituencies—argues that there should also be a place in the market for whiskies with an alcohol level of 37·2 per cent. Having been on the Licensing Bill Committee, I have a special interest in the Government making better efforts to combat alcohol abuse and misuse, especially among under-age drinkers. It must be taken into account that if some of the whiskies with an alcohol level of less than 40 per cent. can contribute to helping people not to abuse alcohol, there must be a place for them.

Dr. Godman: Every Scottish Member who has spoken today is keenly aware of the problems associated with alcohol abuse and misuse. The theme has surely been that alcohol is to be taken in moderation.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I do not wish to imply that the producers of Scotch whisky or those who are responsible for its distribution and sale can be blamed, wholly or in part, for the misuse and abuse of alcohol. There are outlets for the

[Mr. Corbett]

sale of alcohol apart from pubs, and I recognise that those who manage licensed premises cannot be blamed for the misuse and abuse of alcohol. Unfortunately, in many parts of our three countries in this kingdom, alcohol is a menacing problem, especially in the form of under-age drinking. It is regrettable that there has been an alarming increase in the misuse of alcohol by younger women. I believe that to be the case in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker: I trust that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind that I explained at the beginning of my remarks in introducing the Bill that I have always been teetotal. I no more condone over-indulgence in alcohol or the misuse of it by those who are under age than I condone the misuse of cars or the under-age driving of cars. I put both forms of misbehaviour in the same category.

Mr. Corbett: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. No Member of this place would condone the abuse or misuse of alcohol. I am sure that we would all take a similar attitude to the misuse of drugs.

I understand that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said that he did not want any increase in the duty on whisky in the next Budget. Of course, that is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I believe that there is a case for considering an increase in the duty on beers, wines and spirits, because in real terms the price of alcohol has decreased over the past 20 years. I was informed recently in a written answer that a 10 per cent. increase in the duty on beers, wines and spirits would produce about £285 million.

If the Government are to tell us that they are short of money properly to put in place measures to combat alcohol abuse and under-age drinking, for example, they should recognise that a levy on those who regularly use alcohol could make a significant contribution to financing a suitable campaign. The imposition of duty has the merit that those who drink the most contribute the most. A parallel is to abolish the road fund licence and to increase the duty on the petrol that we pump into our tanks.

In real terms, the cost of a bottle of whisky has fallen by about one third over the past 20 years. About 20 years ago, it took about six hours of work to earn enough money to buy a bottle of whisky. It now takes about two hours of work. I am glad about that in one sense, because it is of benefit to Scotch whisky producers and those who are concerned in the distribution and sale of the product, but the evidence from other countries is that when price decreases and availability increases because of an increase in the number of outlets and different types of outlets, such as supermarkets and corner shops, there is an inevitable increase in consumption. As consumption rises, so does the incidence of alcohol-related disease, which imposes such a heavy cost on families, industry and the National Health Service.

I am sensitive to the calls which have come from both sides of the House for the better protection of the Scotch whisky industry. These have come in the form of arguments in favour of minimum strength, the better to protect the industry from what is no more than counterfeiting of Scotch whisky by Japan and other countries. Others have said that some members of the Scotch Whisky Association could contribute to the protection of their industry by reducing the exports of whisky that is not bottled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) talked about low-strength whisky, which has been described as "a drop of the soft stuff". I understand the point that he is making. It is right to say that he declared a constituency interest. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and others have said that the best way to protect the industry is to create a minimum proof floor so that everybody knows what he is getting. There is a problem with that on health grounds.

I listened with great interest to what my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton said about having two or three different standards. I suspect that Scotch whisky users would not find that much help in safeguarding their market, especially exports and overseas sales. While we in the United Kingdom could perhaps understand that, I suspect that it would be a different kettle of fish in the clubs and pubs of Bangkok, Brisbane and Buffalo. It could make misrepresentation of Scotch whisky easier for those who feel that they can get away with it and make a bigger buck in the process. I must admit that I have not reached a conclusion on this. If I am fortunate enough to serve on the Committee, perhaps we could pursue this.

Scotch whisky is no stranger to the courts of Scotland, England and Wales. I am told that as long ago as 1644 the Scots Parliament — it was then a Scots Parliament — passed an Excise Act fixing for the first time a liquor duty. From 1707 and the Union of the Parliaments, revenue staff sought to control and license distillation in Scotland. One learns this also while one reads for these debates.

It was well past the middle of the 19th century before there was some uniformity in whisky. It came from the product of a single distillery, grain or malt, and because of the limitations of technology of the time, and factors such as the supply of water and, I dare say, the quality of the water and barley, the product of a single distillery could vary widely from year to year. In other words, if one bought a bottle of whisky one could never be quite sure what one was getting. That went on for years. There was a report on 28 July 1909 by a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord James of Hereford, and the definition was updated by the Finance Act 1969.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton may be interested to know that in the early 1900s the malt distillers were growing increasingly worried about the success of blended whisky. In 1904, Islington borough council, probably not then under Labour control, took proceedings against several local publicans for selling what they called "brandy", which was a mixture of brandy and neutral spirit. It was a test case to see whether the drink sold was

> "not of the nature, substance and quality of the article demanded by the purchaser",

and thus unadulterated. In November 1905 the council did exactly the same to whisky. The publicans were selling blended whisky, a mixture of grain and malt whiskies, as they had done for many years. They were duly taken to court to see whether or not the whisky that they sold was the genuine article. The magistrate ruled against them, which clearly meant that grain whisky was not the true whisky. Since then, things have moved on, but it supports my preference for a malt rather than a blended whisky.

This is an important Bill for Scotland and I am sure from what has been said today that it will have an interesting Committee stage. I am sure that it will be of great help and value to the Scotch whisky industry.

1.44 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I know that the promoter of this admirable Bill, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), wants a little time to answer the debate, so I shall make my remarks brief.

My first consideration is unemployment in Scotland. I am a member of the Labour steel committee, and that committee has studied cases such as Ravencraig. The unemployment is alarming. When one thinks of the tremendous output of Scotch whisky and the way in which it is revered and loved throughout the world, it would be catastrophic if anything of major proportions went wrong.

There are considerations other than unemployment. My knowledge of the Celt and the Gael is not totally lacking. I have an Irish name, and I come from Yorkshire. Somebody with a rare sense of humour, probably connected with the War Office, called up a Yorkshireman named Flannery to a couple of Scottish regiments, one after the other. I learnt to drink a dram of whisky on the odd occasion, as a sheer defence. It was a curious thing. On the first Friday night that I spent in the Scottish Borderers I palled up with three Scots chaps——

Mr. Corbett: It would be hard not to.

Mr. Flannery: On the contrary, there was a large number of miners from Yorkshire and many people who were not Scots in the Scottish regiments. Anyone who thinks that all the people in the regiments were Scottish is dreaming.

I learnt the hard way. We received 10 shillings. Some hon. Members may be old enough to remember. We went out on only one night a week because of that. I was losing heavily because I did not drink whisky and called for half a bitter. After the third Friday I thought that I had to look at things afresh. I realised that I just had to drink whisky. I found it not a terrible thing to do.

If my Scottish connections, whom I still know from those days, thought that in this debate I had not defended Scotch whisky and the employment of those in the industry they would take me to task in no uncertain manner next time I went to Scotland, where I go for a holiday every year.

The Bill admirably defends Scotch whisky. I shall speak solely about the 40 per cent. level. Unless the Minister is kind, as he promised to be, that part of the Bill could have its dangers. To me, Scotch whisky is 40 per cent. I say to the hon. Member for Tayside, North, although he is a teetotaller, that that level is not unconnected with its name. People who love and drink it in moderation do so because of the 40 per cent. level. The protection against drunkenness is to drink moderately and not a great deal of it. The Bill states:

> "It shall be unlawful . . . to sell Scotch whisky at an alcoholic strength less than any such strength as may be specified for the time being in an order made by the Ministers under this section."

That has a certain amount of danger. The level can go down to 37·5 per cent. or 37·2 per cent., as it apparently does, or even lower. I am not sure, but I think that there could be a grave danger of whisky no longer being seen as the whisky that it now mainly is. There could be a danger of sales dropping off and of unemployment flowing from that fact. Equally dangerous, whisky might be demeaned and not be nearly as good as it is.

Therefore, I defend the 40 per cent. level. I visit Rabbie Burns' cote regularly in the area represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). I support what he said. If we leave it to the Minister to decide, I am afraid that, if we do not get the necessary protection, the dram will taste a bit different.

Mr. Sims: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that there is no legislative protection for the 40 per cent. strength? No law says what the strength should be. The clause would enable the Minister to specify a strength below which Scotch whisky could not be produced.

Mr. Flannery: Is the hon. Gentleman asking that the 40 per cent. strength be enshrined in law?

Mr. Sims: No. The minimum has not yet been discussed. This is simply an enabling measure. The hon. Gentleman wishes to defend the present figure of 40 per cent., but I should tell him that it is not protected in law.

Mr. Flannery: I am sure that the hon. Member for Tayside, North will say something about that.

1.50 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will reply to what has been an interesting and well-informed debate. Although some speeches may have had more to do with deer than with quality, all of us would agree that some unusual Jocks have participated in the debate.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) asked me why we needed the Bill. The answer is that we had to take into account the experience of attempting to negotiate in Europe and the problems that may be created in the United Kingdom and abroad by the introduction of a Euro-whisky. Since I had decided to introduce a Bill on that aspect of the Scotch whisky industry, I thought it proper to include all the other areas of concern, including the problems of the quality end of the Scotch market.

Dr. Godman: I forget to ask the hon. Gentleman about the legal definition of Scotch whisky and why it is to be protected by civil law, not criminal law. Does the hon. Gentleman know whether, in France, the production of champagne is protected only by civil law or by a combination of civil and criminal law?

Mr. Walker: Only a European lawyer could understand French law properly. I am not a European lawyer and I will not try to unscramble the position in French law, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that, in the United Kingdom, this matter will be dealt with in civil law. We judged it to be the best vehicle, and that is why the Bill is constructed as it is.

One problem that has been highlighted is the difficulty of protecting the quality of Scotch. The majority of those who spoke in the debate understand that the quality of Scotch makes it sell in vast quantities worldwide. Although we could argue about what is 7 per cent. of 15 per cent., or what is 6 per cent. of 3 per cent., we must never forget that sales in the United Kingdom represent only a tiny fraction of total sales. The sales worldwide provide the jobs that we are all anxious to maintain and enhance. That is why we deemed it necessary to give the Minister the ability to introduce orders laying down a clearly stated minimum strength for the alcohol content of Scotch whisky.

[Mr. Walker]

Hon. Members have spoken about the good work of the Scotch Whisky Association and the splendid industrial relations in the industry. I have no hesitation in endorsing those remarks.

I am sometimes surprised by Opposition Members who chastise me about some of the matters in which I am involved. I defy anyone to say that he has heard me suggest that there is something wrong with trade unions. After all, I was a shop steward and a member of the national executive of my trade union. Anyone who criticises me fails to realise that I believe that trade unions are an essential part of the negotiating process. That is why I have no hesitation in saying that the trade unions in the whisky industry are an example to many other unions. Indeed, I wish that all trade unions were of their standard.

Dr. Godman: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree about the importance of making known the excellent industrial relations record of the industry to those acquisitive-minded international companies that seek to invest in it. Is not one of the main reasons for such a good record the fine, indigenous managment, as well as first-class trade union representation?

Mr. Walker: I have no hesitation in fully agreeing with the hon. Gentleman. I only wish that we could say the same about so many other industries. The management of the Scotch whisky industry has a fine record.

I have been careful not to stray into areas of great controversy because of my past record. However, it is important to place on record that one of the greatest skills of the management of the Scotch whisky industry has been its motivation and leadership of the work force. That has resulted in excellent industrial relations at all levels within the unions.

I endorse the comments and compliments about Raymond Miguel. He suffered badly in the media in Scotland during the takeover of Bell's. That has now substantially changed, and I am delighted that that former chairman of Bell's is now active in many areas in Scotland, not least as chairman of the Scottish Sports Council. I am sure that he will do the same fine job there as he did at Bell's.

We need the Bill to ensure the continued success of a very fine industry. I hope that the House will show their agreement by supporting the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Slaughter of Deer Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

1.57 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill is only the welfare of deer; it is neither to encourage or discourage deer farming nor to authorise or forbid the lawful killing of deer in slaughter houses.

Our standpoint is taken from the report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council on deer, which is that deer have different characteristics and a heightened sensitivity to humans and to other animals that is not generally shared by the more commonly farmed animals.

The number of deer farms has risen rapidly. In the early 1970s there were only a few, but in 1980 the Farm Animal Welfare Council found 14 deer farms and in 1984 more than 100, with 5,000 deer, excluding park deer. In October 1987—the latest statistics to hand—Scotland alone had 56 deer farms with 12,250 farmed deer, and elsewhere in the United Kingdom there were upwards of 80 farms, with the largest cluster outside Scotland being in Devon; hence my interest.

It is interesting to note that in Scotland the land used is 80 per cent. rough grazing or scrub woodland and that the distribution is mainly in the less favoured areas. It is amusing to note that Brian Aldridge of "The Archers" is now farming deer. It is a sensible move as the gross margin for red deer is £1,000 per hectare compared with lowland sheep or 24-month-old beef at £520 per hectare and suckler beef at £300 per hectare. Although the best margin may be on the sale of breeding stock, venison gets a good price. Indeed, it accounts for 0·5 per cent. of Europe's red meat consumption. Prime quality farmed venison commands a substantial premium over game venison and other meats. The retailer pays the farmer 50 per cent. more than for beef. Deer farming is thus a profitable, new small industry.

The United Kingdom now produces 2,300 lb of venison, both feral and farmed, annually, of which two thirds is exported. The Chernobyl factor fractionally dented our exports to West Germany, which consumes 43,500 lb a year, but it has now been overcome and the figures are increasing again. Current world venison consumption figures are of the order of 50,000 to 100,000 tonnes.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is there a preference in the German market for wild rather than farmed venison?

Miss Nicholson: At the moment the preference is for game venison.

With Christmas coming, the Scandinavians cull and eat their own reindeer, so there is no export market there. The export market is in Europe, north America, Japan and Australia, and these markets have been opened up by New Zealand.

I remind hon. Members that we seek alternative farming and that many products are in surplus but they exclude venison. In New Zealand one in 10 farmers now farm venison compared with one in 100,000 here. The product attracts no subsidies. It is governed by no European Community legislation. We have no quotas and no meat mountains, but the production of excellent lean meat economically from grass. Venison is healthy eating

for the consumer. Stag has a low fat content of 5 to 10 per cent. while the fat content in rams is 22 to 27 per cent. and in bull beef it is 18 to 22 per cent. Venison has high protein, no hormones and no additives or colouring. It is a highly wholesome diet and is again fast becoming a food available to all.

To market venison the deer farmer has to consider the supermarket requirement as farm-gate sales will not fulfil the growing demand. They need a consistent product. Farmed deer are killed at the same age and the meat is undamaged. The quality of game is variable and the age of the meat may differ; it may have been badly shot or handled roughly. Farmers need health-marked meat which has been inspected at all stages and this can only apply if the meat has gone to the slaughterhouse.

It is difficult to define farm deer. We have taken the definition in the Bill from the Farm Animal Welfare Council report. The provisions should perhaps be restricted mainly to red deer—I hope that we shall be able to discuss that in Committee—and not fallow, roes sika or wapiti, although some farmers tell me that the characteristics of red deer are less skittish than limousins or charollais which may be more difficult to handle.

More deer will be going to slaughterhouses, probably in percentage terms and most certainly in actual numbers. That may be why one —possibly two — of the four dissenting signatories to the Farm Animal Welfare Council report on farmed deer have withdrawn their objections. Deer farming has increased rapidly.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The hon. Lady said that of the four who signed the dissenting report, two had changed their minds. Could she tell the House which two she thinks have changed their minds?

Miss Nicholson: I am glad to say that Mr. Ewbank himself told me that he has changed his mind, and I understand at second-hand that Mrs. Harrison has changed her mind, although she did not say that to me.

Mr. Corbett: I categorically assure the hon. Lady that the views of Mrs. Ruth Harrison expressed in the dissenting report are, if anything, stronger than when the report was written. She is in no way in favour of the abattoir slaughter of deer.

Miss Nicholson: I thank the hon. Gentleman.

The present laws allow the slaughter of deer in abbatoirs in England and Wales. It is not going to stop. Indeed, the Government have said that it will continue. There is a provision coming in in Scotland.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Nicholson: In one moment.

There are no welfare provisions at all and the Bill will allow licensing which will enable a batch of welfare controls to be imposed on the slaughter of deer in slaughterhouses. In today's Britain it is improper that one animal species should be allowed to be slaughtered in slaughterhouses without welfare controls when others are not.

Mr. Robin Cook: I represent a local authority that has a large deer farm of its own. I find myself in great difficulty with regard to the Bill. So far, the hon. Lady's speech seems to be perfectly apposite to the provisions for England and Wales where abattoir slaughter is permitted and where her Bill will provide proper standards of welfare. However, her Bill will make it legal for the first time to slaughter red deer in abattoirs in Scotland. She herself has said——

Miss Nicholson *rose*——

Mr. Cook: The hon. Lady can make her statement after I have finished.

At present, most red deer farms are in Scotland. I have grave difficulty in considering the substantial widening of the law in Scotland, particularly in view of the remarks in the dissenting minority report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council, which, I am bound to say, weigh heavily with me.

Miss Nicholson: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the Bill. It does not authorise the slaughter of deer in slaughterhouses in Scotland. That is the subject of a separate amendment which has already been put before the House. If that amendment is carried, the appropriate welfare provisions will be brought in through the primary legislation in my Bill. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, the Bill is not designed to oppose or encourage the slaughter of deer in slaughterhouses. The hon. Gentleman misunderstood that point.

The points in the Bill that are of particular value have led to support in principle from many excellent and reputable organisations. They are the RSPCA, the British Veterinary Association, the Country Landowners' Association, the National Farmers Union and, of course, the Veterinary Deer Society. These are major markers in the Bill whereby there will always be a veterinary presence in slaughterhouses when deer are stunned and slaughtered. That vet will be responsible for overseeing all welfare provisions. Ministerial approval — 12 or 13 months in Scotland—has to be gained for a licence to be granted to slaughterhouses. The ritual slaughter of deer will be excluded, and there will be prohibition of electrical stimulation of deer carcases prior to stunning and sticking —in other words, before an animal's throat is cut.

I suggest that the Bill embraces within its concept the welfare of all animals, not just deer. None the less, it is improper, as I have already stated, that in today's United Kingdom animals should be killed in slaughterhouses with no welfare provisions at all. I commend the Bill to the House.

2.6 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I seek to intervene early in the debate because the Bill that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has courageously introduced has engendered a great deal of misunderstanding. As she said, it is a welfare measure. Perhaps the title is wrong. Perhaps it should have been called the extra welfare of deer Bill. Perhaps people would then have read it more carefully before they opposed it. You will gather from that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Government welcome and fully support the Bill and its aims. I am pleased to have an opportunity to say a few words about it. It will be a few words because I realise that other hon. Members wish to speak.

During the previous debate, in which many hon. Members participated, a great deal was said about consultation. I have consulted widely on the Bill. For instance, I consulted the RSPCA only this week. The new senior officers of the RSPCA were seriously distressed

[Mr. Donald Thompson]

when I told them that the Bill might not be given a Second Reading today and, therefore, would not reach the statute book.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way because it is as well to have the matter clear. Will he acknowledge that, in principle, the RSPCA and the British Veterinary Association are opposed to the abattoir slaughter of deer? The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) won the ballot, and they feel that if deer are to be slaughtered in abattoirs welfare regulations should be in place. That is their stand. In principle, they do not like the idea of the abattoir slaughter of deer.

Mr. Thompson: Vegetarians do not like eating meat, but are anxious that if meat is to be eaten there should be proper welfare regulations. I do not know why the RSPCA or the other groups would say that they did or did not support the Bill. However, the fact is that this week members of the RSPCA sat in my office and discussed a whole range of subjects. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has availed himself of the chairs in my office and brought along his hon. Friends to discuss a range of subjects. When the Bill was mentioned, the representatives of the RSPCA said that they were surprised to hear that it might not receive its Second Reading today.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West suggested, the purpose of her Bill has been misrepresented by some animal welfare organisations. It is not to authorise the slaughter of deer in abattoirs. That is already permitted and is taking place on a small scale, but at present the deer are slaughtered without the protection of the statutory welfare controls that apply to other livestock in slaughterhouses. The Farm Animal Welfare Council recommended that the slaughter of farmed deer in abattoirs in Great Britain should be allowed to continue, subject to the introduction of certain welfare safeguards. The Government accepted that recommendation and, as my hon. Friend stated, her Bill aims to allow the introduction of all the council's safeguards, including extending to deer the existing welfare provisions in the Slaughterhouses Act 1974 and the Slaughter of Animals (Scotland) Act 1980. Together with my ministerial colleagues, I am satisfied that, once these provisions have been extended to deer, and the extra safeguards are in place, the welfare of deer in abattoirs will be satisfactorily protected.

Mr. Robin Cook: I assure the Minister that not only do I eat meat but I regularly eat venison, which is probably my preferred form of meat. I have no complaints about the venison that I have obtained, which has been shot rather than slaughtered in an abattoir. Will the Minister clarify a point that was made by the promoter of the Bill, who claimed that there was an amendment before the House to permit the slaughter of deer in abattoirs in Scotland which, as the Farm Animal Welfare Council explained, is currently prevented? To what was his hon. Friend referring? Was it to this legislation, and if so would it not be anomalous for the House to approve legislation providing standards of welfare before the House had condescended on whether slaughter in abattoirs should be permitted in Scotland?

Mr. Thompson: I shall not deal with that point at the moment. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have the chance to deal with that point when she sums up before the Bill gets its Second Reading.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the Minister will appreciate, we are under some pressure of time. The consideration of whether some of us may wish to participate in the debate and place our observations on the record needs to be settled before the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) has an opportunity to reply. Therefore, those of us who are considering whether to allow the Bill to go through, containing, as it does, clauses on Scotland, will need to know what the position is and to which clause and amendment the hon. Member referred when she said that there was a second provision before the House to permit the slaughter of deer in abattoirs in Scotland.

Sir John Farr (Harborough) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention. Perhaps the Minister will deal with one at a time.

Mr. Thompson: I shall return to the point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) a little later. However, I should like to push on a little or we shall get into such a muddle that it will never be sorted out.

Perhaps I should make it clear that, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, the farmer will still have the option of shooting his deer in the field if that is what he prefers to do. Many people were concerned that the Bill would stop the shooting of deer for game or the shooting of deer in the field, which has been common practice.

Dr. Godman *rose*——

Mr. Thompson: I shall give way in a moment. Let me press on a bit.

My hon. Friend mentioned the transport of deer and the fact that the Farm Animal Welfare Council is satisfied that, provided suitable transport is used, farmed deer can and do travel well. There is already legislation to protect the welfare of deer during transport. That is another aspect of the Bill which has disturbed some people. Indeed, people have been disturbed about both the exclusion and the inclusion of that aspect.

We have acted on the council's recommendations and have published transport guidelines which supplement existing legislation and provide useful advice to deer farmers and transporters.

The amendment about which the hon. Member for Livingston asked is the Slaughterhouse Hygiene (Scotland) (Amendment) Regulations 1987, which were laid before the House as recently as 25 November.

Mr. Robin Cook: Can the Minister confirm that those regulations have not been passed by the House and can he clarify whether they are subject to affirmative or negative procedure?

Mr. Thompson: I shall consider that question while I am speaking.

Before I refer to the measures in the Bill I should like to say something about deer farming and why deer farmers need to have access to abattoir slaughter. Although deer farming in the United Kingdom is a relatively new development, it is an expanding industry with a considerable potential for future growth. Although much of the market here and abroad is currently supplied with

wild venison, British deer farmers have been taking an increased share of that market as a result of farm-gate sales and sales to hotels, the catering trade, the retail trade and as, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West said, to supermarkets. In supplying that latter outlet, farmers must have access to abattoir slaughter. It is the only way in which the hygiene standard demanded by the retailer and the consumer can be met. Indeed, the consumer is often taking that product off the shelf for the first time—unlike the hon. Member for Livingston who has probably eaten venison all his life, in common with past generations of his family.

Dr. Godman: In keeping with the civilised nature of our exchanges throughout today's proceedings, I wish to help the Minister respond to the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). A number of Scottish farmed deer are slaughtered at the premises of the Buchan Meat Producers Association's establishment in Turriff.

Mr. Thompson: Yes, indeed. It is not illegal to slaughter deer in Scotland. I can tell the hon. Member for Livingston that the regulations that I mentioned earlier are subject to negative resolution—that does not make life easier for the hon. Gentleman, but it makes it considerably easier for me.

My hon. Friend has already given details of her proposals and I need not refer to them all again. It is essential that the welfare of the animals is protected, and that is why we accept that the Bill will impose a number of requirements for deer slaughter that are not required for the slaughter of other livestock, even though some may feel that that will place the deer farmers at an unfair disadvantage compared to other parts of the meat industry. The compulsory veterinary presence is something for which someone will have to pay. I assure the House that it will not be the Government.

Perhaps I should also comment on the proposal to exempt Jewish and Moslem forms of slaughter from the legislation. The form of restraint and support required for the slaughter of deer without stunning would cause the deer unacceptable stress and therefore we have accepted the council's recommendations. I would be misleading the House if I did not say that I have had discussions with the Jewish community on this matter, but those discussions have not yet been concluded.

In conclusion, I emphasise that while the deer farming industry should continue to have access to abattoir slaughter if it is to make full use of the marketing opportunities available now and in the future, such slaughter must be made subject to the same welfare controls that already apply to other food animals and the extra measures recommended by the Farm Animal Welfare Council. Those can be introduced quickly by the passing of the Bill. If the Bill should fail, it will mean that farmed deer will continue to be slaughtered in abattoirs without the welfare controls that most of the House considers necessary. I am sure that no one wants that, and the Bill should have a welcome both from the deer-farming industry and the welfare interests.

Once again, I congratulate my hon. Friend on her foresight in presenting the Bill and her courage in bringing it thus far.

2.20 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I offer my compliments to the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). If the Bill has as its major objective the closing of a loophole in the regulations governing English abattoirs, it has something to offer. What prompted my earlier intervention was my deep curiosity about the consumer market distinction between wild and farm deer. There is a similar distinction, however wise or unwise, between wild and farm-reared salmon.

I shall speak briefly, because I know that several of my hon. Friends want to contribute to the debate. I want to ask the hon. Lady a number of questions. First, I point out to her that there is a good deal of support for the views of the dissenting members of the Farm Animal Welfare Council. That situation must be faced in the debate, brief as it is. I quote from the dissenters:

> "We are not alone in our anxiety. Of the nine organisations consulted by FAWC on deer slaughter only two were in favour of abattoir slaughter, four were against, and three expressed the view that more research and investigation were needed."

Miss Emma Nicholson: Of course, the Bill neither supports nor condemns abattoir slaughter; it merely brings in welfare controls. On that basis alone, support is now coming from the Humane Slaughter Association and the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare in addition to the other organisations that I have mentioned, which include the Country Landowners' Association, the National Farmers Union, the British Veterinary Association, the RSPCA and the Veterinary Deer Society. None of them likes the idea of deer being slaughtered in slaughterhouses because of their sensitivity. In that sense, they endorse the FAWC report. But the world has moved on, and more animals are being slaughtered as the numbers of farm deer grow almost daily. That is why those organisations give their support in principle to the Bill, although they want the provisions to be tightened in ways that I hope we shall discuss in Committee.

Dr. Godman: I also compliment the hon. Lady on the skill that she has so readily acquired of making lengthy interventions. It is a skill to be found on both sides of the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): It is a skill that I hope will not be practised.

Dr. Godman: I entirely agree with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that my interventions are always brief.

There are, as I said, conflicting views about the Bill, and it is right that they should be addressed. As the hon. Lady rightly said, despite the early pioneering work done in Scotland, Scottish deer farming is still on a much smaller scale than the English industry. The hon. Lady's figure of about 50 Scottish farms is correct.

I want to point out to the hon. Lady and to some of the dissenting voices of my hon. Friends that a good deal of research has been carried out by members of the Macaulay land use research institute at Laurencekirk in Kincardineshire. They say that their findings show no stress in deer going through the abattoir owned by the Buchan Meat Producers Association at Turriff. That is important.

Mr. Robin Cook: My hon. Friend is senior to me in this matter and I would appreciate his guidance. We are both at a disadvantage because the two Scottish sponsors of the

Newbattle Abbey College

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the period and terms of the review of the status of Newbattle Abbey college; and what consultations took place.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The justification for continued Government support for Newbattle Abbey college, as for all non-departmental public bodies, is reviewed from time to time in the light of changing circumstances, and my Department's knowledge of current educational developments. No specific external consultation took place.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what help he envisages his Department giving to Newbattle Abbey college in its consideration of the implications of its withdrawal of grant.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Officials of the Scottish Education Department are ready to discuss the implications with the board of governors or the trustees of the college, but it will be for the Newbattle interests to identify areas where they think the Department can help.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the withdrawal of grant from Newbattle Abbey college.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following a review of the case for continued financial support for the college from the Scottish Education Department, an official of the Department wrote to the chairman of the board of governors on 10 December 1987 advising him of the intention to withdraw grant with effect from the end of the academic year 1988-89. The following is the text of the letter:

The Secretary of State has been reviewing the case for continued support for Newbattle Abbey College through grants from the Scottish Education Department and I am writing to give notice that he intends to withdraw the grant with effect from the end of academic year 1988-89.

In reaching conclusions as a result of this review, the Secretary of State has taken into account the opportunities which now exist for adults to obtain qualifications for entry to higher education. In contrast to the time when Government support for Newbattle was first introduced, there are now many more opportunities available for mature students to gain qualifications enabling them to participate in higher education. For example, most adults have reasonable access to further education colleges and, in many areas, schools where they may acquire, on a full or part-time basis, entrance qualifications to higher education institutions; and the Open College with its blend of broadcasting and the more traditional methods of learning, should increase opportunities for access to vocational education and training. In addition, the Open University offers adults without formal qualifications the chance to proceed direct to part-time degree courses if they wish to do so and finally, the Universities and Central Institutions are showing increasing readiness to admit to degree courses mature students without normal entry requirements, as part of their policy of widening access. Indeed, latest statistics show that in 1985-86, there were about 6,000 mature entrants to higher education in Scotland — almost ¼ of the total. With these developments, together with the much more widespread use of distance learning methods, it is no longer evident that the residential environment of Newbattle is as necessary for mature entrants to higher education as it once was nor is it evident that the residential opportunity is now widely sought after by students from all over Scotland. I understand that typically some 30 per cent. of Diploma students come from England and the great majority of the remainder from Lothian or elsewhere in the Central belt. All of these factors reduce the case for continued Government support for the adult education provision at Newbattle Abbey College.

Against this background, the Secretary of State has to consider whether the taxpayers' money provided for Newbattle can be justified in the light of the other demands on the resources available for education in Scotland. The centre piece of the Newbattle programme is the 2-year Diploma in Liberal Studies, taken by some 30-40 students per year. Since 1979, the grant made available for Newbattle has increased from £162,000 to £359,000 in the 1986-87 financial year; an increase in real terms of 33 per cent. In addition, the Scottish Education Department has provided annually substantial sums for student tuition and residential fees; these came to approximately £100,000 in the 1986-87 financial year. For the future, the College's own estimates suggest that running costs are likely to continue to rise well in excess of the current inflation rate and further substantial capital sums will be required to maintain the College buildings in an adequate state of repair if it is to continue in its present role.

The Secretary of State believes that he has a duty to ensure that public funds are used to best effect and he doubts whether that is now the case at Newbattle, as circumstances have changed over the years. He has therefore asked me to give you notice of his intention to withdraw Government support for the College at the end of the 1988-89 academic year. This will allow students who entered the College in the current session to complete their 2-year diploma courses. The Secretary of State has asked me to emphasise that the funds released by withdrawal of support from the College in 1989 will be devoted to encouraging wider access to further and higher education in Scotland in ways more relevant to current needs.

The Secretary of State appreciates that this news will come as great disappointment to the Board of Governors and to the staff. He has therefore also asked me to assure you that his decision should not in any sense be regarded as an adverse reflection on the achievements of Newbattle over the last 50 years; if is rather recognition that the College's job has largely been done and the opportunities now widely available in the Scottish education system for encouraging access to higher education have greatly diminshed the demand, and need, for the services now offered by the College in its current form.

Finally, I should emphasise that if the Governors so wish, the Department's officials would be very glad to assit in every way possible with their consideration of the implications of withdrawal of grant.

No doubt there will be public interest in the contents of this letter. I will arrange for it to be released to the Press tomorrow afternoon, once you have had time to tell the Governing Body, staff and students of its content.

I have sent a copy of this letter to each of the Trustees of the College.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Rifkind: The advisory bodies to which I make appointments are listed in "Public Bodies 1987" which was recently published by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service. Comprehensive information of the kind requested is not readily available but I can tell the hon. Member that members of the following bodies are asked to sign a declaration in connection with the Official Secrets Act:

Boundary Commission for Scotland
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
Scottish Economic Council
Scottish Industrial Development Advisory Board
Secretary of State's Advisory Panel of Economic Consultants

Members of the following bodies have the Act drawn to their attention:

Parole Board for Scotland
Local Review Committees for Her Majesty's Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions
Visiting Committees to Detention Centres and Young Offenders Institutions

Economic Advisers

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all his economic advisers who are paid from public funds.

Mr. Rifkind: My chief economic adviser is Dr. R. G. L. McCrone, secretary, Scottish Development Department, who is supported by a staff of 22 economists. In addition, I receive advice from my advisory panel of economic consultants drawn from economists working in the Scottish universities which meets on average some two or three times a year.

Electricity Boards (Performance)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet agreed new performance aims for the Scottish electricity boards.

Mr. Lang: After consultation with the boards I have agreed new cost reduction performance aims for the two-year period to March 1989. The aim for generation and transmission activities is for the boards jointly to reduce controllable unit costs in real terms by 5·7 per cent. by March 1989. Over the same period the South of Scotland Electricity Board will aim to reduce its controllable unit costs of distribution in real terms by 4 per cent. and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board will seek to reduce this element of its costs by 1 per cent.

Student Allowances

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about levels of student allowances and parental contributions for session 1988-89.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I propose to increase the main rates of allowances by 4 per cent. in the 1988-89 academic year. The new rates for Scottish students will be as follows (rates for 1987-88 are shown in brackets):

	£	
Student in the parental home	1,500	(1,442)
Student living away from home		
—outside London	1,990	(1,915)
—in London	2,365	(2,273)

Students in receipt of maintenance allowances will be eligible for reimbursement of travelling expenses in excess of £54 included in the main rates.

While the main rates of allowance have been increased by 4 per cent., in line with inflation, the threshold for parental contributions, and the points on the contribution scale at which the rate of contribution changes, will be raised at the higher rate of about 6·5 per cent. on average. Residual income is broadly the parents' gross income after deduction of those allowances permitted for income tax purposes. Parents earning a residual income of less than £9,900 will not be assessed for a contribution. The minimum contribution will be increased from £40 to £50 and the maximum, which in general applies only to parents with more than one child in receipt of grant, will rise from £4,600 to £4,900.

The full scale is as follows:

Residual Income £	*Contribution* £
9,900	50
10,000	64
11,000	207
12,000	350
12,600	435
12,700	455
12,800	475
12,900	495
13,000	515
14,000	715
15,000	915
16,000	1,115
17,000	1,315
18,000	1,515
18,400	1,595
18,500	1,620
19,000	1,745
20,000	1,995
21,000	2,245
22,000	2,495
23,000	2,745
24,000	2,995
25,000	3,245
26,000	3,495
27,000	3,745
28,000	3,995
29,000	4,245
30,000	4,495
31,000	4,745
31,620	[1]4,900

[1] Maximum.

Notes:
1. For 1988-89 the level of contribution will be assessed at £1 in £7 for residual incomes from £9,900 to £12,600; then £1 in £5 to £18,400; and £1 in £4 thereafter. (In 1987-88 it is assessed at £1 in £7 for residual incomes from £9,300 to £11,800; then £1 in £5 to £17,300; and £1 in £4 thereafter.)
2. The contribution payable may be less than the amounts shown on the scale, particularly at its top end and where the contribution is in respect of one award-holder only. This will depend on the amount of grant against which the contribution has to be set and whether any of the assessed contribution is offset by allowances for other dependent children.

National Health Service

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further resources he is making available in 1987-88 for the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend is making a further £7·6 million available to the hospitals and community health service programme for 1987-88. The extra money is intended to help with reducing waiting lists, upgrading facilities for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped, enhancing equipment in acute hospitals and in combating the AIDS problem.

Personal Files (Access)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has begun consultations with a view to making regulations on access to *(a)* housing records and *(b)* social services records under the Access to Personal Files Act 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* It is hoped to consult on regulations by the spring of next year for both housing and social services interests.

Urban Programme Areas (Housing Subsidy)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the housing subsidy figure for the Scottish equivalents of urban programme areas for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table lists the amount of housing support grant aid to those housing authorities within whose boundaries there are areas eligible for urban programme assistance.

Housing Support Grant paid

Area	*1985-86 £ million*	*1986-87 £ million*
Roxburgh	1·306	8·952
Clackmannan	—	—
Falkirk	—	—
Stirling	—	—
Nithsdale	—	—
Wigtown	0·096	—
Dunfermline	—	—
Kirkcaldy	—	—
Aberdeen	2·260	—
Banff and Buchan	1·600	0·558
Inverness	1·510	1·034
East Lothian	0·023	—
Edinburgh	—	—
Midlothian	—	—
West Lothian	—	—
Clydebank	1·779	0·804
Cunninghame	—	—
Dumbarton	—	—
Glasgow	32·676	21·891
Hamilton	—	—
Inverclyde	0·563	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	—	—
Kyle and Carrick	—	—
Monklands	0·328	—
Motherwell	—	—
Renfrew	—	—
Strathkelvin	—	—
Angus	—	—
Dundee	—	—
Perth and Kinross	—	—

Housing Costs

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the total number of Scottish local authority tenants in receipt of assistance with housing costs, by region and for Scotland as a whole, in the years from 1981 to 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

The information readily available is confined to rent and rate rebates and does not include help with rent and rates provided through supplementary benefit prior to the introduction of housing benefit in 1982-83. On this basis the information for Scotland as a whole is given in table 1. I regret that a breakdown into regions is not available for all the years requested, but the information that is available is given in table 2.

Table 1
Local authority tenants in Scotland receiving rent and rate rebates

Year	*Rent rebate (thousands)*	*Rate rebate (thousands)*
1980-81	237	305
1981-82	284	342
1982-83	457	535
1983-84	565	(note 4)
1984-85	573	611
1985-86	577	580
1986-87	598	603

Notes:

1. Figures for 1980-81 are derived from Scottish Office statistics for the former rebate and allowance scheme.
2. Figures for 1983-84 onwards are based on local authority claims for housing benefit subsidy.
3. The 1982-83 figures include rent and rate rebates paid to certain tenants included in the partial start of the housing benefit scheme in November 1982.
4. It has not been possible to isolate the number of local authority tenants receiving rate rebates in 1983-84, though the subsidy returns indicate a total figure in excess of 580,000.

Table 2: Local authority tenants in Scotland receiving rent and rate rebates by region

(Thousands)

Scottish Regions	*1984-85*		*1985-86*		*1986-87*	
	Rent rebate	*Rate rebate*	*Rent rebate*	*Rate rebate*	*Rent rebate*	*Rate rebate*
Borders	9·8	8·9	8·7	8·7	9·0	9·4
Central	29·2	32·1	28·6	31·3	29·6	32·2
Dumfries and Galloway	12·9	13·0	12·4	11·7	12·6	11·9
Fife	31·4	34·9	29·6	34·4	33·2	39·4
Grampian	34·0	34·0	33·4	33·3	34·2	34·9
Highland	13·1	13·5	13·4	13·8	13·5	13·9
Lothian	60·6	72·9	55·8	65·8	56·6	68·0
Strathclyde	263·6	348·7	286·1	335·8	296·5	348·5
Tayside	46·7	50·3	38·2	41·7	38·3	41·5
Scottish Islands	3·2	3·2	3·4	3·2	3·2	3·2
Development Corporations	68·0	—	67·4	—	71·4	—

Note: Figures are derived from local authority claims for housing benefit subsidy. For 1984-85 and 1985-86 they are based on final claims, subject to revision after audit. The 1986-87 figures are based on mid-year claims, and will be subject to revision when final claims are received.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Noise

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he will be able to provide an answer to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Newbury for answer on 17 November relating to industrial noise.

Mr. Nicholls: I am replying to my hon. Friend today.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current permitted

noise limits for industrial premises; whether there are any plans to reduce them; and what EEC regulations cover industrial noise.

Mr. Nicholls: At present specific legal limits on noise exposure apply in only a few sectors of industry. For industry generally an advisory code of practice published by the Health and Safety Executive recommends what action should be taken when daily personal noise exposure exceeds 90dB(A) or the peak sound pressure exceeds 600 Pascals.

The Health and Safety Commission published proposals for new legislation on 15 December which would require certain action at a daily personal noise exposure of 85dB(A), and additional protective measures at 90dB(A) or a peak sound pressure of 200 Pascals. The proposals would enable the United Kingdom to comply with EC directive 86/188/EEC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to noise at work. Other EC directives are concerned with noise at the operator's position on certain items of new industrial machinery.

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for the new job training scheme for each of the Manpower Services Commission areas in Greater London, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, the Birmingham and Solihull Manpower Services Commission area and for Great Britain as a whole (i) the number of entrants in the latest available period, and the number of cumulative entrants since the scheme started, (ii) a breakdown of entrants showing how many were *(a)* male, *(b)* female, *(c)* the length of time they had been out of work, *(d)* their ethnic background and *(e)* whether or not they had any disabilities, (iii) the number of trainees in the latest available period who entered work placements, and the cumulative total of how many are in work places at the latest available date, (iv) the number of trainees who left the scheme in the latest available period, and the number of cumulative leavers since the scheme started and (v) for all those trainees who have left the scheme how many (1) found work, (2) failed to attend, (3) went on to another course of training or education, (4) completed the course, (5) left for sickness or (6) went back into unemployment.

Mr. Cope: Information about all entrants to the new job training scheme is collated by MSC on an area basis and the information is set out in the tables.

As for leavers from the scheme, a return from managing agents seeking information on the reasons for leaving was first requested in October. Data from this return are known to be incomplete so far and will not be comparable between areas and managing agents in all places. The data do not provide reliable information about job entry rates or other trainee destinations. This information will be gathered by an independent follow-up survey of all trainees early in the new year. Managing agent returns will be considered in the light of that information.

Table 1

MSC—London region

	North London	*East London*	*South London*	*West London*	*Inner London North*	*Inner London South*
Number of entrants in latest available period (October)	289	123	61	143	221	313
Cumulative entrants since scheme started (April-October)	1,018	729	739	645	997	1,466
Cumulative						
(a) Male	640	459	473	372	379	1,045
(b) Female	378	270	266	273	618	421
(c) Length of time out of work						
1. 6-12 months	478	327	355	307	501	667
2. Over 12 months	251	158	195	172	290	396
3. Over 24 months	289	244	189	166	206	403
Declared ethnic background						
1. White	464	379	427	287	484	603
2. Black/African, Caribbean descent	277	142	132	120	374	503
3. Indian Sub-Continent descent	126	119	65	124	65	71
4. None of those	108	64	82	71	80	149
5. Not declared	43	25	33	43	44	140
(e) Declared disability	16	25	33	14	24	38
Entered practical experience placements in October	53	105	14	22	60	55
In practical experience (not cumulative total) placements at latest date (end October)	153	202	71	75	448	759
Cumulative leavers	637	386	394	530	478	541

	North London	East London	South London	West London	Inner London North	Inner London South
October leavers—none cumulative	307	110	65	151	117	127

Notes:

1. Due to difficulties in data collection some of the information given above is incomplete.
2. In the main, new Job Training Scheme trainees undertake individually designed packages of training and practical experience, flexible in nature and of varying length. The Scheme does not offer courses as such and trainees may and do leave at any time to pursue other opportunities.

Table 2

MSC—Merseyside and Manchester areas

	MCR central	MCR East	MCR North	Merseyside
Number of entrants in latest available period (October)	348	243	186	310
Cumulative entrants since scheme started (April-October)	1,408	850	933	1,719
Cumulative				
(a) Male	1,256	680	733	1,237
(b) Female	351	170	200	432
(c) Length of time out of work				
1. 6-12 months	586	327	340	498
2. Over 12 months	369	223	238	427
3. Over 24 months	648	296	355	794
(d) Ethnic Background				
1. White	1,191	723	760	1,500
2. Black/African, Caribbean descent	99	19	11	4
3. Indian Sub-Continent descent	64	29	34	8
4. None of these	217	64	91	181
5. I prefer not to say	36	15	37	21
(e) Disabled Persons	79	13	52	37
Entered practical experience placements in October	132	100	92	91
In practical experience placements at latest date (end October)	344	190	213	377
Cumulative Leavers	883	515	576	1,059
October leavers—none cumulative	203	170	139	261

1. Due to difficulties in data collection some of the information given above is incomplete.
2. In the main, new Job Training Scheme trainees undertake individually designed packages of training and practical experience, flexible in nature and of varying length. The Scheme does not offer courses as such and trainees may and do leave at any time to pursue other opportunities.

Table 3

MSC—Birmingham, Solihull and Great Britain

	Birmingham and Solihull	Great Britain
Number of entrants in latest available period (October)	424	11,331
Cummulative entrants since scheme started (April-October)	1,943	54,744
Cuulative		
(a) Male	1,321	37,995
(b) Female	622	13,215
(b) Length of time out of work		
1. 6-12 months	129	21,124
2. Over 12 months	95	12,272
3. Over 24 months	200	17,810
(d) Ethnic background		
1. White	261	41,009
2. Black/African Caribbean descent	58	2,912
3. Indian Sub-Continent descent	55	2,101
4. None of those	36	3,835
5. I prefer not to say	14	1,509
(e) Disabled persons	10	1,820
Entered practical experience placements in October	117	3,908
In practical experience placements at latest date (end October)	423	14,382
Cumulative leavers	1,072	30,669
October leavers	280	8,285

Notes:

1. Due to difficulties in data collection some of the information given above is incomplete.
2. In the main, new Job Training Scheme trainees undertake individually designed packages of training and practical experience, flexible in nature and of varying length. The Scheme does not offer courses as such and trainees may and do leave at any time to pursue other opportunities.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each new job training scheme—contracted managing agent in the Greater London area, what are the monthly figures since the start of the scheme for entrants during each period, showing how many *(a)* were male and female, *(b)* were six to 12 months unemployed, above and below the age of 25 years, *(c)* were 12 to 24 months unemployed, above and below the age of 25 years, *(d)* were unemployed for 24 months or more, above and below the age of 25 years, *(e)* were disabled, *(f)* were of ethinic minority origin and *(g)* entered work placements; how many leavers there were in each period; and of those how many (i) found work, (ii) failed to attend, (iii) went to further education course or other training, (iv) completed the

new JTS course, (v) left because of sickness and (vi) left for other reasons; and what are the latest cumulative figures for entrants and leavers.

Mr. Cope: It is not MSC policy to publish comparative information on the performance of individual managing agents.

New Workers Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the decision to cease the recruitment of applicants to the new workers scheme.

Mr. Lee: Since the announcement on 3 November this year of the scheme's impending closure, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) have both raised questions on the subject. I refer the hon. Member to my replies in the *Official Report*, 6 November, at column *725*, and 7 December, column *31*, respectively. A reply to the hon. Member's recent letter to me about the scheme's closure will be with him shortly.

YTS

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* major and *(b)* minor accidents have occurred in the last five years to participants on YTS schemes in Cleveland.

Mr. Cope: Between 1 April 1983 and 30 September 1987 there were 28 major and 208 minor accidents to YTS trainees in the Cleveland area. Independent research into accidents on YTS has shown that the injury rate for YTS trainees in no higher than the rate for employed young people.

MSC accident figures for YTS have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive for employed people. However, the Commission's figures include a number of accidents, in particular road traffic accidents during scheme time and accidents to trainees in education establishments, which may not have been reportable to the executive had the individuals been employed.

Up to 31 March 1986 major injuries were classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980. From 1 April 1986 major injuries have been classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurences Regulations 1985.

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places are currently available for males and females on YTS schemes; how many are estimated to be available to meet demand for YTS in summer 1988; and if he will break these figures down by local authority and region.

Mr. Cope: On 31 October 1987, there were approximately 540,000 available YTS places open to young people of either sex, of which 431,000 were filled. No local or regional breakdown for 1988 is yet available but the Government have provided additional resources for YTS to enable a further 27,000 places to be made available nationally.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in what circumstances 16 and 17-year-olds on the two-year YTS schemes are required to work on Christmas day; and whether, in those circumstances, they are entitled to overtime payments and a day off in lieu.

Mr. Cope: All YTS trainees are entitled to bank and public holidays or to paid time off in lieu. Trainees should be asked to attend on Christmas day only when regular employees do so and as part of the normal practice of the organisation. Any payments to trainees additional to the standard YTS allowance are at the discretion of training providers.

Federation of Business and Professional Women (Exhibition)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the United Kingdom Federation of Business and Professional Women to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I have received no formal application for this but I would be pleased to give support to the exhibition.

Chief Adjudication Officer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list for each of the recommendations made in the second report of the chief adjudication officer which affect his Department the action which has been taken to implement them.

Mr. Lee: Six recommendations in the 1985-86 annual report of the Chief Adjudication Officer (CAO) related to my Department. The recommendations together with a summary of the response given by my Department to the CAO, are as follows:

Recommendation 9

"While fully recognising the manpower constraints to which the Unemployment Benefit Service is subject, I can only observe that a better use of AOs time, through adequate support staff to pursue enquiries necessary for deciding claims etc. should pay considerable dividends. I, therefore, recommend again that such support should be improved"

Response

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 3 December at column *673*.

Recommendation 10

"Improvement in the quality of decision-making is unlikely to occur if the number of decisions expected from each AO is as high as at present. I, therefore, recommend again that DE carry out a review of the time allowance".

Response

A Management services survey in November 1986 formed the view that there was not sufficient evidence to justify an approach to the Treasury for an increase to the time allowances. However, the number of adjudication officers has increased from 345 in April 1986 to over 500 currently, an increase of 45 per cent. while work load has increased by substantially less.

Recommendation 11

"I regard it as important that RASs should have the capacity to continue casework monitoring and also adjudication on trade disputes. I, therefore recommend that DE should make available within each Region, adequate resources to enable the RAOs to continue these functions".

Response

Instructions were issued in March 1987 to regional adjudication officers and sector adjudication managers

setting out the arrangements for monitoring the quality of adjudication officers' decisions and appeal submissions. These were agreed with the office of the CAO. The Department believes that adequate resources are available to perform the tasks referred to in the recommendation.

Recommendations 18, 19 and 25

"I think it important that DE should utilise the very considerable knowledge and experience which we can offer on training. I, accordingly, recommend that DE bring OCAO fully into discussions on the training needed by DE AOs and in the preparation of course material".

"I recommend that the Birmingham DE trainers should play a full part in the future development of training material".

"I recommend that DE Sector Adjudication Managers (HEO/AOs) should be required to examine at regular and frequent intervals appeal submissions prepared by each of their AOs".

Response

These recommendations have been implemented.

TVAM (Dispute)

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the assistance of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has been sought in resolving the dispute between the management of TVAM and the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians over manning levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: I understand that both parties have briefed ACAS, which is keeping in touch and will remain available to help to resolve the dispute.

Construction Industry

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals to make it more attractive for building trades employers to finance, in part or in whole, formal training courses for their employees at institutions of further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The Government provide considerable support for initial training through YTS and various adult training schemes administered by the Manpower Services Commission. The industry benefits from this support but the main responsibility for the training of building trades employees lies with their employers, individually and through the construction industry training board. The board operates a levy/grant scheme which aims to spread the costs of training across the industry.

However, the Manpower Services Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Science and Inland Revenue, is preparing to issue, early in 1988, a guide to tax reliefs for employers' expenditure on education and training.

Stratford Colour Company Ltd.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when Stratford Colour Company was last inspected by health and safety inspectors; what advice the inspectors gave; to what degree their recommendations were complied with; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Stratford Colour Company Ltd. at Maryland Road, London, E15, was last visited by an inspector of the Health and Safety Executive on 8 May 1987. The purpose of the visit was to check whether the company had complied with three improvement notices issued by an inspector on 16 February 1987. The terms of these notices required the company to improve *(a)* monitoring of concentrations of lead in air, *(b)* records of assessment of exposure to lead, and *(c)* records of maintenance of measures to control lead, in order to meet the requirements of the Control of Lead at Work Regulations 1980.

The inspector found that all notices had been complied with.

Small Firms

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the measures introduced by the Government to encourage small firms since 1979.

Mr. Cope: I will write to my hon. Friend with the information requested and will place a copy of my letter in the *Official Report*.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Lee: The list of Department of Employment group advisory committees is given on pages 15 to 17 of the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1987." There are two committees whose members are required to sign the Official Secrets Act, the Manpower Services Committee for Scotland and the Manpower Services Committee for Wales. There are no other advisory committees whose members are required either to sign a declaration under or have the provisions of section 2 drawn to their attention.

Family Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average expenditure per household in 1979 and 1986-87 at *(a)* current prices, *(b)* 1979 prices and *(c)* 1987 prices on (1) electricity, (2) gas, (3) telephone charges, (4) water supply, (5) public transport and (6) prescription charges.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is shown for 1979 in the table.

Average weekly household expenditure (£s)
United Kingdom: 1979

	Current prices	*June 1987 prices*
Electricity[1]	2·51	4·60
Gas[1]	1·52	2·79
Telephone	1·09	1·99
Water[2]	0·18	0·33
Public Transport[3]	1·49	2·73
Prescriptions[4]	0·03	0·06

Source: Family Expenditure Survey.

[1] Includes both account payments and slot meter payments (less rebates).

[2] Excludes sewerage charges.

[3] Includes both season and non-season ticket expenditure.

[4] Includes charges for National Health Service appliances.

Full information for 1986 will not be available until after the publication of the report of the 1986 family expenditure survey at the end of the year. I will forward the 1986 data to the hon. Member then.

Bracken

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice his Department gives to farm workers and the public about the harmful effects of bracken on people and animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is the enforcing authority for the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 which places duties on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of persons at work and those who may be affected by work activities. HSE inspectors give advice on health and safety matters, including the effects of bracken during the course of their visits.

The agricultural development and advisory service of MAFF provides advice concerning the harmful effects of bracken on farm animals.

It is known that in some circumstances bracken can be toxic to animals which eat it.

The significance of the toxic properties of bracken for people is currently being considered by the relevant Government Departments.

Industrial Language Training Service

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy towards maintaining a viable local education authority-based industrial language training service for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Cope: In the light of the issues raised in the review of the industrial language training service and subsequent consultations, I am considering its management and funding after the current financial year. I have agreed to the request of the local authority associations that I meet them to hear their views before reaching a decision.

Unemployment Policy

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the major changes of policy announced by him since June.

Mr. Norman Fowler *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The following is a list of some of the major policy announcements made in the last six months. On 30 June I wrote to the chairman of the MSC to explain the changes I had decided to make to programmes run by the MSC, to consult the commission on the proposed transfer of some functions from the MSC to the Department of Employment and to inform the MSC of certain changes I intended to make to its composition. Following consideration of the commission's response on 23 July I informed the chairman of the MSC on 31 July of my intention to go ahead with the transfer of functions from the MSC to the Department of Employment. I announced the creation of the employment service on 23 October.

The Employment Bill was published on 23 October.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State announced on 29 October his intention, as soon as legislative time is available, to increase the age limit up to which women can receive a statutory redundancy payment from 60 to 65 years.

On 13 November, following observations made by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee, I announced a review of the Skills Training Agency.

In a statement on 18 November I announced the establishment from September 1988 of a unified training programme for unemployed adults by bringing together the community programme, the job training scheme and a number of other training programmes for adults.

On 2 December I gave details of the appointment of Lloyds Merchant Bank Ltd. to act as my advisers and report to me early in the new year about options for transferring Professional and Executive Recruitment out of the public sector.

In a joint announcement on 9 December, I invited all major higher education institutions to apply for MSC funding in order to bring enterprise to the centre of their activities.

On 10 December I issued a consultative document entitled "Restrictions on the Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation".

On 14 December I announced new procedures for ensuring that claimants to unemployment benefits are available for work.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Sixty people are presently employed in the information division of my Department. It is anticipated that 67 people will be employed in the division in a year's time.

Note: These figures are likely to change following the transfer of staff from the employment group of the MSC to the Department of Employment.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Manpower Services Commission; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Sixty one and a half people are presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Manpower Services Commission. It is anticipated that 57½ will be employed in a year's time.

Note: These figures are likely to change following the transfer of staff from the employment group of the MSC to the Department of Employment.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The total estimated spending by this Department for 1987-88 is as follows:

£ Million Expenditure Department of Employment

	£ million
Television	2·8
Radio/Newspaper	0·5
Outdoor	3·3
Other Promotional Material	4·7
Total	11·3

Notes:

The figures for radio and newspaper advertising are not available separately.

The estimated expenditure for this Department for 1988-89 has not yet been approved and a detailed budget breakdown is not therefore available at present.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by the Manpower Services Commission on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The latest estimated spending as requested for 1987-88 is as follows:

	£ million
Television Advertising	15·8
Radio Advertising	—
Press Advertising	15·3
Other Promotional Material	11·1
Total	32·2

[1] This figure includes a small element for radio advertising not separately identifiable.

The expenditure levels for 1988-89 have not yet been set.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The estimated expenditure by this Department on press and public relations for 1987-88 is £1·17 million.

The estimated expenditure for this Department for 1988-89 has not yet been approved and a figure is not therefore available at present.

Note:

The above figures represents general administrative expenditure relating to costs for staff, accommodation and for regional services.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Manpower Services Commission on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The estimated expenditure by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) on press and public relations for 1987-88 is £1·22 million.

The estimated expenditure for the MSC for 1988-89 has not yet been approved and a figure is not therefore available at present.

Note:

The above figure represents general administrative expenditure relating to costs for staff accommodation and for regional services.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animals (Cruelty)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many reported cases of cruelty to animals have led to *(a)* prosecution and *(b)* conviction for each of the last five years;

(2) how many reported cases of cruelty to animals involving equines led to *(a)* prosecution and *(b)* conviction for each of the last five years;

(3) how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions have been made under the Animals Act 1911 for each of the last five years;

(4) how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions have been made under the Animals Act 1911 for each of the last five years for cases involving equines;

(5) how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions have been made under the Animals Act 1911 for each of the last five years in relation to tethering of equines;

(6) how many reported cases of cruelty to animals there have been for each of the last five years;

(7) how many reported cases of cruelty to animals for each of the last five years involved equines.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The only readily available information relates to all court proceedings in respect of offences relating to cruelty to animals and is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables, Vol 1", copies of which are in the Library, under offence classification 108. Those proceedings under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 are given in the table below. Details of the animals involved in such offences and the circumstances of the offence are not collected centrally.

Defendants proceeded against and found guilty of offences under the Protection of Animals Act 1911

England and Wales

Year	*Total proceeded against*	*Total found guilty*
1982	820	728
1983	839	747
1984	875	764
1985	989	848
1986	1,026	875

Equines

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will estimate how many deaths of equines have occurred in each of the last five years in which illegal or incorrect tethering was a contributory factor;

(2) if he will estimate how many equines have died for each of the last five years as a result of either illegal or incorrect tethering.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Such information is not collected centrally.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received *(a)* in favour of, and *(b)* opposed to proposed legislation on Sunday trading.

Mr. Renton: Since 20 November 1986, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) answered a similar question from the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor), at column 297, we have received 248 written representations broadly in favour of Sunday trading and 147 against.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates have been charged with drug misuse and trafficking while in prison and have appeared before a prison governor or board of visitors, in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: In 1986 about 1,670 charges of possessing, delivering or receiving controlled drugs were dealt with by governors or boards of visitors in prison department establishments in England and Wales. Information for earlier years is not available.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of vacancies for prison officers at Wandsworth prison on 31 October.

Mr. John Patten: On 31 October the difference between the authorised staffing level for a 39-hour week and staff in post for prison officers was 87. This is based on the existing criteria for manning, to be replaced under Fresh Start. The revised criteria are still the subject of discussion between the prison department and the local branch of the Prison Officers Association.

Remand

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time a person is held in prison on remand awaiting trial.

Mr. John Patten: Information on the average time spent on remand in prison department establishments is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales", table 2*(a)* of the latest issue, for 1986, Cm. 210, copies of which are in the Library.

Court of Appeal (Statistics)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of how many of the cases he has referred to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)*(a)* of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 in the years 1982 to 1987 in respect of conviction and sentence, the appeals were *(a)* allowed and *(b)* disallowed by the Court of Appeal;

(2) how many cases he referred to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)*(a)* of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 in the years 1982 to 1987 *(a)* in respect of conviction and *(b)* in respect of sentence.

Mr. John Patten: The information is as follows:

Reference to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968

(a) In respect of conviction:

Year	Number of cases referred	Number of defendants involved	Results: Appeals allowed	Results: Appeals dismissed
1982	4	7	4	—
1983	3	3	3	—
1984	12	14	3	[2]6
1985	4	4	2	2
1986	4	4	1	3
[1]1987	[2]6	13	2	—

[1] To 1 December 1987.
[2] Three cases abandoned.
[3] Four cases awaiting determination.

(b) In respect of sentence:

Year	Number of cases referred	Number of defendants involved	Results: Appeals allowed	Results: Appeals dismissed
1982	2	2	2	—
1983	2	2	1	1
1984	3	3	2	1
1985	4	4	4	—
1986	13	13	12	1
[1]1987	[2]27	28	19	—

[1] To 1 December 1987.
[2] Seven cases awaiting determination and one abandoned.

Free Pardons and Remission

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases he has recommended to Her Majesty the Queen *(a)* a free pardon, *(b)* remission of imprisonment, *(c)* remission of detention and *(d)* remission of fine in the years 1981 to 1987.

Mr. John Patten: The information for the years 1981 to 1986 is contained in the "Criminal Statistics: England and Wales: Supplementary Tables Vol. 4: 1981 to 1986", copies of which are in the Library. The available information for the year 1987, as at 1 December is as follows:

1987 (to 1 December)

Pardons and remissions granted	Number of persons to whom granted: Total	Males	Females	Grounds on which granted: On grounds affecting the original conviction	On account of technical irregularities in conviction or sentence	As a reward for assistance to the authorities	Medical or other compassionate grounds	Other cases
Free pardons	[1]36	[1]28	8	32	4	—	—	—
Remission of imprisonment	61	52	9	—	1	26	18	16
of youth custody	15	9	6	—	—	5	6	4
of detention in detention centre	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
of fines	[1]9	7	1	8	1	0	0	0

[1] includes 1 company.

Wrongful Convictions

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what and how many ex gratia payments he has made in respect of wrongful conviction in the years 1982-1987.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*[1]1987*
Number of awards	7	3	1	8	8	9
Individual payments (£)	24,275	19,500	6,000	9,500	31,500	22,450
	20,519	8,500	—	7,900	52,000	35,400
	12,602	14,500	—	13,000	5,000	20,000
	8,345	—	—	5,000	20,500	34,000
	2,000	—	—	5,000	10,350	2,150
	25,000	—	—	121,000	10,250	10,500
	18,000	—	—	5,000	18,510	27,156
	—	—	—	45,150	5,000	66,650
	—	—	—	—	—	1,250

[1] To 30 November 1987.
Note: The information relates to the date in which the final award was made in each case; some sums include an interim payment which may have been made in an earlier year.

Independent Television Companies

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when he next meets the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, he will discuss with him the criteria the authority uses in determining whether an individual television company is conforming to its franchise conditions when it is unable to provide a full programme service as a result of an industrial dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: This is a contractual matter for the authority.

North Wales Constabulary

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will allocate additional funds to the North Wales constabulary to enable the Police Authority to avoid rural station closures and to enhance existing rural provision, bearing in mind the financial difficulties of the Clwyd and Gwynedd county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is for the North Wales police authority to decide what resources should be made available to its force. The Home Office meets 51 per cent. of whatever the authority spends on the police, and block grant from the Welsh Office makes a further contribution from central Government funds. I understand from the chief constable that the police authority has agreed to provide finance to recruit up to its full police establishment of 1,316 by the end of this financial year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will visit the headquarters of the North Wales constabulary to discuss with the North Wales Police Authority policing and police strengths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend hopes to include a visit to the headquarters of the North Wales constabulary in his programme of engagements for the coming year.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the new computer applications and services that will arise from the replacement for the police national computer.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department is about to undertake a survey of all users of the police national computer to determine their requirements for a new PNC. This survey will form the basis for decisions about whether any new applications are required and, if so, what should be their nature and scope.

Nationality Applications

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken for an application for British nationality to be processed; and if he will establish procedures to absolve the need for applicants who are visa nationals to obtain re-entry visas should they travel abroad.

Mr. Renton: The average time taken to complete applications for citizenship granted in November 1987 was six months for registration and 15 months for naturalisation. But the ending on 31 December 1987 of certain registration entitlements has resulted in a very large number of applications and it is not possible to give a reliable estimate of the average time likely to be taken to complete applications now being received.

We are not prepared to exclude visa nationals from the re-entry visa requirement purely on the ground that they are applicants for British citizenship. However, nationals of Pakistan and Commonwealth citizens normally requiring visas who are settled in the United Kingdom, including applicants for British nationality, do not need a re-entry visa before travelling abroad, and can obtain a passport stamp to confirm that they are exempt from the visa requirement.

Mr. Andrew Jennings

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what disciplinary action he has taken in respect of the senior officers who authorised surveillance of the then BBC journalist Mr. Andrew Jennings while he was conducting an investigation into police corruption in 1985;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the number of occasions in the last five years when surveillance operations against journalists by the Metropolitan police have been authorised; and what estimate of the cost of these operations has been made by the Commissioner in each of these years;

(3) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many Metropolitan police officers were involved in the surveillance operation in 1985 on the then BBC journalist Mr. Andrew Jennings; how many man hours and overtime hours were spent on the operation; which CID department carried out the operation; and how much the operation cost.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It has been the long-standing policy of successive Governments not to confirm or deny that surveillance measures have been authorised. We do not intend to depart from the policy.

I understand that the commissioner has decided that no disciplinary action is justified against any police officer as a result of Mr. Jennings' complaint which was investigated under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority.

Detective Superintendent Anthony Lundy

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many police officers are involved in conducting the investigation led by Chief Constable Peter Wright into allegations about police corruption made in a television programme in November 1986;

(2) what reasons were given to him by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for the suspension of Detective Superintendent Anthony Lundy from the Metropolitan police in July; which police force has been designated to investigate the matter; and when a report on the case is expected.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The commissioner is not required to consult my right hon. Friend before he suspends one of his officers and did not do so before Mr. Lundy was suspended. I understand, however, that the decision to suspend was based on the report received in July 1987 of an internal inquiry conducted by the Metropolitan police. That report was made available to Mr. Peter Wright, chief constable of the South Yorkshire police, so that account could be taken of it in the wider investigation which he was conducting into allegations made in a television programme. The size of Mr. Wright's investigating team has varied, in accordance with the extent and complexity of the inquiries being conducted at any particular time, from 18 officers to four. His investigation has been conducted under the supervision of the independent Police Complaints Authority.

Scotland Yard (Senior Officers)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are made for Metropolitan police officers of the rank of deputy assistant commissioner and above to remain in contact with Scotland Yard at weekends.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that area deputy assistant commissioners and their deputies are provided with radio pagers. Their private address and telephone numbers are retained in the central command complex and contingency arrangements exist for urgent contact to be made. Similar arrangements exist for deputy assistant commissioners and more senior officers in other operational posts.

Citizenship (Registration)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the interpretation of the phrase "since 1st January 1973" on the front page of his Department's Form R, "Application for Registration as a British Citizen"; what advice his Department has given about the meaning to be attached to that phrase; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Representations have been received from several hon. Members and others including the Leeds city council, the Leeds community relations councils and the Greek Cypriots' Association of Fulham-Hammersmith. We have explained that the words in question were chosen in an attempt to describe simply in a leaflet for guidance, which makes it plain that the law on registration is in the British Nationality Act 1981, a complicated part of the requirements. If misunderstood, the words used would tend to encourage rather than discourage applications.

DNA Tests

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the reliability of DNA tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The applicability of DNA testing in Home Office areas of responsibility continues to be examined. We plan to publish in the new year the results of a pilot study in a number of immigration cases.

King's Cross (Fire)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many police were deployed at King's Cross on the night of the recent major fire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that about 200 Metropolitan police officers were engaged in duties at the scene of the fire and in various support capacities during the night.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many fire appliances were deployed to deal with the King's Cross Underground station fire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the London Fire Brigade that the initial attendance despatched to the fire consisted of four pumping appliances and one turntable ladder. Subsequently a total of 30 appliances, including the initial attendance, were used together with a number of specialist appliances and ancillary vehicles. After some hours a relief force of 15 pumping appliances took over

from the original attendance and a further relief of eight such appliances took over in the early hours of the morning of 19 November.

Kent Police (Rifles)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to why the Kent Police Authority retained for five years Sterling automatic rifles which were purchased for an anti-terrorist operation in 1978.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that for several years after 1978, there was judged to be a possibility of further international conferences in Kent which might require similar operations to the one referred to by the hon. Member. The weapons in question were retained until the possible need for them was considered to have passed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to whether Sterling automatic rifles were used in training exercises in the Kent area in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982 and 1983, respectively.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand that while these weapons were in the possession of Kent constabulary they were used from time to time for training purposes. If any weapon is held by a police force, its officers must be given the appropriate training before the issue of the weapon can be authorised.

Restaurant Staff (Attacks)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the number, by district, of reported attacks on restaurant staff in 1986 and for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the commissioner that the available information, which may be incomplete, indicates that about 120 offences of violence against the person by members of the public on staff of cafes or restaurants are recorded each year. The numbers in most districts are small and so subject to wide variation.

M1 Convoy (14 December)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Buckinghamshire as to the nature of the cargo being conducted southward on the M1 on 14 December by three police patrol cars and on board two Ford transcontinental lorries, registration numbers KMH 304W and KMH 303W; why police patrol cars were necessary; what was the risk to other traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the cargo was a valuable load which justified police protection as a precaution against possible theft. The nature of the load was not in any way hazardous and presented no threat to the public or other traffic.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the estimated costs at current and at constant prices of private pension income tax reliefs in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1985 and the latest year for which the figures are available, distinguishing between employers', employees' and self-employed contributions, tax-free lump sums and other reliefs, and also showing the costs as a proportion of income tax revenues.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Readily available estimates of the direct revenue costs of pension reliefs are given in the table.

Direct Revenue Costs of Pension Reliefs

Relief for:	*1985-86*		*£ billion 1987-88*
	current prices	*1987-88 prices*	*1987-88 prices*
Employers' contributions to occupational pension schemes[1]	3·3	3·5	2·9
Employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes	1·5	1·7	1·6
Retirement annuity premiums[2]	0·40	0·40	0·45
Lump sum payments[3]	1·1	1·2	1·2
Investment income of occupational pensions schemes[3]	3·9	4·2	4·1

[1] on the basis that employers' contributions are not taxable as a benefit in kind of the employee.
[2] including premiums paid by self-employed and others. It is not possible to estimate the costs of exemption of investment income related to retirement annuity contracts.
[3] assuming relief at the basic rate of income tax.

The total cost of the reliefs cannot be calculated by adding the costs of the individual reliefs as this would imply a considerable degree of multiple taxation. Income tax receipts in 1987-88 are expected to be about £40 billion.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table setting out for the latest year for which figures are available the estimated amounts by which income tax liability is reduced on account of private pension income tax reliefs, assuming taxpayers with gross annual earnings in the ranges under £5,000, £5,000 to £10,000, £10,000 to £20,000, £20,000 to £30,000, £30,000 to £50,000, £50,000 to £100,000 and over £100,000.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates for 1987-88 are as follows:

Range of total earned income £	*Number of taxpaying units[1] receiving relief for contributions to occupational pensions schemes or retirement annuity policies* (thousands)	*Average reduction in income tax liability, on account of individuals' contributions to occupational pensions schemes and retirement annuity policies* £
0-5,000	280	60
5,000-10,000	2,500	100
10,000-20,000	4,510	180
20,000-30,000	1,060	370
30,000-50,000	345	870
50,000-100,000	75	2,300
over 100,000	10	6,400

[1] Married couples are treated as one unit.

Allowances

Sir William Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of increasing the single person's allowance to £3,110.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue cost at 1988-89 levels of income of increasing the single person's allowance to £3,110 is estimated to be £2·2 billion. The cost assumes the wife's earned income allowance and the single age allowance are increased by the same cash amount and is compared with indexation of the current income tax bands and allowances to 1988-89 levels as in table 4·1 of the 1987 Autumn Statement.

Take-home Pay

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the growth of real take-home pay for a married man on male average earnings since 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1978-79, real take-home pay has risen by almost 24 per cent. for a married man on average earnings. Average earnings are those for men in all occupations paid at adult rates, working a full week whose pay is unaffected by absence.

Taxation

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the estimated increased yield from lowering the higher tax rate to 60 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I regret that it is not possible to isolate the effect of reducing the top rates of income tax, but the proportion of tax paid by the top 1 per cent. of taxpayers in 1978-79 (part of whose income was liable at rates of 60 per cent. or more) was 11·2 per cent. In 1987-88, the top 1 per cent. are estimated to pay 13·5 per cent. of the yield.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking a reduction in the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the proportion of taxation receipts in 1987-88 to be derived from capital gains tax.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 1½ per cent. including corporation tax on capital gains realised by companies.

Information Technology

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the professional information technology staff in the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, respectively, including programmers, systems analysts and managers, are based in London and the south east.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the Inland Revenue, 25 per cent. of the professional information technology staff are based in London and the south-east.

At 16 December 1987, 98 per cent. of the professional information technology staff employed in Customs and Excise were based in London and the south-east.

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the trainees for professional information technology posts within the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, respectively, are *(a)* female and *(b)* more than 30 years of age.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the Inland Revenue, 35 per cent. of the trainees for professional information technology posts are women. Of these women trainees, 29 per cent. are more than 30 years of age.

At 16 December 1987 20 per cent. of the trainee professional information technology staff employed in Customs and Excise were women, 8 per cent. were women more than 30 years of age and 26 per cent. of all trainees were more than 30 years of age.

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the professional information technology staff in the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, respectively, including programmers, systems analysts and managers, are *(a)* female and *(b)* more than 30 years of age.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the Inland Revenue 25 per cent. of the 1,250 professional information technology staff are women; 14 per cent. of the women are more than 30 years of age and 67 per cent. of all the staff are more than 30 years of age.

At 16 December 1987, 17 per cent. of all professional information technology staff employed in Customs and Excise were women, 9 per cent. were women more than 30 years of age and 68 per cent. of all staff were more than 30 years of age.

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many professional level information technology staff are employed by the Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, respectively, including programmers, systems analysts and managers, and how many trainees there are for such posts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue employs approximately 1,250 professional level information technology staff at the levels of executive officer to unified grade 3. Of these approximately 250 are trainees.

At 16 December 1987 Customs and Excise employed 467 professional information technology staff, of which 50 were trainees.

Latin America

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received regarding the indebtedness of Latin American countries.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this subject, most of them part of a campaign by War On Want.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue yields in 1987-88 from corporation tax on companies' capital gains, indicating the extent to which the estimate has been affected by the falls in share prices in recent months.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About £800 million. Receipts in 1987-88 relate to disposals in earlier years and are therefore unaffected by the recent falls in share prices.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *165*, he will indicate what information of any kind is available as to the current or recent pound sterling value of British-owned assets held abroad.

Mr. Major: Figures for the level of United Kingdom overseas assets at the end of 1986 may be found in the United kingdom balance of payments (Pink Book) 1987 edition. The latest issue of the *Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin* contains information on United Kingdom banks' assets overseas as at the end of June 1987. Data on flows of United Kingdom investment overseas during the first three quarters of 1987 were included in the quarterly balance of payments press notice published by the Central Statistical Office on 15 December 1987.

Retail Prices Index (Error)

Sir William Clark: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the effects of the retail prices index error on occupational and public service pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he will take to compensate public service pensioners who have suffered any loss as a result of the miscalculation of the retail prices index.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what adjustments will be made to Civil Service pensions arising from the computer error on the retail prices index; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Some private sector occupational schemes provide benefit increases which to a greater or lesser degree reflect changes in the cost of living. Others do not. In the small minority of private schemes where benefit increases are linked to the retail prices index it will be for those responsible to decide how, if at all, they should react to the small error in the index. For public service official pensioners, the Government will, after the recess be laying an order which will reflect in the normal way the order made in November uprating social security benefits from 11 April next. As for the statutory social security uprating, the rate of increase in these official pensions will be 4·2 per cent. These pensioners will suffer no permanent loss in their pension rates, as their pension levels from 1 April 1989 will be what they would have been if the error in the index had not occurred.

The rates of pension received by retired public servants vary very widely according to their length of service and final salary when in employment. Flat-rate compensation for the index error would be inappropriate. Precise compensation would have administrative costs out of proportion to the sums concerned. Many public service pensioners are also national insurance retirement pensioners and will receive compensation on that account. The Government will not, therefore, be making any ex gratia payments to members of public service schemes that they administer, including the parliamentary scheme and the schemes for the judiciary, the Civil Service, the National Health Service, the armed forces and teachers. For other public service schemes, including those for local government, the police and the fire service, the issue will be considered by the relevant Government Departments, in consultation with the public authorities concerned.

In informing the House of the error in the index on 11 December, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment made clear that the Exchequer should not benefit from its effects on social security expenditure. On the same basis, we do not intend that the Exchequer should benefit from the effects of the error on the public service pensions the Government administer—a sum of £5 million or more. Like the comparable sum arising on social security, this will be available for allocation to suitable charities, including those active in support of retired or needy members of the public services. Details of the arrangements will be announced later.

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he will take to correct the entitlements of those who hold, and those who have disposed of, national savings and gilt-edged index-linked securities, owing to the miscalculation of the retail prices index.

Mr. Lilley: The prospectuses for index-linked gilts and national savings instruments state that the relevant index for calculating interest and redemption values is the general index of retail prices maintained and issued monthly by the Department of Employment and published in the London, Edinburgh and Belfast *Gazettes*. In the case of an index-linked gilt the index figure applicable to any month is the figure issued seven months prior to the relevant month and relating to the month before that prior month. In the case of index linked national savings, the relevant figure is the index issued in the immediately preceding calendar month.

The amounts paid to the holders of index-linked gilts and national savings instruments have been calculated strictly in accordance with this formulation. The question of retrospective adjustment does not therefore arise.

Government Data Network

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate the anticipated level of savings necessary to justify proceeding with the construction of the Government data network.

Mr. Brooke: The network will proceed only if it represents value for money over the life of the project.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how Her Majesty's Customs and Excise will utilise the Government data network to obtain vehicle data.

Mr. Brooke: There is no intention for the police national computer (PNC) to use the proposed Government data network (GDN). If the current Customs and Excise departmental data network is replaced by the GDN, the interface between the PNC and the Customs and Excise departmental reference and information computer (CEDRIC) will be retained, to enable vehicle data to be transferred to selected CEDRIC terminals.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wray: to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to his reply of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *374*, how many people in Scotland were working, for each year since 1983, in *(a)* industrial cleaning, *(b)* computer services and *(c)* road haulage.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information is only available for 1984, from the census of employment. In September 1984 the number of employees in employment in Scotland in industrial and commercial cleaning services totalled 15,000, in computer services 2,800, and in road haulage 19,400.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in the *Official Report*, those companies that raised more than £500,000 under the business expansion scheme during its first year of operation and the amount raised in each case.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In 1983-84, 44 companies raised £500,000 or more under the business expansion scheme and the total amount raised was £51 million. I regret that I am unable to list those companies as details of the use of the scheme by individual companies are obtained by the Inland Revenue on a confidential basis.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cumulative amount of revenue lost to the Exchequer as a result of tax relief granted under the business expansion scheme to individuals investing in companies involved in (i) farming and (ii) property development, until their eligibility under the scheme was withdrawn by the Finance Acts 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The revenue cost of relief for individuals investing under the business expansion scheme in companies involved in (i) farming in 1983-84 was £10 million and in (ii) property development in 1983-84 and 1984-85 was £25 million. Each of these trades became eligible for relief again from 18 March 1986 but information on investments made after this date is not yet available.

Government Revenue

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net contribution to Government revenue from *(a)* external financing limits, *(b)* tax, and *(c)* dividend income from (1) The Central Electricity Generating Board, The North of Scotland Hydro-Electricity Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board, (2) British Steel, (3) the water authorities, (4) British Gas and (5) British Telecom.

Mr. Major: Government revenue in 1986-87 from tax and dividends for the industries named was as follows:

	Tax	*Dividends*
(a) Electricity Supply Industry[1] (England and Wales)	0	0
North of Scotland Hydro-Electricity Board	0	0
South of Scotland Electricity Board	0	0
Total Electricity	0	0
(b) British Steel	0	0
(c) The Water Authorities	0	0
(d) British Gas[2]	[3]913	0
(e) British Telecom[2]	[3]494	[4]252

[1] Separate figures for the Central Electricity Generating Board are not kept centrally.
[2] Both these industries are in the private sector. British Telecom was privatised in November 1984; British Gas in December 1986.
[3] Tax paid as in annual report and accounts. Gas includes gas levy.
[4] Dividends payable as in annual report and accounts.

2. These figures do not include interest payments made by industries on loans from the Exchequer, or interest on the Exchequer's debenture stock in British Gas and preference shares in British Telecom.

3. The following industries of those named in the question had negative external financing in 1986-87:

	£ million
Electricity Supply Industry (England and Wales)	−1,325
North of Scotland Hydro-Electricity Board	−12
British Gas Corporation	−684

Negative external finance represents either a repayment of outstanding Government or market debt held by the industry, or an increase in their deposits with the public sector. All the other industries had positive external finance.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate *(a)* the capital gains tax and *(b)* the corporation tax yield in 1986-87 from (i) gains in quoted shares and (ii) gains in unquoted shares; and if he has any estimate of expected revenues in 1987-88.

Mr. Norman Lamont: With regard to the first part of the question I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) on 8 December 1987 at columns *68-69*. Revenues in 1987-88 from capital gains tax and corporation tax on capital gains realised by companies are estimated to be £1,300 million and £800 million respectively.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received seeking an alteration to the rules relating to mortgage interest tax relief; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend continues to receive a number of representations on mortgage interest relief. The level of relief has to be fixed each year and will be considered in framing the Budget proposals.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, by range of income, estimates for 1987-88 of the number of tax units receiving mortgage interest tax relief, the average value per mortgagor and the total cost of the relief.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Provisional estimates are given in the table. These are based on projections to 1987-88 of information in the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and the 1985 family expenditure survey. The estimates include mortgages formerly under the option mortgage scheme which are now subsumed within MIRAS.

Tax Unit[1] receiving mortgage interest relief by range of total income 1987-88.

Range of total income £000	*Numbers receiving mortgage interest relief[2] (thousands)*	*Average value of relief to mortgagor (£)*	*Total cost of relief (£ million)*
Under 4	650	370	240
4 to 5	100	380	40
5 to 6	140	410	50
6 to 7	210	420	80
7 to 8	270	450	120
8 to 9	370	470	170
9 to 10	480	480	230
10 to 12	1,150	540	600
12 to 15	1,600	560	890
15 to 20	1,900	580	1,100
20 to 25	730	580	410
25 to 30	330	810	270
Over 30	470	1,170	550
Total	8,400	570	4,750

[1] Single persons and married couples.
[2] Including about 500,000 non-taxpayers.

Personal Incomes

Mr. Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures on personal income, treating child benefit as negative income tax and using 1987-88 prices, but otherwise on the same basis as those provided to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in the *Official Report*, 27 March, columns *310-38*.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The information is given in the following tables.

Fifty per cent. of average male earnings (£113·65 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			*Married no children*			*Married both working*			*Married two children*		
	£ per week	*£ per week 1987-88 prices*	*Per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1987-88 prices*	*Per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1987-88 prices*	*Per cent. of gross earnings*	*£ per week*	*£ per week 1987-88 prices*	*Per cent. of gross earnings*
1978-79												
Income tax	7·91	15·90	17·0	4·42	8·89	9·5	0·00	0·00	0·0	−1·88	−3·78	−4·1
NIC	3·02	6·07	6·5	3·02	6·07	6·5	3·02	6·07	6·5	3·02	6·07	6·5
Total	10·93	21·98	23·6	7·44	14·96	16·0	3·02	6·07	6·5	1·14	2·29	2·5
1979-80												
Income tax	8·95	15·54	16·4	5·20	9·03	9·5	0·00	0·00	0·0	−2·80	−4·86	−5·1
NIC	3·55	6·16	6·5	3·55	6·16	6·5	3·55	6·16	6·5	3·55	6·16	6·5
Total	12·50	21·70	22·9	8·75	15·19	16·0	3·55	6·16	6·5	0·75	1·30	1·4
1980-81												
Income tax	11·78	17·58	17·9	7·33	10·94	11·2	0·00	0·00	0·0	−1·21	−1·81	−1·8
NIC	4·43	6·61	6·7	4·43	6·61	6·7	4·43	6·61	6·7	4·43	6·61	6·7
Total	16·21	24·20	24·7	11·76	17·55	17·9	4·43	6·61	6·7	3·22	4·81	4·9
1981-82												
Income tax	13·95	18·68	19·1	9·51	12·73	13·0	1·58	2·12	2·2	−0·35	−0·47	−0·5
NIC	5·65	7·56	7·7	5·65	7·56	7·7	5·65	7·56	7·7	5·65	7·56	7·7
Total	19·60	26·24	26·9	15·16	20·30	20·8	7·23	9·68	9·9	5·30	7·10	7·3
1982-83												
Income tax	14·58	18·23	18·5	9·50	11·88	12·1	0·48	0·60	0·6	−1·44	−1·80	−1·8
NIC	6·89	8·62	8·8	6·89	8·62	8·8	6·89	8·62	8·8	6·89	8·62	8·8
Total	21·47	26·85	27·3	16·39	20·49	20·8	7·37	9·22	9·4	5·45	6·81	6·9
1983-84												
Income tax	15·35	18·34	18·0	9·53	11·38	11·1	0·00	0·00	0·0	−2·65	−3·17	−3·1
NIC	7·70	9·20	9·0	7·70	9·20	9·0	7·70	9·20	9·0	7·70	9·20	9·0
Total	23·05	27·54	27·0	17·23	20·58	20·2	7·70	9·20	9·0	5·05	6·03	5·9
1984-85												

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
Income tax	16·18	18·40	17·5	9·55	10·86	10·3	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·71	−4·22	−4·0
NIC	8·33	9·47	9·0	8·33	9·47	9·0	8·33	9·47	9·0	8·33	9·47	9·0
Total	24·51	27·87	26·5	17·88	20·33	19·3	8·33	9·47	9·0	4·62	5·25	5·0
1985-86												
Income tax	17·05	18·31	17·2	9·84	10·56	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·96	−4·25	−4·0
NIC	8·93	9·59	9·0	8·93	9·59	9·0	7·54	8·10	7·6	8·93	9·59	9·0
Total	25·98	27·89	26·2	18·77	20·15	18·9	7·54	8·10	7·6	4·97	5·34	5·0
1986-87												
Income tax	17·92	18·64	16·8	10·56	10·98	9·9	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·64	−3·79	−3·4
NIC	9·60	9·98	9·0	9·60	9·98	9·0	6·62	6·88	6·2	9·60	9·98	9·0
Total	27·52	28·62	25·8	20·16	20·97	18·9	6·62	6·88	6·2	5·96	6·20	5·6
1987-88												
Income tax	18·09	18·09	15·9	10·98	10·98	9·7	0·00	0·00	0·0	−3·52	−3·52	−3·1
NIC	10·23	10·23	9·0	10·23	10·23	9·0	7·05	7·05	6·2	10·23	10·23	9·0
Total	28·32	28·32	24·9	21·21	21·21	18·7	7·05	7·05	6·2	6·71	6·71	5·9

Seventy-Five per cent. of average male earnings (£170·48 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	15·56	31·29	22·4	12·07	24·27	17·3	5·28	10·62	7·6	5·66	11·38	8·1
NIC	4·52	9·09	6·5	4·52	9·09	6·5	4·52	9·09	6·5	4·52	9·09	6·5
VAT	1·79	3·60	2·6	1·66	3·33	2·4	2·01	4·04	2·9	1·81	3·64	2·6
Other indirect	6·19	12·44	8·9	7·13	14·33	10·2	8·20	16·48	11·8	6·92	13·92	9·9
Total of above	28·05	56·41	40·3	25·37	51·02	36·5	20·01	40·23	28·7	18·91	38·03	27·2
Domestic rates	2·38	4·80	3·4	2·35	4·72	3·4	2·89	5·80	4·1	2·37	4·77	3·4
Total	30·44	61·21	43·7	27·72	55·75	39·8	22·89	46·03	32·9	21·28	42·79	30·6
1979-80												
Income tax	17·15	29·77	20·9	13·40	23·26	16·3	6·17	10·71	7·5	5·40	9·37	6·6
NIC	5·33	9·25	6·5	5·33	9·25	6·5	5·33	9·25	6·5	5·33	9·25	6·5
VAT	3·33	5·78	4·1	3·03	5·26	3·7	3·62	6·28	4·4	3·37	5·86	4·1
Other indirect	7·04	12·23	8·6	8·02	13·91	9·8	9·16	15·91	11·02	7·87	13·67	9·6
Total of above	32·85	57·03	40·1	29·78	51·69	36·3	24·28	42·15	29·6	21·98	38·15	26·8
Domestic rates	2·84	4·92	3·5	2·79	4·83	3·4	3·42	5·94	4·2	2·81	4·89	3·4
Total	35·69	61·95	43·5	32·56	56·53	39·7	27·70	48·10	33·8	24·79	43·04	30·2
1980-81												
Income tax	21·63	32·29	21·9	17·19	25·66	17·4	9·26	13·82	9·4	8·65	12·91	8·8
NIC	6·65	9·93	6·7	6·65	9·93	6·7	6·65	9·93	6·7	6·65	9·93	6·7
VAT	4·09	6·10	4·1	3·77	5·63	3·8	4·44	6·63	4·5	4·10	6·12	4·2
Other indirect	8·26	12·34	8·4	9·39	14·01	9·5	10·66	15·92	10·8	9·18	13·70	9·3
Total of above	40·63	60·65	41·2	37·00	55·22	37·5	31·02	46·30	31·5	28·58	42·66	29·0
Domestic rates	3·71	5·54	3·8	3·62	5·40	3·7	4·37	6·53	4·4	3·65	5·45	3·7
Total	44·34	66·18	45·0	40·61	60·62	41·2	35·39	52·82	35·9	32·23	48·11	32·7
1981-82												
Income tax	24·89	33·32	22·7	20·45	27·38	18·7	12·52	16·76	11·4	10·59	14·18	9·7
NIC	8·48	11·35	7·7	8·48	11·35	7·7	8·48	11·35	7·7	8·48	11·35	7·7
VAT	4·53	6·06	4·1	4·11	5·51	3·8	4·80	6·43	4·4	4·55	6·09	4·2
Other indirect	9·61	12·87	8·8	10·89	14·57	9·9	12·38	16·58	11·3	10·80	14·46	9·9
Total of above	47·51	63·61	43·4	43·93	58·81	40·1	38·19	51·13	34·9	34·41	46·08	31·5
Domestic rates	4·56	6·10	4·2	4·45	5·96	4·1	5·43	7·27	5·0	4·50	6·02	4·1
Total	52·06	69·71	47·6	48·38	64·77	44·2	43·62	58·39	39·9	38·91	52·09	35·6
1982-83												
Income tax	26·39	33·00	22·4	21·31	26·65	18·1	12·28	15·35	10·4	10·37	12·97	8·8
NIC	10·33	12·92	8·8	10·33	12·92	8·8	10·33	12·92	8·8	10·33	12·92	8·8
VAT	4·68	5·86	4·0	4·25	5·32	3·6	5·01	6·27	4·2	4·74	5·93	4·0
Other indirect	10·01	12·52	8·5	11·39	14·24	9·7	13·04	16·30	11·0	11·27	14·10	9·5
Total of above	51·42	64·29	43·6	47·28	59·12	40·1	40·66	50·84	34·4	36·72	45·91	31·1
Domestic rates	4·98	6·23	4·2	4·89	6·12	4·1	6·01	7·52	5·1	4·94	6·18	4·2
Total	56·40	70·52	47·8	52·18	65·24	44·2	46·67	58·36	39·5	41·65	52·08	35·3

Seventy-five per cent. of average male earnings (£170·48 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1983-84												
Income tax	28·18	33·66	22·0	22·35	26·70	17·4	12·05	14·40	9·4	10·17	12·15	7·9
NIC	11·54	13·79	9·0	11·54	13·79	9·0	11·54	13·79	9·0	11·54	13·79	9·0
VAT	5·20	6·21	4·1	4·75	5·67	3·7	5·63	6·72	4·4	5·30	6·34	4·1
Other indirect	10·95	13·09	8·5	12·45	14·87	9·7	14·32	17·11	11·2	12·31	14·71	9·6
Total of above	55·87	66·74	43·6	51·09	61·03	39·8	43·54	52·01	33·9	39·32	46·98	30·7
Domestic rates	5·04	6·03	3·9	4·96	5·93	3·9	6·09	7·28	4·8	5·02	6·00	3·9
Total	60·91	72·77	47·5	56·05	66·96	43·7	49·63	59·29	38·7	44·35	52·98	34·6
1984-85												
Income tax	30·06	34·18	21·7	23·42	26·63	16·9	11·86	13·49	8·5	10·16	11·55	7·3
NIC	12·49	14·20	9·0	12·49	14·20	9·0	12·49	14·20	9·0	12·49	14·20	9·0
VAT	6·22	7·07	4·5	5·88	6·69	4·2	6·82	7·76	4·9	6·23	7·09	4·5
Other indirect	11·61	13·20	8·4	13·22	15·04	9·5	15·25	17·34	11·0	13·12	14·93	9·5
Total of above	60·38	68·66	43·5	55·02	62·57	39·7	46·42	52·79	33·5	42·01	47·77	30·3
Domestic rates	5·34	6·07	3·8	5·25	5·97	3·8	6·43	7·31	4·6	5·33	6·06	3·8
Total	65·72	74·73	47·4	60·27	68·54	43·4	52·85	60·10	38·1	47·34	53·83	34·1
1985-86												
Income tax	31·94	34·29	21·5	24·73	26·55	16·6	12·01	12·89	8·1	10·93	11·73	7·3
NIC	13·40	14·39	9·0	13·40	14·39	9·0	11·91	12·79	8·0	13·40	14·39	9·0
VAT	6·90	7·41	4·6	6·51	6·99	4·4	7·70	8·26	5·2	6·82	7·32	4·6
Other indirect	12·24	13·14	8·2	13·94	14·96	9·4	16·28	17·48	10·9	13·79	14·80	9·3
Total of above	64·47	69·22	43·3	58·58	62·89	39·3	47·90	51·42	32·2	44·94	48·25	30·2
Domestic rates	5·73	6·16	3·9	5·65	6·07	3·8	6·97	7·48	4·7	5·71	6·13	3·8
Total	70·21	75·38	47·2	64·23	68·96	43·1	54·87	58·91	36·9	50·65	54·38	34·0
1986-87												
Income tax	33·39	34·73	20·9	26·03	27·07	16·3	13·01	13·53	8·1	11·83	12·30	7·4
NIC	14·40	14·98	9·0	14·40	14·98	9·0	13·12	13·65	8·2	14·40	14·98	9·0
VAT	7·44	7·74	4·7	6·98	7·26	4·4	8·17	8·49	5·1	7·25	7·54	4·5
Other indirect	13·25	13·78	8·3	14·98	15·58	9·4	17·52	18·22	10·9	14·91	15·51	9·3
Total of above	68·48	71·23	42·8	62·40	64·90	39·0	51·82	53·89	32·4	48·39	50·32	30·2
Domestic rates	6·44	6·70	4·0	6·34	6·59	4·0	7·81	8·12	4·9	6·37	6·63	4·0
Total	74·93	77·93	46·8	68·74	71·49	42·9	59·63	62·01	37·3	54·76	56·95	34·2
1987-88												
Income tax	33·44	33·44	19·6	26·32	26·32	15·4	13·73	13·73	8·1	11·82	11·82	6·9
NIC	15·34	15·34	9·0	15·34	15·34	9·0	13·98	13·98	8·2	15·34	15·34	9·0
VAT	8·16	8·16	4·8	7·60	7·60	4·5	8·76	8·76	5·1	7·82	7·82	4·6
Other indirect	13·90	13·90	8·2	15·58	15·58	9·1	18·12	18·12	10·6	15·46	15·46	9·1
Total of above	70·84	70·84	41·6	64·84	64·84	38·0	54·58	54·58	32·0	50·43	50·43	29·6
Domestic rates	7·04	7·04	4·1	6·89	6·89	4·0	8·46	8·46	5·0	6·90	6·90	4·0
Total	77·88	77·88	45·7	71·73	71·73	42·1	63·04	63·04	37·0	57·33	57·33	33·6

Hundred per cent. of average male earnings (£227·30 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	23·22	46·69	25·0	19·73	39·67	21·3	12·32	24·77	13·3	13·32	26·78	14·4
NIC	6·03	12·12	6·5	6·03	12·12	6·5	6·03	12·12	6·5	6·03	12·12	6·5
VAT	2·46	4·95	2·7	2·37	4·76	2·6	2·78	5·58	3·0	2·43	4·88	2·6
Other indirect	7·54	15·15	8·1	8·48	17·05	9·1	9·49	19·09	10·2	7·91	15·90	8·5
Total of above	39·25	78·91	42·3	36·61	73·61	39·5	30·62	61·56	33·0	29·68	59·69	32·0
Domestic rates	2·87	5·78	3·1	2·70	5·44	2·9	3·08	6·19	3·3	2·79	5·61	3·0
Total	42·12	84·69	45·4	39·32	79·05	42·4	33·70	67·75	36·3	32·47	65·30	35·0
1979-80												
Income tax	25·35	44·01	23·2	21·60	37·50	19·8	14·16	24·58	13·0	13·60	23·61	12·4
NIC	7·10	12·33	6·5	7·10	12·33	6·5	7·10	12·33	6·5	7·10	12·33	6·5
VAT	4·60	7·98	4·2	4·36	7·58	4·0	5·01	8·70	4·6	4·53	7·86	4·1
Other indirect	8·67	15·06	7·9	9·65	16·75	8·8	10·69	18·56	9·8	9·13	15·85	8·4
Total of above	45·72	79·37	41·8	42·71	74·15	39·1	36·96	64·16	33·8	34·36	59·65	31·4
Domestic rates	3·43	5·96	3·1	3·22	5·59	2·9	3·65	6·33	3·3	3·33	5·77	3·0
Total	49·15	85·33	45·0	45·93	79·74	42·0	40·61	70·50	37·2	37·68	65·42	34·5

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1980-81												
Income tax	31·49	47·00	24·0	27·05	40·38	20·6	19·11	28·52	14·5	18·51	27·63	14·1
NIC	8·87	13·24	6·8	8·87	13·24	6·8	8·87	13·24	6·8	8·87	13·24	6·8
VAT	5·65	8·43	4·3	5·41	8·07	4·1	6·13	9·15	4·7	5·52	8·23	4·2
Other indirect	10·21	15·24	7·8	11·33	16·92	8·6	12·44	18·57	9·5	10·70	15·97	8·1
Total of above	56·22	83·91	42·8	52·66	78·60	40·1	46·55	69·49	35·4	43·59	65·07	33·2
Domestic rates	4·51	6·73	3·4	4·20	6·27	3·2	4·67	6·98	3·6	4·34	6·48	3·3
Total	60·73	90·64	46·2	56·86	84·87	43·3	51·23	76·46	39·0	47·93	71·55	36·5
1981-82												
Income tax	35·84	47·98	24·6	31·39	42·03	21·5	23·46	31·41	16·1	21·53	28·83	14·8
NIC	11·31	15·14	7·8	11·31	15·14	7·8	11·31	15·14	7·8	11·31	15·14	7·8
VAT	6·29	8·42	4·3	5·96	7·98	4·1	6·71	8·98	4·6	6·14	8·23	4·2
Other indirect	11·87	15·89	8·1	13·15	17·61	9·0	14·44	19·33	9·9	12·54	16·79	8·6
Total of above	65·31	87·44	44·8	61·81	82·76	42·4	55·92	74·86	38·3	51·53	68·98	35·3
Domestic rates	5·54	7·42	3·8	5·17	6·92	3·5	5·80	7·76	4·0	5·34	7·15	3·7
Total	70·85	94·86	48·6	66·98	89·67	45·9	61·71	82·63	42·3	56·87	76·13	39·0
1982-83												
Income tax	38·19	47·75	24·3	33·11	41·40	21·0	24·09	30·12	15·3	22·17	27·72	14·1
NIC	13·77	17·22	8·7	13·77	17·22	8·7	13·77	17·22	8·7	13·77	17·22	8·7
VAT	6·50	8·13	4·1	6·16	7·71	3·9	6·98	8·73	4·4	6·40	8·00	4·1
Other indirect	12·38	15·48	7·9	13·76	17·18	8·7	15·16	18·95	9·6	13·09	16·36	8·3
Total of above	70·84	88·58	45·0	66·78	83·50	42·4	60·00	75·02	38·1	55·42	69·30	35·2
Domestic rates	6·05	7·56	3·8	5·67	7·09	3·6	6·41	8·02	4·1	5·85	7·32	3·7
Total	76·89	96·14	48·8	72·45	90·59	46·0	66·41	83·04	42·2	61·27	76·62	38·9

One hundred per cent. of average male earnings (£227·30 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1983-84												
Income tax	41·00	48·98	24·0	35·18	42·03	20·6	24·88	29·72	14·5	23·00	27·48	13·5
NIC	15·39	18·39	9·0	15·39	18·39	9·0	15·39	18·39	9·0	15·39	18·39	9·0
VAT	7·20	8·60	4·2	6·85	8·19	4·0	7·80	9·32	4·6	7·12	8·51	4·2
Other indirect	13·55	16·19	7·9	15·02	17·94	8·8	16·65	19·90	9·7	14·30	17·08	8·4
Total of above	77·14	92·16	45·1	72·44	86·54	42·4	64·72	77·32	37·9	59·81	71·46	35·0
Domestic rates	6·12	7·31	3·6	5·74	6·86	3·4	6·49	7·76	3·8	5·94	7·10	3·5
Total	83·26	99·47	48·7	78·18	93·40	45·7	71·22	85·08	41·6	65·76	78·55	38·5
1984-85												
Income tax	43·93	49·96	23·7	37·30	42·42	20·2	25·73	29·26	13·9	24·04	27·34	13·0
NIC	16·65	18·93	9·0	16·65	18·93	9·0	16·65	18·93	9·0	16·65	18·93	9·0
VAT	8·29	9·43	4·5	8·14	9·26	4·4	9·27	10·55	5·0	8·79	10·00	4·8
Other indirect	14·32	16·29	7·7	15·93	18·12	8·6	17·68	20·10	9·6	15·18	17·26	8·2
Total of above	83·20	94·61	45·0	78·03	88·73	42·2	69·33	78·84	37·5	64·66	73·53	35·0
Domestic rates	6·48	7·37	3·5	6·08	6·91	3·3	6·85	7·79	3·7	6·30	7·17	3·4
Total	89·67	101·97	48·5	84·10	95·64	45·5	76·18	86·63	41·2	70·97	80·70	38·4
1985-86												
Income tax	46·83	50·28	23·6	39·62	42·54	20·0	26·90	28·88	13·6	25·82	27·72	13·0
NIC	17·87	19·19	9·0	17·87	19·19	9·0	17·07	18·33	8·6	17·87	19·19	9·0
VAT	9·20	9·87	4·6	9·01	9·67	4·5	10·35	11·11	5·2	9·65	10·37	4·9
Other indirect	15·10	16·21	7·6	16·79	18·03	8·5	18·77	20·15	9·5	15·96	17·13	8·0
Total of above	89·00	95·55	44·8	83·29	89·42	42·0	73·09	78·47	36·8	69·30	74·40	34·9
Domestic rates	6·94	7·46	3·5	6·53	7·01	3·3	7·41	7·96	3·7	6·74	7·24	3·4
Total	95·94	103·01	48·3	89·82	96·44	45·3	80·50	86·43	40·6	76·05	81·64	38·3
1986-87												
Income tax	48·86	50·82	22·9	41·50	43·16	19·4	28·48	29·62	13·3	27·30	28·39	12·8
NIC	19·21	19·98	9·0	19·21	19·98	9·0	17·50	18·20	8·2	19·21	19·98	9·0
VAT	9·94	10·34	4·7	9·71	10·09	4·5	11·16	11·60	5·2	10·33	10·74	4·8
Other indirect	16·41	17·07	7·7	18·14	18·87	8·5	20·38	21·19	9·5	17·36	18·05	8·1
Total of above	94·42	98·20	44·2	88·56	92·10	41·5	77·51	80·61	36·3	74·20	77·17	34·8
Domestic rates	7·81	8·13	3·7	7·33	7·63	3·4	8·32	8·66	3·9	7·54	7·85	3·5
Total	102·24	106·33	47·9	95·89	99·73	44·9	85·84	89·27	40·2	81·74	85·01	38·3
1987-88												
Income tax	48·78	48·78	21·5	41·67	41·67	18·3	29·07	29·07	12·8	27·17	27·17	12·0

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
NIC	20·46	20·46	9·0	20·46	20·46	9·0	18·64	18·64	8·2	20·46	20·46	9·0
VAT	10·94	10·94	4·8	10·62	10·62	4·7	12·08	12·08	5·3	11·24	11·24	4·9
Other indirect	17·31	17·31	7·6	18·97	18·97	8·3	21·20	21·20	9·3	18·13	18·13	8·0
Total of above	97·48	97·48	42·9	91·72	91·72	40·4	80·99	80·99	35·6	77·00	77·00	33·9
Domestic rates	8·56	8·56	3·8	7·99	7·99	3·5	9·03	9·03	4·0	8·20	8·20	3·6
Total	106·04	106·04	46·7	99·72	99·72	43·9	90·02	90.02	39·6	85·20	85·20	37·5

One hundred and fifty per cent. of average male earnings (£340·95 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income Tax	38·53	77·47	27·7	35·04	70·46	25·2	27·64	55·58	19·9	29·63	57·57	20·6
NIC	7·80	15·68	5·6	7·80	15·68	5·6	9·05	18·20	6·5	7·80	15·68	5·6
VAT	3·87	7·77	2·8	3·86	7·75	2·8	4·24	8·53	3·0	3·72	7·47	2·7
Other indirect	10·36	20·82	7·4	11·31	22·75	8·1	11·97	24·07	8·6	9·97	20·04	7·2
Total of above	60·55	121·75	43·5	58·01	116·64	41·7	52·90	106·38	38·0	50·11	100·76	36·0
Domestic rates	3·90	7·83	2·8	3·45	6·93	2·5	3·44	6·92	2·5	3·66	7·37	2·6
Total	64·45	129·58	46·3	61·45	123·57	44·1	56·35	113·30	40·5	53·78	108·13	38·6
1979-80												
Income Tax	41·74	72·46	25·5	37·99	65·95	23·2	30·55	53·04	18·6	29·99	52·06	18·3
NIC	8·78	15·24	5·4	8·78	15·24	5·4	10·66	18·51	6·5	8·78	15·24	5·4
VAT	7·27	12·63	4·4	7·17	12·46	4·4	7·76	13·47	4·7	6·96	12·08	4·2
Other indirect	12·11	21·02	7·4	13·10	22·74	8·0	13·70	23·79	8·4	11·78	20·45	7·2
Total of above	69·90	121·35	42·6	67·04	116·39	40·9	62·67	108·80	38·2	57·51	99·84	35·1
Domestic rates	4·70	8·15	2·9	4·13	7·18	2·5	4·09	7·11	2·5	4·41	7·65	2·7
Total	74·60	129·51	45·5	71·18	123·56	43·4	66·77	115·91	40·7	61·91	107·49	37·8
1980-81												
Income tax	51·20	76·42	26·0	46·76	69·80	23·7	38·82	57·94	19·7	38·22	57·05	19·4
NIC	11·14	16·63	5·7	11·14	16·63	5·7	13·30	19·85	6·7	11·14	16·63	5·7
VAT	8·93	13·33	4·5	8·85	13·22	4·5	9·51	14·20	4·8	8·50	12·68	4·3
Other indirect	14·31	21·36	7·3	15·43	23·04	7·8	16·00	23·88	8·1	13·89	20·73	7·0
Total of above	85·58	127·74	43·4	82·19	122·67	41·7	77·63	115·87	39·4	71·74	107·09	36·4
Domestic rates	6·20	9·25	3·1	5·42	8·10	2·8	5·27	7·87	2·7	5·79	8·64	2·9
Total	91·78	136·99	46·6	87·61	130·77	44·5	82·90	123·74	42·1	77·53	115·73	39·3
1981-82												
Income tax	57·72	77·28	26·4	53·28	71·33	24·3	45·35	60·72	20·7	43·42	58·13	19·8
NIC	15·50	20·75	7·1	15·50	20·75	7·1	16·96	22·71	7·7	15·50	20·75	7·1
VAT	9·92	13·28	4·5	9·78	13·09	4·5	10·52	14·09	4·8	9·44	12·64	4·3
Other indirect	16·54	22·14	7·6	17·83	23·87	8·1	18·55	24·83	8·5	16·14	21·61	7·4
Total of above	99·68	133·45	45·5	96·38	129·04	44·0	91·38	122·34	41·8	84·50	113·13	38·6
Domestic rates	7·58	10·15	3·5	6·65	8·90	3·0	6·53	8·75	3·0	7·09	9·49	3·2
Total	107·26	143·61	49·0	103·03	137·94	47·1	97·91	131·09	44·7	91·59	122·62	41·8
1982-83												
Income tax	61·80	77·27	26·2	56·72	70·92	24·0	47·70	59·64	20·2	45·78	57·24	19·4
NIC	19·25	24·07	8·2	19·25	24·07	8·2	20·66	25·83	8·8	19·25	24·07	8·2
VAT	10·25	12·82	4·3	10·10	12·63	4·3	10·92	13·66	4·6	9·80	12·25	4·1
Other indirect	17·24	21·56	7·3	18·56	23·21	7·9	19·40	24·25	8·2	16·82	21·03	7·1
Total of above	108·54	135·72	46·0	104·63	130·83	44·3	98·68	123·39	41·8	91·65	114·59	38·8
Domestic rates	8·24	10·30	3·5	7·26	9·08	3·1	7·20	9·01	3·1	7·73	9·66	3·3
Total	116·78	146·02	49·5	111·89	139·90	47·4	105·88	132·40	44·8	99·37	124·26	42·1

One hundred and fifty per cent. of average male earnings (£340·95 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1983-84												
Income Tax	66·65	79·62	26·0	60·83	72·67	23·7	50·53	60·36	19·7	48·65	58·12	19·0
NIC	21·15	25·27	8·2	21·15	25·27	8·2	23·09	27·58	9·0	21·15	25·27	8·2
VAT	11·36	13·57	4·4	11·22	13·40	4·4	12·14	14·61	4·7	10·90	13·02	4·2
Other indirect	18·95	22·63	7·4	20·34	24·30	7·9	21·33	25·48	8·3	18·43	22·01	7·2

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
Total of above	118·10	141·09	46·0	113·54	135·64	44·3	107·09	127·93	41·8	99·13	118·42	38·6
Domestic rates	8·34	9·97	3·3	7·36	8·79	2·9	7·29	8·71	2·8	7·85	9·38	3·1
Total	126·45	151·06	49·3	120·90	144·43	47·1	114·38	136·65	44·6	106·98	124·80	41·7
1984-85												
Income Tax	71·68	81·51	25·8	65·05	73·97	23·4	53·48	60·82	19·3	51·79	58·89	18·7
NIC	22·50	25·59	8·1	22·50	25·59	8·1	24·98	28·41	9·0	22·50	25·59	8·1
VAT	12·63	14·36	4·5	12·86	14·62	4·6	14·17	16·12	6·1	14·13	16·07	5·1
Other indirect	19·99	22·73	7·2	21·59	24·55	7·8	22·53	25·63	8·1	19·47	22·14	7·0
Total of above	125·79	144·18	45·7	122·00	138·73	44·0	115·17	130·97	41·5	107·89	122·69	38·9
Domestic rates	8·35	10·06	3·2	7·80	8·87	2·8	7·70	8·75	2·8	8·33	9·48	3·0
Total	135·64	154·24	48·9	129·80	147·60	46·8	122·86	139·72	44·3	116·23	132·17	41·9
1985-86												
Income Tax	76·60	82·24	25·7	69·39	74·50	23·3	56·67	60·84	19·0	55·59	59·68	18·7
NIC	23·85	25·61	8·0	23·85	25·61	8·0	26·80	28·77	9·0	23·85	25·61	8·0
VAT	14·02	15·05	4·7	14·26	15·31	4·8	15·71	16·87	5·3	15·60	16·75	5·2
Other indirect	21·11	22·67	7·1	22·78	24·45	7·6	23·80	25·55	8·0	20·51	22·02	6·9
Total of above	135·58	145·56	45·5	130·28	139·87	43·8	122·98	132·04	41·3	115·55	124·05	38·8
Domestic rates	9·48	10·18	3·2	8·38	8·99	2·8	8·30	8·91	2·8	8·92	9·58	3·0
Total	145·06	155·74	48·7	138·65	148·86	46·6	131·28	140·95	44·1	124·47	133·62	41·8
1986-87												
Income Tax	79·81	83·00	24·9	72·45	75·35	22·6	59·42	61·80	18·6	58·25	60·58	18·2
NIC	25·65	26·68	8·0	25·65	26·68	8·0	28·81	29·96	9·0	25·65	26·68	8·0
VAT	15·18	15·79	4·7	15·41	16·02	4·8	16·91	17·59	5·3	16·79	17·46	5·2
Other indirect	23·03	23·96	7·2	24·76	25·75	7·7	25·86	26·90	8·1	22·49	23·39	7·0
Total of above	143·68	149·43	44·9	138·26	143·80	43·2	131·00	136·24	40·9	123·18	128·11	38·5
Domestic rates	10·68	11·11	3·3	9·42	9·80	2·9	9·32	9·69	2·9	10·00	10·40	3·1
Total	154·36	160·54	48·2	147·68	153·59	46·1	140·32	145·94	43·8	133·18	138·51	41·6
1987-88												
Income Tax	79·47	79·47	23·3	72·35	72·35	21·2	59·76	59·76	17·5	57·85	57·85	17·0
NIC	26·55	26·55	7·8	26·55	26·55	7·8	30·69	30·69	9·0	26·55	26·55	7·8
VAT	16·81	16·81	4·9	17·01	17·01	5·0	18·47	18·47	5·4	18·48	18·48	5·4
Other indirect	24·51	24·51	7·2	26·15	26·15	7·7	27·13	27·13	8·0	23·78	23·78	7·0
Total of above	147·33	147·33	43·2	142·07	142·07	41·7	136·05	136·05	39·9	126·65	126·65	37·1
Domestic rates	11·77	11·77	3·5	10·33	10·33	3·0	10·14	10·14	3·0	10·95	10·95	3·2
Total	159·11	159·11	46·7	152·39	152·39	44·7	146·19	146·19	42·9	137·61	137·61	40·4

Two hundred per cent. of average male earnings (£454·60 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	54·74	110·07	29·5	50·51	101·07	27·2	42·95	86·36	23·1	43·94	88·35	23·7
NIC	7·80	15·68	4·2	7·80	15·68	4·2	12·06	24·25	6·5	7·80	15·68	4·2
Total	62·54	125·75	33·7	58·31	117·24	31·4	55·01	110·61	29·6	51·74	104·03	27·9
1979-80												
Income tax	58·53	101·61	26·8	54·39	94·42	24·9	46·95	81·51	21·5	46·39	80·53	21·2
NIC	8·78	15·24	4·0	8·78	15·24	4·0	14·21	24·67	6·5	8·78	15·24	4·0
Total	67·31	116·85	30·8	63·17	109·67	28·9	61·16	106·18	28·0	55·17	95·78	25·2
1980-81												
Income tax	72·91	108·83	27·7	66·99	99·99	25·5	58·53	87·36	22·3	58·45	87·24	22·2
NIC	11·14	16·63	4·2	11·14	16·63	4·2	17·74	26·48	6·8	11·14	16·63	4·2
Total	84·05	125·46	32·0	78·13	116·62	29·7	76·27	113·84	29·0	69·59	103·87	26·5
1981-82												
Income tax	85·04	113·85	29·1	78·59	105·22	26·9	68·01	91·05	23·3	68·73	92·02	23·6
NIC	15·50	20·75	5·3	15·50	20·75	5·3	22·61	30·27	7·7	15·50	20·75	5·3
Total	100·54	134·61	34·5	94·09	125·97	32·2	90·62	121·33	31·1	84·23	112·77	28·9
1982-83												
Income tax	89·27	111·62	28·4	82·50	103·16	26·2	71·31	89·16	22·7	71·56	89·48	22·7
NIC	19·25	24·07	6·1	19·25	24·07	6·1	27·54	34·44	8·7	19·25	24·07	6·1
Total	108·52	135·69	34·5	101·75	127·23	32·3	98·85	123·60	31·4	90·81	113·55	28·8

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1983-84												
Income tax	94·99	113·48	27·8	87·22	104·20	25·5	76·18	91·01	22·3	75·04	89·65	21·9
NIC	21·15	25·27	6·2	21·15	25·27	6·2	30·78	36·77	9·0	21·15	25·27	6·2
Total	116·14	138·75	34·0	108·37	129·46	31·7	106·96	127·78	31·3	96·19	114·91	28·1
1984-85												
Income tax	102·96	117·08	27·8	94·12	107·03	25·4	81·23	92·37	22·0	80·86	91·95	21·9
NIC	22·50	25·59	6·1	22·50	25·59	6·1	33·30	37·87	9·0	22·50	25·59	6·1
Total	125·46	142·67	33·9	116·62	132·62	31·5	114·53	130·24	31·0	103·36	117·54	27·9
1985-86												
Income tax	110·68	118·83	27·9	101·07	108·51	25·5	86·45	92·81	21·8	87·27	93·70	22·0
NIC	23·85	25·61	6·0	23·85	25·61	6·0	35·73	38·36	9·0	23·85	25·61	6·0
Total	134·53	144·43	33·9	124·92	134·12	31·5	122·18	131·18	30·8	111·12	119·30	28·0
1986-87												
Income tax	116·37	121·03	27·3	106·22	110·47	24·9	90·37	93·99	21·2	92·02	95·70	21·6
NIC	25·65	26·68	6·0	25·65	26·68	6·0	38·41	39·95	9·0	25·65	26·68	6·0
Total	142·02	147·70	33·3	131·87	137·15	30·9	128·78	133·93	30·2	117·67	122·38	27·6
1987-88												
Income tax	119·22	119·22	26·2	107·90	107·90	23·7	90·45	90·45	19·9	93·40	93·40	20·5
NIC	26·55	26·55	5·8	26·55	26·55	5·8	40·91	40·91	9·0	26·55	26·55	5·8
Total	145·77	145·77	32·1	134·45	134·45	29·6	131·36	131·36	28·9	119·95	119·95	26·4

Three hundred per cent. of average male earnings (£681·90 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	102·89	206·88	37·0	96·54	194·11	34·7	77·06	154·95	27·7	89·09	179·13	32·0
NIC	7·80	15·68	2·8	7·80	15·68	2·8	15·04	30·24	5·4	7·80	15·68	2·8
Total	110·69	222·57	39·8	104·34	209·80	37·5	92·10	185·19	33·1	96·89	194·82	34·8
1979-80												
Income tax	106·83	185·46	32·6	100·58	174·61	30·7	83·49	144·94	25·5	92·58	160·72	28·2
NIC	8·78	15·24	2·7	8·78	15·24	2·7	17·30	30·03	5·3	8·78	15·24	2·7
Total	115·61	200·70	35·3	109·36	189·85	33·4	100·79	174·98	30·7	101·36	175·96	30·9
1980-81												
Income tax	133·40	199·12	33·8	125·99	188·06	32·0	102·39	152·83	26·0	117·45	175·31	29·8
NIC	11·14	16·63	2·8	11·14	16·63	2·8	21·78	32·51	5·5	11·14	16·63	2·8
Total	144·54	215·75	36·7	137·13	204·69	34·8	124·17	185·34	31·5	128·59	191·94	32·6
1981-82												
Income tax	155·15	207·72	35·4	147·74	197·80	33·8	117·43	157·22	26·8	137·88	184·60	31·5
NIC	15·50	20·75	3·5	15·50	20·75	3·5	29·07	38·92	6·6	15·50	20·75	3·5
Total	170·65	228·47	39·0	163·24	218·55	37·3	146·50	196·14	33·5	153·38	205·35	35·0
1982-83												
Income tax	163·55	204·50	34·6	155·09	193·92	32·8	124·31	155·44	26·3	144·15	180·24	30·5
NIC	19·25	24·07	4·1	19·25	24·07	4·1	35·78	44·74	7·6	19·25	24·07	4·1
Total	182·80	228·57	38·7	174·34	217·99	36·9	160·09	200·17	33·9	163·40	204·31	34·6
1983-84												
Income tax	173·76	207·58	33·9	164·05	195·98	32·0	133·30	159·25	26·0	151·87	181·43	29·6
NIC	21·15	25·27	4·1	21·15	25·27	4·1	39·62	47·33	7·7	21·15	25·27	4·1
Total	194·91	232·85	38·0	185·20	221·25	36·1	172·92	206·58	33·7	173·02	206·70	33·7
1984-85												
Income tax	188·89	214·80	34·0	177·84	202·23	32·0	143·37	163·04	25·8	164·58	187·15	29·7
NIC	22·50	25·59	4·1	22·50	25·59	4·1	42·48	48·31	7·7	22·50	25·59	4·1
Total	211·39	240·39	38·1	200·34	227·82	36·1	185·85	211·34	33·5	187·08	212·74	33·7
1985-86												
Income tax	203·47	218·45	34·2	191·45	205·55	32·1	153·54	164·84	25·8	177·65	190·73	29·8
NIC	23·85	25·61	4·0	23·85	25·61	4·0	45·29	48·62	7·6	23·85	25·61	4·0
Total	227·32	244·06	38·2	215·30	231·15	36·2	198·83	213·47	33·4	201·50	216·33	33·8

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1986-87												
Income tax	217·42	226·12	34·0	204·73	212·92	32·0	160·54	166·96	25·1	190·53	198·16	29·8
NIC	25·65	26·68	4·0	25·65	26·68	4·0	48·70	50·65	7·6	25·65	26·68	4·0
Total	243·07	252·80	38·0	230·38	239·60	36·0	209·24	217·61	32·7	216·18	224·83	33·8
1987-88												
Income tax	228·84	228·84	33·6	215·67	215·67	31·6	161·31	161·31	23·7	201·17	201·17	29·5
NIC	26·55	26·55	3·9	26·55	26·55	3·9	51·10	51·10	7·5	26·55	26·55	3·9
Total	255·39	255·39	37·5	242·22	242·22	35·5	212·41	212·41	31·1	227·72	227·72	33·4

Five hundred per cent. of average male earnings (£113·56 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	234·37	471·25	50·5	226·44	455·31	48·8	157·63	316·95	34·0	218·41	439·61	47·1
NIC	7.80	15·68	1·7	7·80	15·68	1·7	15·60	31·37	3·4	7·80	15·68	1·7
Total	242·17	486·93	52·2	234·24	470·99	50·5	173·23	348·32	37·3	226·21	454·84	48·8
1979-80												
Income tax	225·28	391·10	41·2	217·78	378·07	39·8	165·36	287·07	30·3	209·78	364·19	38·4
NIC	8·78	15·24	1·6	8·78	15·24	1·6	17·55	30·47	3·2	8·78	15·24	1·6
Total	234·06	406·34	42·8	226·56	393·32	41·5	182·91	317·54	33·5	218·56	379·43	40·0
1980-81												
Income tax	279·78	417·61	42·6	270·89	404·34	41·2	206·31	307·95	31·4	262·35	391·59	39·9
NIC	11·14	16·63	1·7	11·14	16·63	1·7	22·28	33·26	3·4	11·14	16·63	1·7
Total	290·92	434·24	44·3	282·03	420·97	42·9	228·59	341·20	34·8	273·49	408·22	41·6
1981-82												
Income tax	323·28	432·82	44·3	314·39	420·92	43·1	240·18	321·56	32·9	304·53	407·72	41·7
NIC	15·50	20·75	2·1	15·50	20·75	2·1	31·00	41·50	4·2	15·50	20·75	2·1
Total	338·78	453·57	46·4	329·89	441·67	45·2	271·18	363·07	37·2	320·03	428·47	43·9
1982-83												
Income tax	342·03	427·67	43·5	331·87	414·97	42·2	252·82	316·12	32·1	320·93	401·29	40·8
NIC	19·25	24·07	2·4	19·25	24·07	2·4	38·50	48·14	4·9	19·25	24·07	2·4
Total	261·28	451·74	45·9	351·12	439·04	44·6	291·32	364·26	37·0	340·18	425·36	43·2
1983-84												
Income tax	364·42	435·35	42·6	352·77	421·43	41·3	268·75	321·06	31·4	340·59	406·88	39·8
NIC	21·15	25·27	2·5	21·15	25·27	2·5	42·30	50·53	4·9	21·15	25·27	2·5
Total	385·57	460·62	45·1	373·92	446·70	43·7	311·05	371·59	36·4	361·74	432·15	42·3
1984-85												
Income tax	396·48	450·86	42·9	383·21	435·77	41·4	291·86	331·89	31·6	369·95	420·69	40·0
NIC	22·50	25·59	2·4	22·50	25·59	2·4	45·00	51·17	4·9	22·50	25·59	2·4
Total	418·98	476·45	45·3	405·71	461·36	43·9	336·86	383·07	36·4	392·45	446·28	42·4
1985-86												
Income tax	427·27	458·73	43·0	412·85	443·25	41·6	314·16	337·29	31·7	399·05	428·43	40·2
NIC	23·85	25·61	2·4	23·85	25·61	2·4	47·70	51·21	4·8	23·85	25·61	2·4
Total	451·12	484·33	45·5	436·70	468·85	44·0	361·86	388·50	36·5	422·90	454·04	42·6
1986-87												
Income tax	461·39	479·86	43·2	446·16	464·02	41·8	333·79	347·15	31·3	431·96	449·25	40·5
NIC	25·65	26·68	2·4	25·65	26·68	2·4	51·30	53·35	4·8	25·65	26·68	2·4
Total	487·04	506·53	45·6	471·81	490·69	44·2	385·09	400·50	36·1	457·61	475·92	42·9
1987-88												
Income tax	493·50	493·50	43·4	477·69	477·69	42·0	348·06	348·06	30·6	463·19	463·19	40·8
NIC	26·55	26·55	2·3	26·55	26·55	2·3	53·10	53·10	4·7	26·55	26·55	2·3
Total	520·05	520·05	45·8	504·24	504·24	44·4	401·16	401·16	35·3	489·74	489·74	43·1

Seven hundred per cent. of average male earnings (£1,591·10 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	387·10	778·35	59·6	378·32	760·69	58·2	270·44	543·78	41·6	369·99	743·94	57·0
NIC	7·80	15·68	1·2	7·80	15·68	1·2	15·60	31·37	2·4	7·80	15·68	1·2
Total	394·90	794·03	60·8	386·12	776·38	59·4	286·04	575·14	44·0	377·79	759·63	58·2
1979-80												
Income tax	356·44	618·79	46·6	348·94	605·77	45·6	271·16	470·74	35·4	340·94	591·89	44·6
NIC	8·78	15·24	1·1	8·78	15·24	1·1	17·55	30·47	2·3	8·78	15·24	1·1
Total	365·22	634·04	47·7	357·72	621·02	46·8	288·71	501·21	37·7	349·72	607·13	45·7
1980-81												
Income tax	437·46	652·97	47·6	428·57	639·70	46·6	337·37	503·57	36·7	420·03	626·95	45·7
NIC	11·14	16·63	1·2	11·14	16·63	1·2	22·28	33·26	2·4	11·14	16·63	1·2
Total	448·60	669·60	48·8	439·71	656·33	47·8	359·65	536·83	39·1	431·17	643·58	46·9
1981-82												
Income tax	498·36	667·22	48·8	489·47	655·32	47·9	393·80	527·23	38·6	479·61	642·12	47·0
NIC	15·50	20·75	1·5	15·50	20·75	1·5	31·00	41·50	3·0	15·50	20·75	1·5
Total	513·86	687·98	50·3	504·97	676·07	49·4	424·80	568·74	41·6	495·11	662·87	48·5
1982-83												
Income tax	530·91	663·84	48·2	520·75	651·14	47·3	414·29	518·02	37·6	509·81	637·46	46·3
NIC	19·25	24·07	1·7	19·25	24·07	1·7	38·50	48·14	3·5	19·25	24·07	1·7
Total	550·16	687·91	49·9	540·00	675·21	49·0	452·79	566·16	41·1	529·06	661·53	48·0
1983-84												
Income tax	569·62	680·49	47·6	557·97	666·57	46·6	439·42	524·95	36·7	545·79	652·02	45·6
NIC	21·15	25·27	1·8	21·15	25·27	1·8	42·30	50·53	3·5	21·15	25·27	1·8
Total	590·77	705·76	49·4	579·12	691·84	48·4	481·72	575·48	40·2	566·94	677·29	47·4
1984-85												
Income tax	618·48	703·31	47·8	605·21	688·22	46·7	478·08	543·66	36·9	591·95	673·15	45·7
NIC	22·50	25·59	1·7	22·50	25·59	1·7	45·00	51·17	3·5	22·50	25·59	1·7
Total	640·98	728·90	49·5	627·71	713·81	48·5	523·08	594·83	40·4	614·45	698·73	47·4
1985-86												
Income tax	665·47	714·46	47·9	651·05	698·98	46·9	515·61	553·57	37·1	637·25	684·17	45·9
NIC	23·85	25·61	1·7	23·85	25·61	1·7	47·70	51·21	3·4	23·85	25·61	1·7
Total	689·32	740·07	49·6	674·90	724·59	48·6	563·31	604·78	40·5	661·10	709·77	47·6
1986-87												
Income tax	717·47	746·18	48·0	702·24	730·34	47·0	555·04	577·25	37·2	688·04	715·58	46·1
NIC	25·65	26·68	1·7	25·65	26·68	1·7	51·30	53·35	3·4	25·65	26·68	1·7
Total	743·12	772·86	49·7	727·89	757·02	48·7	606·34	630·61	40·6	713·69	742·25	47·8
1987-88												
Income tax	766·26	766·26	48·2	750·45	750·45	47·2	590·51	590·51	37·1	735·95	735·95	46·3
NIC	26·55	26·55	1·7	26·55	26·55	1·7	53·10	53·10	3·3	26·55	26·55	1·7
Total	792·81	792·81	49·8	777·00	777·00	48·8	643·61	643·61	40·5	762·50	762·50	47·9

One thousand per cent. of average male earnings (£2,273·00 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	618·17	1,242·96	66·6	609·39	1,225·31	65·7	475·02	955·13	51·2	601·06	1,208·56	64·8
NIC	7·80	15·68	0·8	7·80	15·68	0·8	15·60	31·37	1·7	7·80	15·68	0·8
Total	625·97	1,258·65	67·5	617·19	1,240·99	66·5	490·62	986·50	52·9	608·86	1,224·26	65·6
1979-80												
Income tax	553·18	960·34	50·6	546·68	947·32	49·9	453·85	787·90	41·5	537·68	933·43	49·2
NIC	8·78	15·24	0·8	8·78	15·24	0·8	17·55	30·47	1·6	8·78	15·24	0·8
Total	561·96	975·58	51·4	554·46	962·56	50·7	471·40	818·37	43·1	546·46	948·68	50·0
1980-81												
Income tax	673·98	1,006·01	51·3	665·09	992·74	50·6	561·28	837·79	42·7	656·55	979·99	50·0
NIC	11·14	16·63	0·8	11·14	16·63	0·8	22·28	33·26	1·7	11·14	16·63	0·8

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
Total	685·12	1,022·63	52·1	676·23	1,009·37	51·5	583·56	871·04	44·4	667·69	996·62	50·8
1981-82												
Income tax	760·98	1,018·83	52·2	752·09	1,006·93	51·5	646·55	865·63	44·3	742·23	993·73	50·9
NIC	15·50	20.75	1·1	15·50	20·75	1·1	31·00	41·50	2·1	15·50	20·75	1·1
Total	776·48	1,039·58	53·2	767·59	1,027·68	52·6	677·55	907·13	46·4	757·73	1,014·48	51·9
1982-83												
Income tax	814·23	1,018·10	51·7	804·07	1,005·40	51·1	684·37	855·73	43·5	793·13	991·72	50·4
NIC	19·25	24·07	1·2	19·25	24·07	1·2	38·50	48·14	2·4	19·25	24·07	1·2
Total	833·48	1,042·17	53·0	823·32	1,029·47	52·3	722·87	903·87	45·9	812·38	1,015·79	51·6
1983-84												
Income tax	877·42	1,048·20	51·3	865·77	1,034·28	50·6	730·98	873·26	42·7	853·59	1,019·73	49·9
NIC	21·15	25·27	1·2	21·15	25·27	1·2	42·30	50·53	2·5	21·15	25·27	1·2
Total	898·57	1,073·46	52·5	886·92	1·059·55	51·9	773·28	923·79	45·2	874·74	1,045·00	51·2
1984-85												
Income tax	951·48	1,081·99	51·4	938·21	1,066·90	50·7	794·52	903·50	42·9	924·95	1,051·82	50·0
NIC	22·50	25·59	1·2	22·50	25·59	1·2	45·00	51·17	2·4	22·50	25·59	1·2
Total	973·98	1,107·58	52·6	960·71	1,092·49	51·9	839·52	954·67	45·4	947·45	1,077·41	51·2
1985-86												
Income tax	1,022·77	1,098·07	51·5	1,008·35	1,082·59	50·8	855·61	918·60	43·1	994·55	1,067·77	50·1
NIC	23·85	25·61	1·2	23·85	25·61	1·2	47·70	51·21	2·4	23·85	25·61	1·2
Total	1,046·62	1,123·68	52·7	1,032·20	1,108·19	52·0	903·31	969·81	45·5	1,018·40	1,093·38	51·3
1986-87												
Income tax	1,101·59	1,145·68	51·6	1,086·36	1,129·84	50·9	922·78	959·71	43·2	1,072·16	1·115·07	50·2
NIC	25·65	26·68	1·2	25·65	26·68	1·2	51·30	53·35	2·4	25·65	26·68	1·2
Total	1,127·24	1,172·35	52·8	1·112.01	1·156·51	52·1	974·08	1.013·06	45·6	1·097·81	1,141·75	51·4
1987-88												
Income tax	1,175·40	1,175·40	51·7	1,159·59	1,159·59	51·0	986·99	986·99	43·4	1·145·09	1·145·09	50·4
NIC	26·55	26·55	1·2	26·55	26·55	1·2	53·10	53·10	2·3	26·55	26·55	1·2
Total	1,201·95	1,201·95	52·9	1,186·14	1,186·14	52·2	1,040·09	1,040·09	45·8	1,171·64	1·171·64	51·5

Two thousand per cent. of average male earnings (£4,546·00 a week in 1987-88)

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
1978-79												
Income tax	1,388·41	2,791·69	74·8	1,379·63	2,774·04	74·3	1,236·34	2,485·93	66·6	1,371·30	2,757·29	73·9
NIC	7·80	15·68	0·4	7·80	15·68	0·4	15·60	31·37	0·8	7·80	15·68	0·4
Total	1,396·21	2,807·38	75·2	1,387·43	2,789·72	74·8	1,251·94	2,517·29	67·5	1,379·10	2,772·97	74·3
1979-80												
Income tax	1,208·98	2,098·84	55·3	1,201·48	2,085·82	55·0	1,106·35	1,920·67	50·6	1,193·48	2,071·93	54·6
NIC	8·78	15·24	0·4	8·78	15·24	0·4	17·55	30·47	0·8	8·78	15·24	0·4
Total	1,217·76	2,114·08	55·7	1,210·26	2,101·06	55·4	1,123·90	1,951·14	51·4	1,202·26	2,087·17	55·0
1980-81												
Income tax	1,462·38	2,182·80	55·6	1,453·49	2,169·53	55·3	1,347·95	2,012·00	51·3	1,444·95	2,156·78	55·0
NIC	11·14	16·63	0·4	11·14	16·63	0·4	22·28	33·26	0·8	11·14	16·63	0·4
Total	1,473·52	2,199·43	56·1	1,464·63	2,186·16	55·7	1,370·23	2,045·25	52·1	1,456·09	2,173·41	55·4
1981-82												
Income tax	1,636·38	2,190·85	56·1	1,627·49	2,178·94	55·8	1,521·95	2,037·64	52·2	1,617·63	2,165·74	55·4
NIC	15·50	20·75	0·5	15·50	20·75	0·5	31·00	41·50	1·1	15·50	20·75	0·5
Total	1,651·88	2,211·60	56·6	1,642·99	2,199·70	56·3	1,552·95	2,079·15	53·2	1,633·13	2,186·50	56·0
1982-83												
Income tax	1,758·63	2,198·97	55·9	1,748·47	2,186·26	55·5	1,628·45	2,036·19	51·7	1,737·53	2,172·58	55·2
NIC	19·25	24·07	0·6	19·25	24·07	0·6	38·50	48·14	1·2	19·25	24·07	0·6
Total	1,777·88	2,223·04	56·5	1,767·72	2,210·33	56·2	1,666·95	2,084·33	53·0	1,756·78	2,196·65	55·8
1983-84												
Income tax	1,903·42	2,273·90	55·7	1,891·77	2,259·98	55·3	1,754·85	2,096·41	51·3	1,879·59	2,245·43	55·0
NIC	21·15	25·27	0·6	21·15	25·27	0·6	42·30	50·53	1·2	21·15	25·27	0·6

	Single			Married no children			Married both working			Married two children		
	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings	£ per week	£ per week 1987-88 prices	Per cent. of gross earnings
Total	1,924·57	2,299·16	56·3	1,912·92	2,285·24	55·9	1,797·15	2,146·94	52·5	1,900·74	2,270·69	55·6
1984-85												
Income tax	2,061·48	2,344·25	55·7	2,048·21	2,329·16	55·4	1,902·96	2,163·98	51·4	2,034·95	2,314·08	55·0
NIC	22·50	25·59	0·6	22·50	25·59	0·6	45·00	51·17	1·2	22·50	25·59	0·6
Total	2,083·98	2,369·83	56·3	2,070·71	2,354·74	56·0	1,947·96	2,215·16	52·6	2,057·45	2,339·66	55·6
1985-86												
Income tax	2,213·77	2,376·75	55·8	2,199·35	2,361·27	55·4	2,045·54	2,196·14	51·5	2,185·55	2,346·46	55·1
NIC	23·85	25·61	0·6	23·85	25·61	0·6	47·70	51·21	1·2	23·85	25·61	0·6
Total	2,237·62	2,402·36	56·4	2,223·20	2,386·88	56·0	2,093·24	2,247·35	52·7	2,209·40	2,372·06	55·7
1986-87												
Income tax	2,381·99	2,477·32	55·8	2,366·76	2,461·48	55·5	2,203·18	2,291·35	51·6	2,352·56	2,446·71	55·1
NIC	25·65	26·68	0·6	25·65	26·68	0·6	51·30	53·35	1·2	25·65	26·68	0·6
Total	2,407·64	2,504·00	56·4	2,392·41	2,488·16	56·1	2,254·48	2,344·71	52·8	2,378·21	2,473·39	55·7
1987-88												
Income tax	2,539·20	2,539·20	55·9	2,523·39	2,523·39	55·5	2,350·79	2,350·79	51·7	2,508·89	2,508·89	55·2
NIC	26·55	26·55	0·6	26·55	26·55	0·6	53·10	53·10	1·2	26·55	26·55	0·6
Total	2,565·75	2,565·75	56·4	2,549·94	2,549·94	56·1	2,403·89	2,403·89	52·9	2,535·44	2,535·44	55·8

Notes to tables:

Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the tax units have no other tax reliefs apart from the standard allowances. Earners, including working wives, are assumed to pay class I NI contributions at the contracted in rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

2. Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. The levels of average earnings in each year are given below:

	£ per week
1978-79	92·80
1979-80	109·30
1980-81	131·40
1981-82	145·90
1982-83	157·40
1983-84	171·00
1984-85	185·00
1985-86	198·50
1986-87	[1]213·40
1987-88	[2]227·30

[1] Assuming growth of 7½ per cent. on 1985-86.
[2] Assuming growth of 6½ per cent. on 1986-87.

3. The two-earner married couple is assumed to have joint earnings of the various multiples of average earnings. In calculating disposable income it is assumed that the joint earnings are split between husband and wife in the ratio 60:40.

4. For the married couple with two children child benefit is treated as a negative income tax. For this purpose, financial year averages are used for child benefit.

5. The estimate of indirect taxes are derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. Estimates cannot reliably be made outside the income rate for which figures are shown. There are also quite wide variations in spending patterns between households with similar incomes and compositions and, because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from different family expenditure surveys.

Incomes

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total amount of taxable *(a)* cash and *(b)* non-cash personal income for the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will give what information he has regarding the different types of taxable non-cash remuneration.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of the letter in the Library.

Personal Income (Taxation)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the tax expenditures cost if *(a)* the first £500 per person per year and *(b)* the first £750 per person per year, counting husbands and wives separately, of investment income occupational pension and other personal income other than earned income were free of tax; and what rates of tax on the balance of such income would be necessary in order to make the change revenue neutral.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The direct revenue cost at 1988-89 levels of income of making the first £500 and the first £750 of personal income other than earnings tax free would be about £1½ billion and £2 billion respectively. Additional rates of 4 per cent. and 5½ per cent. would have to be charged on the balance of such income to make the proposed changes revenue neutral.

Tax Reliefs and Allowances

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in 1987-88 and 1988-89 of restricting *(a)* personal allowances and *(b)* mortgage interest tax relief to the standard rate of tax only.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The direct revenue yield at 1987-88 levels of income of restricting personal allowances to the basic rate is estimated to be £810 million; the yield at 1988-89 levels of income, assuming indexation of the current income tax bands and allowances to 1988-89 levels as in table 4.1 of the 1987 Autumn Statement, is estimated to be £950 million. The estimates make no allowance for possible changes in taxpayers' behaviour.

The direct revenue yield in a full year at 1987-88 levels from restricting mortgage interest relief to the basic rate is estimated to be £330 million. This estimate makes no allowance for the effect of any consequential changes to the distribution of outstanding mortgages. It would be premature to provide estimates of the direct revenue yield at 1988-89 levels since this will depend on the mortgage interest rate and the level of mortgages outstanding in that year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* figures relating to tax reliefs and allowances on the same basis as in his reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, 5 May, columns *325-8*, for the following income groups: top 50 per cent. and bottom 50 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Estimates are given in the table for the upper 50 per cent and lower 50 per cent. of tax-paying single people and married couples analysed by total income liable to tax. The table shows the reduction in income tax liabilities, in a full year at 1987-88 income levels, under the 1987-88 income tax regime compared with the 1978-79 regime indexed to 1987-88 levels by reference to statutory formula.

Reductions in income tax liabilities in 1987-88 compared with the indexed 1978-79 tax regime

	Upper 50 per cent.[1]		*Lower 50 per cent.*[1]	
	Amount £ million	*Average per tax unit*[2] *£ per year*	*Amount £ million*	*Average per tax unit*[2] *£ per year*
Increase in personal allowances	2,500	240	1,470	140
Abolition of reduced rate band	−1,720	−170	−1,130	−110
Decrease in basic rate	6,190	600	1,790	170
Increase in higher rate threshold	400	40	—	—
Changes in higher rate thresholds	800	80	—	—
Abolition of higher rates above 60 per cent.	590	60	—	—
Abolition of Investment Income Surcharge	810	80	20	2
Total	9,570	920	2,150	200

Notes: Source of income tax reduction(+)/increase(−).
In the table, the effect of each change has been calculated on the assumption that each of the previous changes has already been made.
[1] Based on 20·9 million single people and married couples expected to pay tax in 1987-88 and excluding a further 900,000 who would pay tax under the revalorised 1978-79 regime. All information is in terms of tax units i.e. married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.
[2] By reference to the numbers paying tax in 1987-88.

Tax Liability

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the reduction in annual liability to *(a)* capital gains tax and *(b)* capital transfer tax in 1987-88 as compared with the 1978-79 indexed regime, specifying in each case the total and average reduction per taxpayer as well as the number of taxpayers in each year.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The information requested is given in the table:

	Reduction, compared with indexed 1978-79 regime, in:		*Taxpayer Numbers (thousands)*	
	Total Liability (£ million)	*Average Liability*[1] *(£)*	*1978-79 Indexed Regime*	*1987-88 Regime*
Capital Gains Tax	1,200	1,800	650	200
Capital Transfer Tax/Inheritance Tax	250	3,800	70	30

[1] Calculated for the number of taxpayers under the 1978-79 indexed regime.

The figures for capital gains tax exclude capital gains realised by companies and taxed within corporation tax.

In each case the 1987-88 tax base is taken as given. It is not possible to determine to what extent changes to the taxes between 1978-79 and 1987-88 may have affected the levels of transfers and disposals.

Taxable Incomes

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many families with children are estimated to have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold; and what proportion this represents of all families with children.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* In 1987-88 it is estimated that some 1·6 million families, about 23 per cent. of the total number of families with children, have taxable incomes below the income tax threshold.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Peter Brooke *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The number of press and public relations staff employed in my Department on 1 December 1987 was 11. The planned complement for press and public relations staff at this point in 1988 is 11.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Brooke *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The estimated expenditure for 1987-88 is £35,000, none of which is likely to be on television and radio advertising. Detailed decisions on expenditure by the media in 1988-89 have not yet been taken but overall publicity expenditure is provisionally budgeted at £36,500.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Brooke *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The estimated expenditure on press and public relations for 1987-88 is £597,900 and provisional budgeted expenditure for 1988-89 is £606,500.

Income Tax

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has in respect of *(a)* the number of people in England and Wales paying income tax, *(b)* the number of spouses of *(a)* and *(c)* the number of people in England and Wales who are not paying income tax and are not the spouses of those paying taxes.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* In 1985-86, the latest year for which information by country is available, about 17·7 million single persons and married couples resident in England and Wales were liable to income tax, of whom about 9·4 million were married couples. This excludes members of Her Majesty's forces and the Merchant Navy. Records are not kept enabling fully comparable information to be compiled for non-taxpayers, but at mid-1985, the total population over 16 resident in England or Wales numbered about 39·7 million.

Households (Statistics)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide figures for 1979 and 1985 showing, on an equivalent income basis, the proportion of each of the following household types in each quintile of *(a)* original and *(b)* post-tax income, as defined in the annual articles in *Economic Trends* on the effects of taxes and benefits (i) one adult with children, (ii) two adults with children (iii) non-retired without children and (iv) retired.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* I regret that the information requested is not readily available and estimates could be made only at disproportionate cost.

However, some of the information, not adjusted to an equivalent income basis, may be found in the *Economic Trends* articles to which the hon. Member refers. The proportion of the household types listed in each quintile group of both original and post-tax income in 1985 may be calculated from the information given in table 7 of the appendix to the article published in the November 1986 edition of *Economic Trends*. Similar data for 1979 are given in table 7 of appendix 3 to the article published in the January 1981 edition, but based on original income only; post-tax was introduced as a separate income definition for the first time in the December 1984 article. Some analysis of incomes in 1985 adjusted to an equivalent income basis was published in *Economic Trends* in July 1987; however this was based on disposable income rather than original or post-tax income.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC (Food)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the total amount which will be expended by the EEC on the storage, export and destruction of food in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure met from the 1987 Community budget on storage, export and withdrawal of produce from the market is estimated to be approximately £8 billion. Expenditure in November and December 1987 (estimated to be £1·6 billion) will be met by member states which will be reimbursed from the 1988 budget.

Capital Grants

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the total United Kingdom expenditure on each of the major capital grants schemes for agriculture in 1986-87;

(2) what was the total United Kingdom expenditure on major capital grant schemes for agriculture in the less favoured areas and non-less favoured areas, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom expenditure under the main farm capital grant schemes in 1986-87

	United Kingdom £ *million*	*Less favoured areas* £ *million*	*Non-less favoured areas* £ *million*
Agriculture Improvement Scheme	22·9	18·2	4·7
Farm/Agriculture and Horticulture Development Schemes	51·4	26·4	25·0
Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme	37·6	22·9	14·7
Northern Ireland Agricultural Development Programme	9·1	9·1	—
TOTAL	121·0	76·6	44·4

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the rate of take-up of each

of the main capital grant schemes for agriculture in 1986 in less favoured areas and non-less favoured areas, respectively and for the United Kingdom and England and Wales, respectively.

Mr. Gummer: The agriculture improvement scheme is the only scheme now open to new applicants. Information on take-up under both elements of the scheme in 1986-87 is as follows:

	United Kingdom	*England*	*Wales*
European Community measures			
Number of plans approved	9,191	4,219	2,253
National measures			
Number of claims paid	4,632	1,474	649

I regret that full information is not currently available distinguishing between take-up inside and outside the less favoured areas.

Food Aid

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he is having with local authorities regarding the future distribution of food surpluses according to the permanent scheme approved by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: At present, I am consulting the main charitable organisations. I will consult more widely if this becomes appropriate.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what charities he is consulting for the purpose of free food distribution in accordance with the permanent scheme for European Community food surpluses approved by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Gummer: I am consulting the following organisations:

Age Concern
British Red Cross Society
Church Army
Help the Aged
National Council for Voluntary Organisations
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations
Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation
Royal British Legion
Salvation Army
Social and Pastoral Action
Catholic Bishops Conference, England and Wales
Women's Royal Voluntary Service

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland are conducting separate consultations in those countries.

Bee Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to change the number of bee officers employed by his Ministry in 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: From 1988 we shall be confining inspection of bees to colonies where foul brood is suspected or which have recent history of the disease. As a result the number of bee officers will be reduced to about 30.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of agricultural land in the United Kingdom will be covered by environmentally sensitive areas when the second phase comes into operation.

Mr. Gummer: It will not be possible to provide a definitive figure until the planned new areas in Scotland and Northern Ireland have been designated. The 12 per cent. areas covered by designated orders in England and Wales comprise 4 per cent. of the agricultural area of England and Wales.

Research and Development

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) which outside bodies will be consulted during the review of research and development in his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the review of research and development in his Ministry will be completed; and if he will make the findings of the review public;

(3) whether there will be public consultation about the findings of the review of research and development in his Ministry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The examination of the balance of our research and development programmes which we are conducting, in addition to the normal review procedures outlined in my reply to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 19 November at column *656*, is part of the general process of policy formation. It will not involve any formal consultation outside agricultural departments, though we may be seeking views on an informal basis. This is a study being undertaken within Government which it would not be appropriate to publish. I shall consider at a later stage what subsequent consultations may be necessary.

Bracken

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what investigations he is undertaking to control bracken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I would first refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to Lord Campbell of Croy on 5 November in another place. My Department has recently completed a comparison of herbicide application methods on bracken and is presently studying the effects of large-scale bracken control on hillsheep and grouse production, conservation and the landscape. The Department is also funding research by the Agricultural and Food Research Council into vegetation management, weed control and environmental issues, which includes work on bracken. I would also point out that some of my Department's in-house and external research on weed control generally would be applicable to bracken.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what methods for controlling bracken he currently advocates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Methods advocated for controlling bracken depend on the scale of the problem and the nature of the terrain.

Where cultivation is possible, summer ploughing and subsequent tillage for two seasons can eradicate bracken. Where ploughing is not possible mechanical methods such as cutting or slashing twice a year or repeatedly crushing young fronds for several years will control but not eradicate bracken. These methods are useful in only limited circumstances.

The most popular method advocated is the use of herbicides. These can be applied to small areas by knapsack and other hand-held applicators. Tractor-mounted sprayers can be used on areas that are not too steep or rocky. Larger areas, especially if steep or uneven, are normally sprayed by helicopter.

Grant aid is available for bracken control under the agricultural improvement scheme. This covers control by mechanical means (excluding ploughing and cultivating), chemical control by spraying, and follow-up treatment to promote the growth of other vegetation and discourage further bracken growth. The rate of grant is 15 per cent. in the lowlands and 30 per cent. in less favoured areas.

Fertiliser

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the value of nitrogenous fertiliser wasted by farmers each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have made no such estimate. My Department encourages farmers to assess the requirements of each crop for nitrogen fertiliser in accordance with good husbandry practice and to restrict application to those times when the crops can utilise the nitrogen.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department's advisory committees are listed in "Public Bodies 1987" published by HMSO which is available in the Library of the House. Among these committees, members of the Reading Cattle Breeding Advisory Committee sign a declaration under section 2 of the Official Secrets Act and members of the Food Advisory Committee and the Steering Group on Food Surveillance have their attention drawn to it.

Drainage

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures exist to protect ratepayers against the possibility of unwise expenditure in the event of a drainage authority proceeding with a drainage scheme without having sought grant-aid from his Department, or having sought but failed to obtain grant-aid from his Department.

Mr. Gummer: Most land drainage schemes are carried out by the water authorities. Decisions are taken by specialist regional or local land drainage committees which consist of persons expert in the subject with, in addition, a built-in majority of members of the constituent councils whose ratepayers fund the expenditure. The committees take account of all aspects of the proposals, including economic worthwhileness.

In certain parts of the country, smaller drainage schemes may also be carried out by internal drainage boards accountable to the ratepayers who elect him. In addition, the boards are subject to the overall supervision of the relevant water authority.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will describe the procedures for the environmental scrutiny of arterial land drainage schemes in the event of a drainage authority deciding not to apply for grant-aid from his Department; and, in the event of such a decision by a drainage authority, what are the procedures for resolving objections from conservation bodies, statutory or voluntary, to a potentially environmentally damaging scheme.

Mr. Gummer: In implementing their statutory obligations under the Water Act 1973 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 drainage authorities consult widely with the relevant organisations concerned with conservation from the earliest planning stages of proposed works. The aim of these consultations is not only to avoid damage but to further and enhance sensitive features and wildlife consistent with authorities' statutory drainage responsibilities. I am not aware that in recent years any potentially environmentally damaging scheme has gone ahead in my area of responsibility in the face of objections from conservation bodies.

Poultry Industry

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied that competitive conditions for the poultry industry are uniform throughout the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am satisfied that the competitive conditions are reasonably fair. My Department keeps a careful watch on the situation throughout the Community, and where disadvantages for the United Kingdom industry are discovered we try to have them removed as speedily as possible.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total cost of putting produce into intervention in each of the past 10 years; and what percentage of *(a)* the European Community agricultural budget and *(b)* the total European Community budget these figures represent.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The costs associated with purchases into intervention are borne by member states and are not available. The costs to the EC of storing intervention produce (including private storage) and reimbursing member states for losses on sale from intervention over the past 10 years were:

Year	*Mecu*	*£ million*	*Per cent. of CAP budget*	*Per cent. of total EC budget*
1978	1,689	1,121	19	15
1979	1,654	1,074	15	12

Year	Mecu	£ million	Per cent. of CAP budget	Per cent. of total EC budget
1980	1,617	979	14	10
1981	1,631	908	14	9
1982	1,818	1,014	14	9
1983	2,893	1,697	17	12
1984	3,561	2,079	19	13
1985	4,427	2,603	22	16
1986	5,555	3,599	24	16
1987	3,948	2,761	16	10

Sources:
1978-1986—EAGGF Guarantee Annual Report
1987 EC budget-covers actual expenditure to end October 1987

Note: The full cost of disposing of surplus produce also includes other expenditure on export refunds, withdrawal and subsidies for disposal on the Community Market. Budget provision for this cost in 1987 amounted to some 17,390 mecu (£12,160) which is respectively 72 per cent. of the CAP budget and 48 per cent. of the total EC budget.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the Press and Public Relations Office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The number of staff in the press branch of the information division and related posts in the regions is 32 and is expected to be the same in 1988.

Nephrops

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make it his policy to make representations against the conservation proposal being proposed by the European Community to reduce the landing size of nephrops from 85mm to 58mm; if he will instead consider a derogation for the Irish sea to allow the minimum size of 58mm to be confined to that sector of the market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* At the Fisheries Council meeting on 14-16 December I argued that a reduction in the minimum landing size for nephrops should be made for the Irish sea and west of Scotland stocks only and in any case that the present minimum landing size for nephrops in the North sea should be maintained. No decision was taken on this matter, which was referred, along with the other elements of the Commission's proposals on technical conservation measures, for further examination at official level.

Employment (Set-aside Policies)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment of the effect of set-aside policies on employment has been made by his Department; and what other studies he is aware of which deal with the matter.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I shall be examining this and other effects as part of ongoing monitoring of the scheme when it is implemented.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement explaining the operation of stabilisers in the common agricultural policy reforms proposed by the Commission, and what effect they will have on the availability of export rebates for food not taken into intervention.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The Commission's proposals are generally for guarantee threshold mechanisms. These relate support to specified quantities. There are no proposals affecting the availability of export refunds. Effective stabilisers should reduce the need to export surpluses and should have a beneficial effect on export refund expenditure.

Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will place in the Library the details of the monitoring results of sheep for radioactivity in north, south and west Yorkshire since 1 October, in a similar form to that used in the publication "Radionuclide Levels in Food, Animals and Agricultural Products";

(2) if he will place in the Library the results of the monitoring of sheep for radioactivity in Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear since 1 October, in a similar format to that used for the 1987 publication "Radionuclide Levels in Food, Animals and Agricultural Products."

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The results of monitoring of live sheep for radiocaesium levels in Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear since October 1987 are being placed in the Library of the House. They are in the format of previous replies that I have given on live monitoring data. It is not appropriate to give this data in exactly similar form to that used in the publication "Radionuclide Levels in Food, Animals and Agricultural Products" since that publication did not include any data on live monitoring. I believe that this different format of grouping the individual results in flocks gives the reader a better picture of the results from the monitoring of live sheep.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Hospital Beds

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average bed occupancy rate by region in National Health Service hospitals for the last date for which figures are available; and what are the comparative figures for the previous five years.

Mrs. Currie: The table gives the information requested about bed occupancy (the average number of occupied beds as a percentage of the available beds for all specialties).

The health services information steering group (chaired by Mrs. Körner) recommended in its first report that a more useful measure is patient throughput, the annual number of patients per available bed. These are also given in a table.

Percentage bed occupancy by Regional Health Authority, 1981-1986

Health Authority	Year					
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Northern	79·3	78·0	78·5	78·7	79·5	79·6
Yorkshire	80·4	78·7	79·0	78·0	78·6	78·4
Trent	79·4	78·3	78·7	78·4	78·5	77·9
East Anglian	79·4	79·0	78·7	78·3	79·1	78·4
North West Thames[1]	83·5	82·4	82·3	82·4	83·0	83·5
North East Thames[1]	83·7	82·6	83·2	83·3	84·7	84·3
South East Thames[1]	81·7	80·9	80·6	80·9	81·9	81·5
South West Thames[1]	85·3	85·1	84·3	84·4	84·7	84·4
Wessex	80·7	79·3	79·2	78·8	79·9	79·0
Oxford	79·4	79·1	79·7	79·1	79·5	79·0
South Western	80·7	80·3	80·2	80·0	80·3	78·9
West Midlands	80·6	79·7	80·2	80·3	80·6	80·5
Mersey	82·2	82·1	83·0	83·7	83·8	82·9
North Western	81·4	80·1	80·5	80·6	81·4	80·2
Special Health Authorities[1]	74·0	75·4	75·4	76·2	76·2	77·8
England	81·3	80·4	80·6	80·5	81·1	80·6

[1] Figures are not comparable over the whole period, due to NHS restructuring in 1982.

Annual number of patients per available beds 1981-1986

Health Authority	Year					
	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Northern	15·9	15·2	16·5	17·3	18·2	19·0
Yorkshire	16·1	15·9	17·5	18·2	19·3	20·5
Trent	16·5	16·4	17·8	18·6	19·7	20·5
East Anglian	16·8	16·5	17·7	18·7	20·0	20·4
North West Thames[1]	15·5	15·3	16·1	16·9	17·6	18·3
North East Thames[1]	16·7	17·5	18·3	19·1	20·1	20·4
South East Thames[1]	17·0	17·2	18·1	19·3	20·6	21·4
South West Thames[1]	13·1	13·1	13·9	14·7	15·5	16·4
Wessex	17·3	17·3	18·2	19·1	20·2	21·3
Oxford	20·4	20·3	21·6	22·4	23·7	24·5
South Western	15·2	15·5	16·4	17·6	18·6	19·6
West Midlands	16·4	16·8	17·9	19·1	20·1	20·9
Mersey	14·2	14·3	15·8	16·9	17·9	18·8
North Western	18·1	18·1	19·3	20·1	21·3	22·0
Special Health Authorities[1]	27·2	27·2	27·7	28·2	29·5	30·3
England	16·4	16·4	17·5	18·5	19·5	20·3

[1] Figures are not comparable over the whole period, due to NHS restructuring in 1982.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the current bed availability by district health authority for Nottinghamshire as at the latest date and the comparative figures for each year since 1979;

(2) how many beds are available in each unit of the district health authorities in Nottinghamshire; and what are the comparable figures for 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in tables 1 and 2. The number of in-patient cases treated by health authorities in Nottinghamshire has increased by 28 per cent. between 1979 and 1986 from 115,198 to 147,511.

Table 1
Average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in Nottinghamshire in years 1979 and 1986

Hospital	1979	1986
Bassetlaw District Health Authority		
Retford and District Hospital	95·0	74·0
Victoria Hospital	110·0	84·5
Bassetlaw District Hospital	198·0	319·5
Central Nottinghamshire Health Authority		
Mansfield and District General Hospital	177·0	168·2
Newark General Hospital	72·0	59·2
Kings Mill Hospital	422·3	437·4
Forest Hospital	87·8	71·0
Newstead Hospital	125·4	137·6
Victoria Hospital	266·6	159·3
Debdale Hall Recovery Hospital[1]	37·0	—
Langwith Lodge	29·2	28·5
Berry Hill Hospital	40·0	36·3
Ransom Hospital	60·0	58·0
Newark Hawtonville Hospital	130·0	116·0
Balderton Hospital	362·0	269·4
Harlow Wood Orthopaedic Hospital	187·9	177·5
Nottingham Health Authority		
The Cedars Rehabilitation Unit[1]	32·5	—
Nottingham City Hospital	917·8	1,084·4
The Firs Maternity Hospital[1]	40·0	—
The Coppice Hospital	164·0	161·0
Mapperley Hospital	116·0	5·6
St. Francis Hospital	500·8	312·8
Ellerslie House[1]	24·0	—
Sherwood Hospital[1]	322·9	—
Basford Hospital	103·1	104·0
St. Anns Hospital	77·5	69·0
Nottingham General Hospital	423·4	230·9
Highbury Hospital	244·3	190·5
Ruddington Hall Hospital[1]	36·5	—
Saxondale Hospital	662·8	399·0
Nottingham Eye Hospital[1]	58·9	—
Nottingham Hospital for Women[1]	157·5	—
University Hospital	315·7	1,236·9

[1] Due to hospital closures or hospital mergers figures for 1986 are not available.

Table 2.
Average daily number of available beds, Nottinghamshire Health Authorities

Health Authority	*Year*							
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Bassetlaw	403	408	412	424	424	419	433	478
Central Nottinghamshire	1,997	1,967	1,949	1,934	1,888	1,851	1,794	1,718
Nottingham	4,198	4,088	4,041	4,029	4,000	3,958	3,931	3,794

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service beds are allocated for the use of military personnel *(a)* currently and *(b)* for use in the event of nuclear war; and what funding arrangements exist.

Mrs. Currie: Military personnel are admitted to NHS hospitals if necessary, in particular where they require specialised treatment not provided by service hospitals. There is no specific allocation of beds for this purpose, nor do special funding arrangements exist.

In the event of war in Europe it is expected that NHS hospitals would receive military casualties evacuated to this country, as well as those sustained on United Kingdom soil. Plans are not made on the basis of specific allocation of beds. In the aftermath of a nuclear attack, surviving Heath Service hospitals would be supported by emergency medical centres, but according to the scale of the attack evacuation of casualties to the United Kingdom might not be possible.

Accident and Emergency Units

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by district health authority, and by year the accident and emergency units closed since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information is not collected centrally.

Nurses

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much it costs to train a nurse.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 23 November, at column *81*.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the median level of earnings for nurses in each year since 1979.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the median level of earnings for nurses expressed as a proportion of average earnings in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the form requested. However, data on mean average earnings for the years 1983-84 to 1986-87 are set out in the table. Information is not available for earlier years on a comparable basis.

	All Qualified Nurses[1] *£pa*	*Staff Nurses* *£pa*	*Ward Sister* *£pa*	*Average Gross Earnings*[2] *£pa*
1983-84	7,368	6,733	8,812	8,306
1984-85	7,970	7,422	9,474	8,916
1985-86	8,555	7,938	10,175	9,631
1986-87	9,440	8,981	11,208	10,371

Notes:
[1] *Source: DHSS*—Excludes Nursing Auxiliaries and Students/Pupils.
[2] *Source: Department of Employment* — New Earnings Survey. Figures relate to all full employees on adult rates, excluding those whose pay was affected by absence.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what timetable he envisages for the extension of prescribing powers to nurses, as outlined in the primary care White Paper;

(2) how he intends to proceed in investigating the issues surrounding the concept of the nurse practitioner, as outlined in the primary care White Paper.

Mr. Newton: The Department will be consulting the relevant professional advisory groups in the near future about the professional and ethical issues involved in nurse prescribing and will be looking at the other issues involved in more detail during the coming year. It is not possible to give firm timetables or detailed plans at the moment.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many nurses are employed nationally in intensive care units;

(2) how many nurses nationally are receiving intensive care training;

(3) what is the estimated number of nurses needed nationally in intensive care units.

Mr. Newton: The total number of nursing staff employed in intensive and coronary care units in England at 30 September 1986 was 6,250 whole-time equivalents, an increase of some 74 per cent. over September 1981. Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health visiting shows that in the year ended 31 March 1987, 563 nurses entered specialist post basic training in intensive and coronary care nursing, an increase of some 14 per cent. over the previous year. Information is not available centrally on which an estimate of the number of nurses needed nationally in such units could be made. It is for individual health authorities to determine their requiremets for nurses in their intensive care units in the light of local needs and priorities and the resources which can be allocated to those needs. Information for the rest of the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many student nurses did not complete their training in each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton: Information about student and pupil nurses who did not complete their training is given in the table. It includes those who failed their examinations and assessments as well as those who left training.

Number of students and pupils discontinuing basic nurse training: Year ending 31 March: England

	Students	Pupils	Total
[1]1983	3,910	2,210	6,120
1984	2,870	1,660	4,530
1985	3,960	2,130	6,100
1986	2,490	950	3,440
1987	2,880	980	3,860

[1] Actual figures for England for 1983 are not available but have been assumed to be 95 per cent. of those for England and Wales.

(1) All figures rounded to the nearest 10.

(2) Due to rounding the total may not be equal to the sum of the constituent parts.

Source: English National Board

Mrs Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the estimated number of nurses needed in intensive care units in the West Midlands regional health authority.

(29 how many nurses are receiving intensive care unit training in the west midlands region;

(3) how many nurses are employed in intensive care units in the West Midlands regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: It is for regional and district health authorities to determine the number of nurses needed in intensive care units. However, the latest information held centrally shows that on 30 September 1986 the following whole-time equivalent nurses were employed in intensive care units in the west midlands:

	Whole Time Equivalent
Intensive Care General Nursing	600
Paediatric Intensive Care	20

During the year ending March 1987, 28 nurses undertook the English National Board course 100 in intensive therapy nursing and six undertook course 124 in coronary care nursing. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority for any additional information she requires.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to when the next round of pay negotiations for nursery nurses is planned to begin.

Mr. Newton: The pay of nursery nurses is determined on the advice of the Independent Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives and Health Visitors, which will be reporting its recommendations to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in the spring.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his latest projection for the next five years for the number of nurses who will qualify each year for (i) England and (ii) each regional health authority; and if he will provide comparable figures for the number of nurses who currently leave each year and the number who he anticipates will leave in each of the next five years.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* I regret that not all the information requested is available. Information supplied by the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting on the number of nurse learners completing basic nurse training in 1987 and projections to 1990 based on actual intakes to training is shown in the table.

Number of nurse learners completing basic nurse training England

Year ended 31 March	Registered Nurse Training	Enrolled Nurse Training
1987	17,678	6,426
1988[1]	15,750	4,080
1989[1]	15,250	3,510
1990[1 2]	15,120	(4)

[1] Estimated figures assuming current wastage rates.

[2] Estimates possible for only three years for registered nurses and two years for enrolled nurses from 1987 (latest available figures on intakes to training).

Information about the numbers of nurses who leave the NHS in England is not collected centrally, but the most commonly accepted estimate for qualified nurses and midwives is 10 per cent. per annum. This figure includes retirements, those leaving to have a family and those leaving for non-NHS nursing employment. They are not therefore all lost to the profession. On that basis an estimated 23,700 in wholetime equivalent terms left the NHS in England in 1986-87.

After allowing for wastage and failure to practise on qualification, around 22,650 learners completed training and entered the NHS in the year to 31 March 1987. It is estimated that about 7,100 qualified staff in wholetime equivalent terms returned to the NHS in that year. It is not possible to provide the further projections requested; it is for individual health authorities to plan their intake to nurse education and training each year in the light of the latest available plans and information on service developments, labour market conditions, wastage and rate of return to NHS nursing.

NHS (Administration)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to reduce the number of administrators in the National Health Service to a level below that obtaining in 1979.

Mr. Newton: Since 1979, administrative and clerical staff numbers have risen from 103,000 to 111,400 (September 1986). This reflects increases in clinical support staff, such as medical secretaries, ward clerks and the like, which increased from 22,680 to 35,589 between 1982 and 1986. Their employment has released medical and nursing staff from clerical duties to spend more time directly caring for patients.

We are well aware of the need to monitor closely both numbers of administrators and management costs. This has been done for a number of years. While not seeking to impose artificial ceilings, this has nevertheless encouraged health authorities to exercise restraint in these areas. The policy has been successful over the years in maintaining management costs at less than 5 per cent. of total NHS turnover. (Turnover is defined as total revenue and capital expenditure and revenue and capital income.)

Expenditure (Kettering)

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list total expenditure on *(a)* current account and *(b)* capital account derived from central Government sources in the Kettering district health authority in each year since the authority was established.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of the Kettering health authority since its establishment on 1 April 1982:

	Revenue Expenditure £ million	*Capital Expenditure £ million*
1982-83	25·7	0·7
1983-84	26·8	1·0
1984-85	29·5	1·4
1985-86	30·8	1·3
1986-87	32·7	1·2

Note:
The figures for capital expenditure include sums in respect of capital schemes within the district recorded in the accounts of the Oxford regional health authority. Revenue and capital expenditure is incurred by the latter authority for the region as a whole is excluded.

Housing Benefit Supplement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of claimants in receipt of housing benefit supplement in each local authority in Britain; and of these how many receive a housing benefit supplement each week of *(a)* under £2, *(b)* £2 up to £5, *(c)* £5 up to £10 and *(d)* over £10.

Mr. Portillo: Information on the level of housing benefit supplement paid by benefit band width is not available. Information obtained from the housing benefit subsidy claims submitted by local authorities for the 1985-86 year and indicating the total number of housing benefit supplement claims made in each authority during that year has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are proposed to be taken to advise claimants of housing benefit in receipt of housing benefit supplement of its abolition next April; and what guidance is being given to local authorities paying housing benefit supplement to claimants as to how they should advise such claimants.

Mr. Portillo: The general publicity on the social security reforms has made it quite clear that housing benefit supplement will cease from April 1988. We are, however, still considering whether any additional information will be required for all claimants, including recipients of housing benefit supplement, during the transitional period.

Hospital Building

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospital schemes costing over £1 million which have started on site since May 1979, giving in each case *(a)* the date of start on site, *(b)* the actual completion date or the present intended completion date, *(c)* the number of beds involved, *(d)* the number of operating theatres involved, *(e)* the cost or estimated cost and *(f)* the health district.

Mrs. Currie: The latest information held centrally, which covers all health building schemes, is set out in the table. The costs shown are for building and engineering works only; design fees and equipment costs will increase these sums by about 30 per cent.

Region and Health District	*Health Scheme*	*Works cost £*	*Start date*	*Actual or Estimated completion date*	*Number of beds*	*Number of operating theatres*
Northern RHA						
Northumberland	Blyth community hospital and health centre	4,211,371	10 December 1984	3 June 1987 A	78	—
	Fenham blood transfusion service centre	3,537,500	31 May 1983	30 June 1985 A	—	—
Newcastle	Freeman hospital	2,865,079	4 March 1985	31 August 1987 A	—	—
South Cumbria	Furness general scheme 1 phase 2	1,496,159	8 December 1980	24 May 1983 A	—	—
South Cumbria	Furness general scheme 2 phase 1	6,080,209	6 April 1986	5 September 1988 E	—	—
Hartlepool	Hartlepool DGH scheme 2 phase 1	44,886,628	26 January 1981	24 May 1984 A	90	—
Hartlepool	Hartlepool DGH scheme 3 phase 1	2,391,391	14 January 1985	14 April 1987 A	104	—
Hartlepool	Hartlepool DGH scheme 3 phase 4	1,900,440	14 November 1983	31 January 1985 A	—	—
South Tyneside	Jarrow community hospital	3,314,250	21 November 1983	14 August 1986 A	82	—
South Tees	Middlesbrough general hospital	1,565,825	9 September 1985	10 April 1987 A	120	—
North Tyneside	North Tyneside scheme 1 phase 1	10,364,538	14 April 1980	13 December 1983 A	334	6
North Tyneside	North Tyneside scheme 2 phase 1	4,137,500	8 January 1985	5 August 1987 A	84	—
Gateshead	Queen Elizabeth Gateshead scheme 3 phase 1	6,139,179	0 September 1981	26 April 1985 A	200	6
Gateshead	Queen Elizabeth Gateshead scheme 3 phase 2	1,762,698	10 January 1983	9 October 1984 A	—	—
South Tees	South Cleveland general scheme 2 phase 1B	6,143,060	28 May 1985	30 January 1988 E	150	—
South Tees	South Cleveland general scheme 2 phase 1C	1,034,004	9 December 1985	3 March 1987 A	—	—
South Tyneside	South Shields general scheme 3 phase 1	12,011,032	24 January 1987	25 January 1990 E	342	5
Northumberland	St. Georges hospital boilerhouse	1,213,183	29 June 1987	29 December 1988 E	—	—
South Cumbria	Westmoreland DGH scheme 1 phase 1	15,410,127	7 September 1987	7 September 1990 E	340	2
Yorkshire RHA						
Bradford	Bradford royal infirmary wards/ theatres (nucleus)	2,311,000	10 September 1984	12 September 1986 A	56	4

Region and Health District	*Health Scheme*	*Works cost £*	*Start date*	*Actual or Estimated completion date*	*Number of beds*	*Number of operating theatres*
East Yorkshire	Bridlington new community hospital	11,154,408	14 January 1985	23 October 1987 A	219	1
East Yorkshire	Castle hill hospital	1,085,285	28 May 1985	12 March 1987 A	60	—
Northallerton	Friarage hospital phase 1 (nucleus)	4,885,608	30 April 1984	1 September 1986 A	171	—
Scunthorpe	Goole new community hospital	9,705,353	20 May 1985	16 December 1987 E	166	1
Leeds Western	High Royds hospital upgrading of six wards	1,089,421	2 June 1986	2 November 1988 E	177	—
Pontefract	Pontefract day surgical unit	1,198,622	24 August 1987	17 February 1989 E	12	2
Leeds Eastern	Regional blood transfusion centre seacroft phase 1	2,131,162	2 April 1984	00 June 1986 A	—	—
	Regional distribution centre	2,932,116	1 September 1986	5 October 1987 A	—	—
	Regional secure unit Wakefield	1,390,204	15 February 1982	13 February 1984 A	48	—
Scarborough	Scarborough DGH phase 1 (nucleus)	6,237,086	7 November 1983	25 July 1986 A	161	—
Scarborough	Scarborough geriatric day hospital and wards	1,226,924	25 May 1987	26 November 1988 E	48	—
Scunthorpe	Scunthorpe DGH phase 3A service centre	4,100,387	9 January 1984	8 August 1986 A	—	—
Scunthorpe	Scunthorpe DGH phase 3B A and E block	2,720,815	15 September 1986	10 October 1988 E	—	—
Scunthorpe	Scunthorpe DGH phase 4A(2) four storey block	2,176,140	20 July 1987	18 August 1989 E	—	—
Dewsbury	Staincliffe DGH energy centre	3,262,108	26 July 1982	14 June 1985 A	—	—
Dewsbury	Staincliffe DGH pathology department (Extns and Imps)	1,182,265	9 March 1987	13 March 1989 E	—	—
Dewsbury	Staincliffe DGH phase 1 (nucleus)	13,190,622	8 January 1985	3 August 1988 E	306	4
Trent RHA						
Bassetlaw	Bassetlaw DGH phase 1	4,696,449	28 May 1980	21 July 1983 A	134	2
Bassetlaw	Bassetlaw DGH phase 2	4,411,608	30 June 1986	22 September 1989 E	170	2
North Derbyshire	Bolsover community hospital development	2,765,308	20 May 1985	13 July 1987 A	72	—
North Derbyshire	Calow DGH site additional laundry facilities	1,143,819	26 November 1984	4 June 1986 A	—	—
North Derbyshire	Chesterfield and North Derby Royal hospital phase 2B	6,198,578	21 October 1985	00 November 1988 E	168	4
North Derbyshire	Chesterfield DGH phase 2A MI provision	1,957,141	3 September 1984	28 April 1986 A	—	—
Leicestershire	Coalville community hospital	3,288,219	14 October 1985	16 October 1987 A	96	—
South Derbyshire	Derby city phase 1	11,862,209	2 August 1982	20 December 1985 A	242	4
South Derbyshire	Derby Royal infirmary—phase 2	8,436,949	23 January 1984	2 October 1986 A	180	—
South Derbyshire	Derby Royal infirmary—phase 2 kitchen and dining	1,092,929	19 June 1985	29 June 1987 A	—	—
Doncaster	Doncaster Royal infirmary childrens unit	3,335,582	20 October 1986	6 November 1988 E	88	—
Leicestershire	Glenfield DGH phase 1	10,630,644	22 September 1980	13 April 1983 A	200	4
Leicestershire	Glenfield DGH phase 2	12,647,836	11 May 1987	7 April 1990 E	258	4
Trent RHA						
South Lincolnshire	Grantham and Kesteven accident and emergency and x-ray	1,220,923	November 1984	14 July 1986 A	14	—
Southern	Ilkeston community hospital	4,556,638	5 March 1984	16 April 1987 A	72	1
South Lincolnshire	John Spalding	1,035,514	21 January 1985	16 June 1986 A	56	—
Barnsley	Kendray hospital—phase 1—redevelopment	1,974,579	January 1982	9 December 1983 A	104	—
Central Nottinghamshire	Kings Mill—mortuary and histopathology	1,110,069	13 April 1987	22 July 1988 E	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	Kings Mill DGH phase 1A	1,441,063	29 March 1982	6 April 1984 A	—	—
Central Nottinghamshire	Kings Mill DGH phase 2	2,751,813	21 May 1984	7 July 1986 A	120	—
Central Nottinghamshire	Kings Mill DGH phase 3 enabling works	3,347,301	27 January 1986	1 November 1987 E	—	—
Leicestershire	Leicester general MIU	2,698,182	2 June 1980	17 November 1982 A	160	—
Leicestershire	Leicester royal infirmary phase 4B	15,751,965	26 October 1987	1 July 1990 E	465	—
North Lincolnshire	Lincoln county phase 1	9,037,589	20 July 1981	20 July 1984 A	112	4
North Lincolnshire	Lincoln county phase 1A and 1B	3,240,841	14 May 1984	20 June 1986 A	100	—
North Lincolnshire	Lincoln county phase 1C—MIU	2,510,954	4 February 1985	5 December 1986 A	90	—
Doncaster	Montagu Mexborough wards and theatres	2,028,992	3 February 1986	4 July 1988 E	56	3
Sheffield	Northern general geriatric	5,781,100	28 October 1985	20 December 1987 E	196	—
Sheffield	Northern general phase 1C	5,691,383	31 January 1983	3 May 1985 A	236	—

Region and Health District	Health Scheme	Works cost £	Start date	Actual or Estimated completion date	Number of beds	Number of operating theatres
Nottingham	Notts City mortuary and histopathology	1,054,610	24 October 1983	16 September 1985 A	—	—
South Lincolnshire	Pilgrim hospital (Boston)—phase 3—MIU	2,678,084	22 October 1984	6 July 1987 A	116	—
South Lincolnshire	Pilgrim hospital (Boston) support services	1,019,158	6 April 1987	30 September 1988 E	—	—
Rotherham	Rotherham DGH phase 1 (Moorgate) laundry	1,641,316	25 July 1983	20 December 1984 A	—	—
Rotherham	Rotherham DGH phase 2	6,375,346	8 September 1980	5 May 1983 A	178	—
Sheffield	Sheffield childrens phase 1 development	4,908,127	14 April 1986	September 1988 E	49	3
Leicestershire	Towers hospital Leicester	1,404,744	30 June 1980	26 March 1983 A	60	—
Bassetlaw	Victoria Mansfield—phase 1	2,002,667	7 January 1985	4 October 1988 E	84	—
East Anglian RHA						
Cambridge	Addenbrookes geriatric unit	3,864,130	4 August 1980	3 March 1983 A	208	—
Cambridge	Addenbrookes operating theatre extension	1,273,967	30 March 1981	25 March 1983 A	—	2
West Suffolk	Bury St. Edmunds new central store	1,251,170	20 October 1986	29 May 1987 A	—	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	Chatterton House Kings Lynn—phase 2	1,761,836	10 February 1986	July 1987 A	48	—
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	Great Yarmouth DGH phase 2	4,078,713	1 February 1982	15 November 1984 A	240	4
Huntingdon	Hinchingbrooke hospital Huntingdon phase 3	10,677,970	20 August 1979	10 January 1983 A	227	7
Huntingdon	Hinchingbrooke hospital Huntingdon phase 4	1,052,989	7 September 1981	14 February 1983 A	—	—
Ipswich	Ipswich phase 1 Heath Road wing (nucleus)	6,223,133	14 April 1980	13 April 1983 A	308	6
Ipswich	Ipswich phase 3 Heath Road wing (nucleus)	3,810,340	30 September 1985	7 December 1987 E	56	4
West Norfolk and Wisbech	London Road Kings Lynn contract 2	1,167,419	16 June 1987	2 October 1988 E	24	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	North Cambridgeshire major development	1,587,668	12 August 1985	1 May 1987 A	48	—
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	Northgate—Conversion of Maternity unit to geriatric	1,182,199	8 June 1987	2 January 1989 E	48	—
Peterborough	Peterborough 2nd DGH phase 1	12,908,108	27 February 1984	11 December 1987 E	284	4
Peterborough	Peterborough district opd/pathology	1,606,710	9 May 1983	11 March 1985 A	—	—
West Norfolk and Wisbech	Queen Elizabeth Kings Lynn stage 1	1,481,907	3 October 1983	29 April 1985 A	120	—
Cambridge	Regional blood transfusion centre	1,009,847	28 May 1985	11 November 1987 A	—	—
Cambridge	Rosie maternity—Cambridge	4,700,000	3 August 1981	17 June 1983 A	104	—
	St. Andrew's regional forensic psychiatric unit	1,288,039	17 May 1982	26 September 1983 A	—	—
West Suffolk	West Suffolk Bury St Edmunds stage 1	2,150,253	30 January 1984	23 August 1985 A	48	—
North West Thames RHA						
Barnet	Barnet General Hospital	1,482,591	1 September 1981	19 September 1983 A	—	—
North Bedfordshire	Bedford general rehabilitation facilities	1,542,287	16 June 1986	18 December 1987 E	—	—
Brent	Central Middlesex pathology department	1,617,064	8 October 1984	31 October 1986 A	—	—
Brent	Central Middlesex psychiatric unit	2,869,322	18 November 1985	16 November 1987 E	90	—
Riverside	Charing Cross Hospital medical oncology	1,716,164	1 September 1981	29 April 1983 A	—	—
Riverside	Charing Cross Hospital north block	3,616,324	1 September 1981	1 May 1984 A	—	—
Riverside	Chiswick conversion to psychogeriatrics	1,438,799	1 June 1985	1 September 1986 A	—	—
Ealing	Clayponds geriatric unit (nucleus)	3,216,151	1 February 1987	14 October 1988 E	72	—
Ealing	Ealing maternity unit	3,543,101	9 June 1986	15 February 1988 E	55	—
Barnet	Edgware General Hospital	1,362,200	28 October 1985	1 July 1988 E	—	—
North West Hertfordshire	Gossoms end day unit	1,763,928	23 February 1987	10 October 1988 E	—	—
North West Bedfordshire	Hemel Hempstead phase 1—main block redevelopment	5,906,036	14 November 1983	27 February 1987 A	84	3
Hounslow and Spelthorne	Hounslow and Spelthorne district store	1,284,865	1 November 1985	28 October 1986 A	—	—
North Hertfordshire	Lister maternity unit (nucleus)	2,579,632	8 February 1982	10 February 1984 A	76	—
North Hertfordshire	Lister residential accommodation	1,168,775	12 March 1984	10 June 1985 A	—	—
South Bedfordshire	Luton and Dunstable kitchen and dining room	1,497,058	4 September 1981	9 August 1983 A	—	—

Region and Health District	*Health Scheme*	*Works cost £*	*Start date*	*Actual or Estimated completion date*	*Number of beds*	*Number of operating theatres*
Hillingdon	Mount Vernon medical block	1,194,000	18 May 1987	16 December 1987 E	100	—
North West Hertfordshire	North West Hertfordshire district office accommodation	1,263,191	15 July 1985	5 September 1986 A	—	—
	North London blood transfusion centre—enabling works	2,838,332	1 June 1987	14 October 1988 E	—	—
	North London blood transfusion centre	4,610,588	1 June 1987	14 October 1988 E	—	—
Paddington and North Kensington	Paddington and North Kensington divisional store 6	1,344,605	10 February 1986	7 December 1986 A	—	—
	Queen Elizabeth II reorganisation of acute facilities phase 1	2,240,080	3 August 1987	26 November 1989 E	—	—
Ealing	Regional secure unit Ealing Hospital	1,440,323	8 May 1984	7 January 1986 A	40	—
North West Herts	St. Albans city hospital geriatric unit	1,617,046	19 April 1982	29 February 1984 A	84	—
North West Herts	St. Albans city hospital residential accommodation	1,019,215	18 July 1983	12 November 1984 A	—	—
North West Herts	St. Albans redevelopment of main phase	5,859,553	17 November 1986	31 January 1989 E	—	4
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Charles' hospital	3,155,802	19 April 1982	16 January 1985 A	116	—
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Mary's W2 phase 1A	2,529,389	27 April 1981	26 April 1983 A	60	—
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Mary's W2 phase 1B	20,397,915	22 November 1982	15 April 1987 A	338	—
South West Herts	Watford (Shrodells wing) phase 3	13,464,151	24 September 1979	17 February 1984 A	368	12
South West Herts	Watford (Shrodells wing) residential	1,050,267	25 May 1983	28 November 1984 A	—	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	West Middlesex geriatric unit	1,487,256	14 December 1981	12 December 1983 A	84	—
Hounslow and Spelthorne	West Middlesex geriatric unit (completion weeks)	1,245,353	1 August 1983	10 September 1984 A	84	—
North East Thames RHA						
Barking	Barking elderly care services development	4,324,131	May 1987	February 1989 E	124	—
Mid Essex	Broomfield phase 5	7,359,641	6 April 1981	23 November 1984 A	8	4
Mid Essex	Broomfield ward block	2,716,089	3 September 1984	15 June 1987 A	224	—
North East Essex	Clacton community hospital phase 2	1,052,952	1 December 1986	19 April 1988 E	48	—
North East Essex	Clacton district phase 1 stages 1 and 2	2,887,330	14 February 1983	13 February 1985 A	46	—
North East Essex	Colchester DGH phase 2	10,990,807	16 March 1981	1 October 1984 A	286	4
North East Essex	Colchester DGH phase 3 residential	2,565,700	29 November 1982	March 1985 A	—	—
Bloomsbury	Elizabeth Garrett Anderson	1,772,303	September 1981	December 1983 A	—	—
Barking	Harold Wood phase 1	7,477,330	6 February 1984	5 January 1987 A	112	3
Barking	Harold Wood phase 2 school of nursing	1,506,326	6 May 1986	13 January 1988 E	—	—
Barking	High Wood—extension to laurels	1,885,327	27 April 1987	12 August 1988 E	60	
City and Hackney	Homerton hospital phase 1	13,225,741	1 June 1982	19 March 1986 A	428	4
Tower Hamlet	London hospital (Mile End)	5,182,249	2 February 1987	1 May 1989 E	144	—
Newham	Newham Hospital phase 1 (nucleus)	8,597,602	10 September 1979	8 September 1982 A	293	4
Newham	Newham Hospital phase 2 (nucleus)	3,944,691	21 February 1983	May 1985 A	121	—
Haringey	North Middlesex Boiler House & Works Department	2,188,319	22 May 1985	26 July 1987 A	—	—
Haringey	North Middlesex Geriatric & Catering	4,017,277	17 March 1986	16 June 1988 E	96	—
Southend	Rochford Geriatric Wards	3,969,527	June 1986	27 June 1988 E	96	—
Haringey	St. Ann's Geriatric Unit	3,479,760	3 August 1987	31 March 1989 E	96	—
Haringey	St. Ann's MI day hospital and ESMI	1,310,522	6 October 1986	1 March 1988 E	80	—
West Essex	St. Margaret's—Epping (mental handicapped)	1,046,140	21 January 1985	1 November 1986 A	—	—
Islington	Whittington redevelopment phase 1	10,876,344	2 November 1987	13 August 1990 E	244	—
South East Thames RHA						
South East Kent	Archery House—MH unit	3,325,387	31 January 1983	28 June 1985 A	96	—
Bromley	Bassetts Residential Centre—MH services	3,656,071	15 October 1984	19 February 1987 A	—	—
Bromley	Bethlem Royal Hospital (SASS)	1,032,404	29 November 1982	25 May 1984 A	30	—
South East Kent	Buckland DGH	2,358,469	9 January 1984	9 March 1987 A	—	—
Camberwell	Crystal Palace (Bowley Close)—MH centre	2,992,182	25 November 1985	3 August 1987 A	72	—

Region and Health District	Health Scheme	Works cost £	Start date	Actual or Estimated completion date	Number of beds	Number of operating theatres
Eastbourne	Eastbourne new DGH phase 2	12,009,727	23 June 1986	31 December 1988 E	140	—
Canterbury	Faversham Hospital Geriatric Wards	1,052,664	2 March 1987	2 June 1988 E	24	—
Hastings	Hastings DGH pre-phase works	2,555,581	23 June 1986	22 December 1987 E	—	—
Canterbury	Isle of Thanet DGH—Margate wing interim development	1,700,899	12 May 1986	17 August 1987 A	28	—
Maidstone	Kent & Sussex—Tunbridge Wells phase 1	4,935,417	19 April 1982	5 November 1984 A	14	—
Maidstone	Kent & Sussex—Tunbridge Wells phase 2	1,886,990	25 June 1985	8 June 1987 A	97	—
Camberwell	Kings College—children's ward	1,255,542	5 January 1981	18 February 1983 A	—	—
Lewisham & Southwark	Lewisham DGH phase 1A	6,032,680	8 February 1982	27 March 1986 A	—	4
Lewisham & Southwark	Lewisham DGH phase 1B	2,723,583	17 January 1983	3 June 1987 A	—	—
Maidstone	Maidstone DGH phase 1 (nucleus)	10,769,425	28 April 1980	20 April 1983 A	262	—
Maidstone	Maidstone DGH phase 1A (nucleus)	1,916,815	23 January 1984	2 September 1985 A	112	—
Maidstone	Maidstone DGH staff residences	1,432,417	4 January 1982	12 July 83 A	—	—
Medway	Medway DGH phase 3B	13,393,204	6 October 1986	14 June 1989 E	186	—
Medway	Medway DGH residential	1,155,205	7 November 1983	8 March 1985 A	—	—
Bromley	Orpington phase 1	6,194,928	9 June 1980	16 December 1983 A	300	—
Bexley	Queen Mary's Sidcup—extension to maternity department	1,368,901	8 Februrary 1982	23 March 1984 A	—	—
Bexley	Queen Mary's Sidcup—pathology	1,057,898	13 January 1986	16 November 1987 E	—	—
SE Kent	RVH Folkestone phase 2	1,888,782	2 March 1987	25 November 1988 E	—	—
Eastbourne	Seaford Health Centre	1,200,638	13 January 1986	17 July 1987 A	—	—
W Lambeth	St Thomas' Hospital—south wing	8,714,167	1 June 1987	31 May 1989 E	129	—
W Lambeth	Thamesmead main health centre	1,902,850	13 December 1982	8 July 1985 A	—	—
SE Kent	William Harvey	1,049,676	1 March 1982	11 January 1984 A	—	—
SW Thames RHA						
Mid-Downs	Crawley Hospital phase 4	1,242,346	13 October 1986	April 1988 E	46	—
Croydon	Croydon/Mayday ante-natal & PG med centre	1,171,364	31 October 1983	29 April 1985 A	—	—
Croydon	Croydon/Mayday DGH (Nucleus)	8,519,504	17 September 1979	10 December 1982 A	330	8
Croydon	Croydon/Mayday DGH geriatric & rehabilitation unit	1,316,349	21 May 1984	13 December 1986 A	63	—
E Surrey	Dene Hospital development Caterham	1,279,502	21 November 1983	20 August 1985 A	—	—
W Surrey	Greenfield mentally handicapped conversion	1,507,462	14 September 1981	13 September 1983 A	72	—
NE Hants	Harrowlands—unit for younger disabled	1,335,925	30 June 1986	7 December 1987 E	20	—
Mid-Downs	Horsham Hospital mental illness unit	2,020,488	August 1987	April 1989 E	54	—
Mid-Surrey	Manor Hospital kitchen & staff dining room	1,034,999	4 May 1982	3 August 1984 A	—	—
Mid-Surrey	Manor Hospital MH units	1,266,536	13 September 1982	May 1984 A	—	—
Mid-Downs	Mid Sussex phase 1	18,557,421	14 July 1986	20 September 1989 E	330	4
SW Surrey	Milford Hospital Waverley	1,184,848	9 April 1984	8 October 1985 A	—	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	Queen Mary's Roehampton phase 1	3,131,584	19 April 1982	April 1984 A	20	3
East Surrey	Redhill residential	1,718,909	20 July 1981	20 April 1983 A	—	—
South West Surrey	Royal Surrey County Guildford phase 2	13,612,790	1 September 1986	30 November 1989 E	151	—
South West Surrey	Royal Surrey County Guildford teaching unit	1,259,621	30 January 1984	22 November 1985 A	—	—
Wandsworth	St. Georges block H phase 2A	16,953,738	4 June 1984	21 September 1987 A	360	6
Wandsworth	St. Georges blocks G2 and F phase 2	9,904,806	9 November 1981	9 May 1985 A	—	—
Merton/Sutton	St. Helier maternity unit alterations	1,011,322	12 October 1981	10 October 1983 A	—	—
Wessex RHA						
Winchester	Andover Community Hospital	3,076,639	15 October 1984	24 August 1987 A	78	2
West Dorset	Blandford Community Hospital development—phase 1	1,917,861	23 June 1982	19 April 1984 A	50	—
East Dorset	Bournemouth DGH—phase 1 (nucleus)	14,140,611	6 August 1984	1 April 1988 E	289	4
East Dorset	Bournemouth DGH—phase 1B (residential)	3,407,483	13 January 1986	23 November 1987 E	—	—
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	Havant health centre	1,366,310	25 January 1982	February 1984 A	—	—
Salisbury	Odstock Hospital rehabilitation and catering	1,026,779	July 1981	September 1983 A	—	—

Region and Health District	Health Scheme	Works cost £	Start date	Actual or Estimated completion date	Number of beds	Number of operating theatres
Salisbury	Odstock Hospital spinal injuries unit	3,297,929	26 August 1981	21 October 1983 A	50	—
East Dorset	Poole General Hospital—ESMI assessment unit/day hospital	3,827,121	20 July 1987	19 July 1989 E	112	—
East Dorset	Poole General Hospital—maternity extension	1,472,447	1 October 1987	2 October 1987 A	24	—
Winchester	Royal Hampshire County Winchester —phase 4 (nucleus)	8,943,857	8 December 1982	16 May 1986 A	278	4
Southampton and South West Hampshire	Royal South Hampshire Southampton—phase 3	9,956,350	17 October 1983	15 December 1986 A	20	—
Bath	Royal United Bath—operating theatres	4,773,673	28 November 1985	7 March 1989 E	—	8
Bath	Royal United Bath—residential accommodation	1,539,876	11 April 1984	10 July 1985 A	—	—
Bath	Royal United Bath—ward block	3,962,201	6 February 1984	31 January 1987 A	168	—
Bath	St. Andrew's redevelopment—phase 1A	1,161,282	18 August 1986	20 November 1987 E	48	—
Bath	St. Ann's Canford Cliffs—extension contract 1	2,188,660	19 October 1987	19 July 1988 E	100	—
Bath	St. Martin's Bath geriatric wards	1,936,354	27 May 1987	8 March 1989 E	96	—
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	St. Mary's Portsmouth	6,611,853	24 August 1987	24 November 1989 E	4	8
Isle of Wight	St. Mary's—Isle of Wight—phase 3B (nucleus)	15,895,327	28 October 1985	February 1989 E	87	4
Swindon	Swindon laundry	2,055,465	14 July 1982	14 May 1984 A	—	—
West Dorset	West Dorset DGH phase 1	10,480,035	30 April 1984	22 May 1987 A	134	2
Oxford						
Wycombe	Amersham operating theatres	1,333,653	18 May 1981	24 June 1983 A	—	3
East Berkshire	heatherwood MI/EMI	3,754,584	15 April 1985	16 November 1987 E	75	—
Wycombe	High Wycombe pathology	1,053,300	12 December 1983	5 July 1985 A	—	—
Oxfordshire	Horton operating theatres	1,274,086	19 January 1981	15 April 1983 A	—	3
Oxfordshire	Horton phase 3A geriatric	1,367,696	14 July 1986	5 November 1987 E	53	—
Oxfordshire	John Radcliffe hospital—phase 3	3,138,810	26 May 1987	25 November 1988 E	58	—
Kettering	Kettering—new theatres: Spencer ward	1,361,953	20 July 1987	15 January 1989 E	10	3
Milton Keynes	Milton Keynes DGH—MI unit	2,422,087	18 May 1987	14 April 1989 E	50	—
Milton Keynes	Milton Keynes DGH—phase 1	12,622,800	6 October 1980	12 September 1983 A	265	4
Northampton	Northampton DGH phase 2B	1,761,364	9 February 1981	18 June 1982 A	120	—
Northampton	Northampton DGH phase 3	1,603,784	16 May 1983	17 May 1985 A	—	—
Aylesbury Vale	Stoke Mandeville—pathology	1,132,346	5 October 1987	3 February 1989 E	—	—
Aylesbury Vale	Stoke Mandeville—X-ray	1,149,659	6 January 1986	10 July 1987 A	—	—
East Berkshire	Wexham Park—EMI/MI	2,196,819	4 July 1983	6 February 1986 A	70	4
East Berkshire	Wexham Park—Maternity unit	4,485,975	26 October 1981	27 July 1984 A	130	2
East Berkshire	Wexham Park—MODS pathology, pharmacy and X-ray	1,185,104	8 July 1985	27 November 1987 E	—	—
East Berkshire	Wexham Park—Paediatric department and stores	2,155,847	31 May 1983	11 February 1985 A	43	—
East Berkshire	Wexham Park—Rehabilitation unit	1,311,482	19 November 1986	17 August 1988 E	—	—
East Berkshire	Wexham Park—Residential	1,452,561	16 September 1985	3 June 1987 A	—	—
South Western RHA						
Bristol and Weston	Bristol Eye Hospital	4,024,429	12 July 1982	23 April 1985 A	78	3
Exeter	Butler Clinic—Langdon Hospital, Dawlish	1,052,022	7 July 1980	1 April 1982 A	30	—
Cheltenham and District	Charlton Lane Development phase 1A	1,178,217	22 September 1986	21 September 1987 A	50	—
Cheltenham and District	Cheltenham General phase 1A	1,856,192	28 June 1982	22 June 1984 A	—	—
Cheltenham and District	Cheltenham General phase 1B	6, 614,327	19 August 1985	21 June 1988 E	120	2
Cheltenham and District	Cirencester Memorial Replacement and ESMI beds	3,482,447	6 January 1986	December 1987 E	74	1
Plymouth	Derriford DGH Tower Block fitting out	2,897,107	December 1984	16 January 1987 A	—	—
Frenchay	Frenchay DGH boiler house	1,237,757	28 October 1985	1 May 1987 A	—	—
Frenchay	Frenchay DGH phase 1	6,240,327	7 July 1986	26 May 1989 E	188	—
Frenchay	Glenside sub-regional secure unit	1,510,016	5 January 1987	5 July 1988 E	—	—
Gloucester	Gloucester Royal phase 4B	3,840,926	7 April 1986	13 January 1989 E	—	3
Gloucester	Gloucester Royal phase 4C	1,182,507	1 December 1980	11 June 1982 A	56	—
Frenchay	Hannam Hall redevelopment phase 1	1,090,551	30 November 1981	10 September 1983 A	—	—

Region and Health District	Health Scheme	Works cost £	Start date	Actual or Estimated completion date	Number of beds	Number of operating theatres
Southmead	Hortham Hospital—engineering improvements	1,245,695	2 November 1981	28 October 1983 A	—	—
Exeter	P.E.O.H. boiler house and renewal of eng. services	1,084,000	23 January 1984	29 November 1985 A	—	—
Exeter	Royal Devon and Exeter (Wonford) Acute Geriatric	1,197,000	6 August 1984	16 April 1986 A	56	—
North Devon	South Molton Hospital Geriatric and GP Unit	1,402,950	24 February 1986	6 April 1988 E	28	—
Southmead	Southmead Hospital—central delivery suite	1,109,458	23 May 1983	22 February 1985 A	—	1
Southmead	Southmead pathology phase 1	3,059,730	16 March 1987	27 March 1989 E	—	—
Chel and District	Tewkesbury General Hospital	1,472,853	28 July 1986	12 February 1988 E	—	—
Torbay	Torbay DGH maternity unit	2,358,298	2 August 1982	28 September 1984 A	68	—
Torbay	Torbay MI unit	2,279,300	26 November 1984	18 August 1986 A	60	—
Somerset	West Somerset (Musgrove Park) DGH phase 1	5,876,191	8 November 1982	10 October 1986 A	150	2
Bristol and Weston	Weston-super-Mare New Hospital	11,007,359	6 September 1982	18 April 1986 A	252	4
Somerset	Williton New Geriatric Hospital	1,703,010	24 November 1986	26 August 1988 E	56	—
West Midlands RHA						
Oxfordshire	Bradwell new geriatric unit (nucleus)	4,263,207	15 April 1985	30 October 1987 A	96	—
Bromsgrove	Bromsgrove Redditch DGH contract 3 (residential)	1,208,783	1 February 1984	31 July 1985 A	—	—
Bromsgrove	Bromsgrove Redditch DGH PH 1 contract 2 (nucleus)	15,110,938	1 November 1982	11 April 1986 A	393	4
Hereford	Bromyard community hospital	2,404,991	16 June 1986	15 May 1988 E	20	—
South East Staffordshire	Burton (outwoods) psychiatric/ temporary maternity	2,025,483	22 September 1986	2 April 1988 E	68	—
South East Staffordshire	Burton on Trent DGH (central production unit)	1,837,120	13 October 1986	27 May 1988 E	—	—
North Staffordshire	Cheadle new geriatric unit	3,262,718	1 October 1984	3 July 1987 A	81	—
North Staffordshire	City General Stoke nurses' training school	1,174,319	July 1983	23 November 1984 A	—	—
North Staffordshire	City General Stoke surgical accommodation (nucleus)	13,563,581	11 March 1985	4 September 1988 E	278	—
Dudley	Dudley-Guest rehabilitation unit	1,148,576	6 April 1987	6 October 1988 E	—	—
Dudley	Dudley Road maternity extension	1,413,377	20 August 1984	28 March 1986 A	—	—
Dudley	Edward Street-psychiatric/geriatric	4,644,341	1 September 1986	20 December 1988 E	96	—
North Warwickshire	George Elliot Nuneaton phase 2 (nucleus)	4,434,122	27 July 1984	7 November 1986 A	56	—
North Birmingham	Good Hope phase 1	2,976,656	9 April 1984	2 June 1986 A	—	4
North Birmingham	Good Hope phase 2	4,452,493	6 January 1986	15 March 1988 E	—	—
North Birmingham	Good Hope phase 3A	1,595,346	7 July 1986	3 January 1988 E	138	—
Walsall	Goscote (new kitchen and dining room)	1,491,125	14 January 1985	February 1987 A	—	—
Herefordshire	Hereford County-acute psychiatry unit	1,742,748	17 January 1983	25 February 1985 A	60	—
Kidderminister	Kidderminister DGH phase 5 (nucleus)	2,668,371	17 February 1982	24 October 1984 A	96	—
Wolverhampton	New Cross Wolverhampton wards and theatres (nucleus)	2,043,354	15 June 1981	13 June 1983 A	56	4
Wolverhampton	New Cross Wolverhamton wards 1 and 2 (nucleus)	3,111,025	7 February 1983	10 May 1985 A	—	—
Worcester	Newtown Worcester ESMI unit	1,380,526	23 February 1981	31 May 1983 A	—	—
North Staffordshire	North Staffordshire royal infirmary boiler house	1,119,279	26 March 1984	13 December 1985 A	—	—
North Staffordshire	Pelsall ambulance training centre	1,315,814	14 November 1983	14 May 1985 A	—	—
South Birmingham	Rubery Hill regional psychiatric intensive care unit	3,889,096	12 February 1985	17 July 1987 A	100	—
Central						
Birmingham	Queen Elizabeth Birmingham—phase 1 and 2	1,653,089	2 May 1983	28 January 1985 A	—	—
Birmingham	Queen Elizabeth Birmingham—phase 3 contract1	1,335,514	7 April 1986	31 July 1988 E	—	—
Wolverhampton	Royal Wolverhampton—new boiler house	1,229,048	September 1982	March 1984 A	—	—
Sandwell	Sandwell DGH maternity dept. clinic	1,860,214	September 1992	September 1984 A	—	—
Rugby	St. Cross Rugby maternity	1,149,922	8 December 1980	6 December 1982 A	30	—
Mid Staffordshire	St. Georges Stafford phase 2	2,133,676	1 June 1981	January 1984 A	—	—
Shropshire	Telford DGH phase 1	18,322,673	26 November 1984	31 August 1988 E	338	4

Region and Health District	Health Scheme	Works cost £	Start date	Actual or Estimated completion date	Number of beds	Number of operating theatres
Shropshire	Town wharf residential accommodation	1,041,821	8 July 1985	6 March 1987 A	—	—
Walsall	Walsall phase 4a and 4b (nucleus)	14,480,519	7 January 1985	7 September 1988 E	297	4
Coventry	Walsgrave Radiotherapy treatment unit	2,985,362	12 November 1984	6 February 1987 A	—	—
South Warwickshire	Warwick DGH—phase 1 (nucleus)	4,594,686	17 June 1985	6 March 1988 E	135	4
Dudley	Wordsley—obstetrics	4,565,889	19 November 1984	25 October 1987 E	—	—
Mersey RHA						
Liverpool	Alder Hey child heath institute	4,556,420	18 March 1985	April 1988 E	—	1
Liverpool	Alder Hey new boiler house	1,242,265	30 April 1984	29 July 1985 A	—	—
Liverpool	Broadgreen cardiology-cardio-thoracic unit	1,336,000	27 November 1979	26 November 1981 A	—	—
Liverpool	Broadgreen development phase 1 (nucleus)	8,623,560	6 January 1986	31 March 1988 E	292	—
Wirral	Clatterbridge medical unit (Nucleus)	2,514,576	October 1986	4 October 1988 E	109	—
South Sefton	Fazakerley hospital acute MI unit	1,727,745	11 May 1987	8 July 1988 E	125	—
Halton	Halton DGH phase 2 (nucleus)	6,020,514	22 February 1982	18 August 1984 A	232	2
Halton	Halton hospital residential accommodation	1,078,333	April 1984	September 1985 A	—	—
Macclesfield	Macclesfield development (nucleus)	8,717,398	21 January 1980	24 June 1883 A	208	4
Liverpool	Mossley Hill ESMI unit	1,490,845	January 1985	19 December 1986 A	30	—
Southport and Formby	North Sefton DGH Southport phase 1 (nucleus)	16,590,435	29 May 1984	25 March 1988 E	301	4
St. Helens and Knowsley	Rainhill regional secure unit	1,792,049	19 January 1981	7 June 1983 A	51	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	Regional stores	2,182,000	30 April 1984	11 January 1985 A	—	—
Southport and Formby	Southport infirmary—new main block	1,499,667	26 January 1981	26 July 1982 A	30	4
Wirral	St. Catherine's Birkenhead redevelopment phase 1	2,913,000	21 October 1985	27 November 1987 E	112	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	St. Helens phase 2	1,787,651	2 February 1987	13 November 1987 E	—	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	St. Helens redevelopment phase 1 boiler house	2,884,915	7 April 1986	7 February 1988 E	—	—
St. Helens and Knowsley	St. Helens redevelopment phase 1 Geriatric	1,072,085	23 November 1981	21 December 1983 A	60	—
Warrington	Warrington DGH phase B (nucleus)	4,293,354	17 March 1986	25 March 1988 E	204	—
North Western RHA						
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	Blackpool Victoria phase 4	2,880,493	15 February 1984	15 May 1986 A	112	3
Bolton	Bolton DGH boiler house	1,698,141	22 November 1982	22 August 1984 A	—	—
Bolton	Bolton DGH ESMI and geriatric unit	3,048,210	14 June 1982	10 September 1984 A	152	—
Bolton	Bolton DGH MIU	1,412,462	15 July 1985	29 September 1986 A	48	—
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale	Burnley general Reedyford—HSDU and replace pharmacy	1,442,245	21 January 1985	November 1987 E	—	—
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale	Burnley general phase 3	4,152,174	18 June 1984	4 July 1986 A	168	3
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale	Burnley general younger disabled unit	1,177,100	15 April 1985	5 December 1986 A	26	—
Chorley and South Ribble	Chorley DGH geriatric unit	1,279,114	29 June 1987	25 December 1988 E	48	—
Chorley and South Ribble	Chorley regional store	1,532,960	9 February 1987	25 October 1987 A	—	—
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	Clifton community hospital	4,287,923	17 June 1985	16 November 1987 E	96	—
Bury	Fairfield boiler house	1,351,725	15 January 1984	15 October 1985 A	—	—
Bury	Fairfield catering and HSDU	2,273,991	29 April 1985	23 September 1987 A	—	—
Bury	Fairfield phase 1	4,135,797	5 July 1985	1 February 1988 E	102	—
Black, Wyre and Fylde	Fleetwood ESMI	1,979,862	22 November 1983	22 January 1986 A	56	—
Salford	Hope Hospital Salford phase 1	11,678,323	1 October 1979	13 May 1983 A	83	7
Wigan	Leigh Infirmary 2nd MI unit	1,828,633	6 June 1983	5 June 1985 A	60	—
Wigan	Leigh Infirmary HSDU substation and roadworks	1,118,420	15 December 1983	15 December 1985 A	—	—
Salford	Manchester Royal Infirmary—MIDU	1,550,062	8 August 1983	23 November 1984 A	—	—
Salford	Manchester Royal Infirmary ESMI unit	1,968,751	16 August 1982	27 February 1984 A	56	—
Salford	Manchester Royal Infirmary phase 1	2,342,719	16 July 1979	10 October 1981 A	112	2
Salford	Manchester Royal Infirmary phase 2	17,607,188	14 July 1986	5 January 1990 E	280	10

Region and Health District	Health Scheme	Works cost £	Start date	Actual or Estimated completion date	Number of beds	Number of operating theatres
Salford	Manchester Royal Infirmary service complex	3,688,541	1 September 1986	23 September 1988 E	—	—
Oldham	Oldham DGH ESMI unit	1,303,946	4 January 1982	3 January 1984 A	56	—
Oldham	Oldham DGH HSDU	1,141,825	7 April 1986	9 October 1987 A	—	—
Oldham	Oldham DGH phase 1	12,808,854	11 February 1985	16 March 1988 E	308	7
Oldham	Oldham DGH temporary accommodation	1,082,689	8 March 1982	4 November 1983 A	—	—
Black, Wyre and Fylde	Park Hospital geriatric and rehabilitation	2,644,171	13 June 1983	27 February 1986 A	96	—
Salford	Prestwich Hospital adolescent secure unit	1,394,679	16 March 1981	15 February 1983 A	20	—
Salford	Prestwich Hospital adult secure unit	1,457,464	15 February 1982	13 December 1985 A	88	—
Lancaster	Queen Victoria Hospital—phase 1	1,610,851	10 September 1984	13 May 1986 A	48	—
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	Queen's Park Blackburn phase 1 paediatric	3,126,709	6 June 1984	18 March 1987 A	102	—
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	Regional blood transfusion centre	2,924,912	23 May 1983	11 May 1984 A	—	—
Rochdale	Rochdale ESMI	1,819,294	1 June 1984	15 December 1985 A	568	—
Wigan	Royal Albert Edward Infirmary Wigan boiler house	1,095,484	22 February 1982	21 November 1983 A	—	—
Wigan	Royal Albert Edward Infirmary Wigan phase 1	4,192,677	14 March 1983	23 April 1986 A	112	4
Lancaster	Royal Lancaster Infirmary phase 2	2,776,604	1 September 1981	26 February 1984 A	46	—
Preston	Royal Preston Accident	1,059,501	26 February 1984	1 July 1985 A	12	—
Preston	Royal Preston Administration and Accommodation	1,883,993	11 October 1982	12 January 1984 A	—	—
Preston	Sharde Green—Maternity and Gynaecology	1,128,000	3 September 1985	1 October 1985 A	—	—
Stockport	Stepping Hill Manufacturing Pharmacy	1,226,061	16 August 1982	13 February 1984 A	—	—
Tameside and Glossop	Tameside General Geriatric Unit	2,031,216	26 November 1984	29 August 1986 A	72	—
Tameside and Glossop	Tameside General phase 2	11,389,978	16 July 1984	30 November 1987 E	139	3
Trafford	Trafford Regional Store	1,833,449	9 February 1987	25 November 1987 A	—	—
Wigan	Whelley Hospital phase 1	3,067,628	26 May 1987	24 November 1989 E	72	—
Non RHA						
	Blood Products Manufacturing Unit Elstree	13,845,000	1 May 1983	31 December 1987 E	—	—
	Central Public Health Laboratory Colindale	14,418,380	13 April 1981	20 January 1985 A	—	—
	Centre for Applied Microbiology Porton Down	3,109,134	13 June 1983	25 February 1985 A	—	—
	Clare Hall Biotechnology Building	1,745,600	29 July 1985	30 January 1987 A	—	—
	Clare Hall Project	12,371,867	21 November 1983	30 January 1987 A	—	—
	Eastman Dental Hospital	1,343,936	12 September 1983	30 June 1984 A	—	1
	Grays Inn Road Audiology and Hearing Aid Centre	1,843,150	16 February 1981	November 1982 A	—	—
	Great Ormond Street boiler plant replacement	2,191,736	18 August 1986	30 June 1988 E	—	—
	Hammersmith Hospital redevelopment phase 1	12,377,300	September 1985	31 March 1988 E	60	8
	London Chest Hospital	1,491,330	29 July 1981	4 July 1983 A	10	—
	Maudsley Hospital redevelopment phase 1A	2,245,012	1 June 1987	10 October 1988 E	75	—
	Moorfields Eye Hospital—City Road development phase 1	4,619,291	4 January 1982	10 May 1985 A	30	4
	National Heart and Chest Centre Brompton phase 1	17,967,623	2 March 1987	25 July 1989 E	196	7
	Royal National Orthopaedic Spinal Unit and Residencies	1,350,372	28 January 1982	28 March 1983 A	—	—

Bioplan Ltd.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the date on which he intends to announce any details arrived at between Bioplan Ltd. and district health authorities; if he has any knowledge of district health authorities, apart from Oxford and Salford, who have been negotiating with Bioplan Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Collaboration between health authorities and private providers helps make the maximum use of health care skills and resources. It is for health authorities to explore and if they so decide, enter into collaborative

arrangements with companies such as Bioplan. We are not aware of any discussions between Bioplan and English authorities other than Salford and Oxford; these would in any case be local management matters. However we welcome innovative projects which provide cost-effective ways of improving health care.

Residential Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services for each social service authority, what is the population aged 75 years and over and the number of people in residential care homes for the elderly and disabled provided by *(a)* the local authority, together with the percentage change since 1979, *(b)* the voluntary sector, together with the percentage change since 1979, and *(c)* the private sector, together with the percentage change since 1979.

Mrs. Currie: The 1985 mid-year estimates of the population aged 75 and over for each local authority are published in table 2.1 of "Local Authority Vital Statistics VS12 PP1 No. 8". Numbers of supported residents in local authority homes for the elderly and younger physically handicapped people (including those residents in another local authority area) are published in "Residential Accommodation for the Elderly and for Younger Physically Handicapped People: Local Authority Supported Residents". Numbers of people resident in private and voluntary homes are published in "Residential Accommodation for the Elderly and Younger Physically Handicapped People: All Residents in Local Authority, Voluntary and Private Homes"—the earliest data relates to 1983. All these publications are available in the Library.

Benefits (Seaham and Peterlee)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of retirement pensioners who have drawn supplementary benefit from the Seaham and Peterlee office within the Easington constituency over the last five years.

Mr. Portillo: The table sets out the information requested.

Number of people over pension age receiving a supplementary pension

	Local office	
	Seaham	*Peterlee*
10 May 1983	680	1,534
8 May 1984	910	1,779
8 May 1985	900	1,820
7 May 1986	1,000	2,041
5 May 1987	1,044	2,075

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Medicines (Exemption from Licences)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time taken in each of the last three years by his Department to process applications under article 3 of the Medicines Exemption from Licences (Manufacture and Assembly Temporary Provisions) Order 1972; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No such applications under that order have been received in each of the last three years by the Department.

Doctors and Dentists (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many general practitioners were practising within the Easington constituency in the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1985-86;

(2) how many dentists were in practice in the Easington constituency over the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that records are not collected centrally on a constituency basis. I would refer the hon. Member to Durham family practitioner committee, which may be able to provide the information he seeks.

Chiropody (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service patients received chiropody treatment within the Easington constituency during the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not collected by parliamentary constituency. The number of patients treated by the chiropody service of Durham district health authority, which covers Easington, is given in the table.

Chiropody service—Durham District Health Authority

Year	*Persons treated*
1982	8,126
1983	8,018
1984	8,437
1985	8,463
1986	7,909

The figures include persons treated by the health authority (including voluntary organisations acting on behalf of the authority) and the school health service. They exclude hospital patients. Figures for the latter are not available.

Emergency Medical Supplies

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue guidance on the criteria health boards should use in making decisions on allocating resources to stockpile medical supplies in peacetime for possible use in an emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A working group of officials within the Department is considering stockpile requirements for medical supplies for possible use in emergencies. The cost of providing stores of essential items is likely to be high and so may have to be built up over a period of time. Guidance will be issued following completion of the study.

Industrial Injury Benefits

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for industrial injury benefits over the last five years have been refused on the grounds that there was no industrial accident, but it was a case of injury by process.

Mr. Scott: This information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cataracts

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the average waiting period for patients awaiting the removal of cataracts.

Mr. Newton: In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, the estimated median interval between the time a patient was placed on the waiting list and admission to a National Health Service hospital in England for operation on an eye lens was 16 weeks.

Patients (North-East)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were treated in *(a)* Hartlepool general hospital, *(b)* Sunderland general hospital, *(c)* Sunderland royal infirmary and *(d)* Dryburn hospital, Durham during the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of patients treated in years 1982 to 1986—all specialties

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Hartlepool General Hospital					
Discharges and deaths	8,069	9,200	10,705	13,108	13,779
Day cases	2,551	2,639	2,535	3,507	3,758
Out-patient attendances	53,820	56,913	65,010	71,646	71,273
Dryburn Hospital					
Discharges and deaths	12,543	13,795	14,106	14,908	14,974
Day cases	1,825	2,464	2,469	2,698	3,262
Out-patient attendances	101,030	104,384	106,549	106,480	107,935
Sunderland Royal Infirmary					
Discharges and deaths	7,154	7,912	8,204	7,935	8,526
Day cases	690	938	975	1,137	1,245
Out-patient attendances	80,360	85,124	93,792	97,663	94,630
Sunderland General Hospital					
Discharges and deaths	25,269	26,950	27,898	28,857	28,286
Day cases	1,709	2,503	2,566	2,991	3,751
Out-patient attendances	122,157	128,920	131,829	135,758	140,601

Source: SH3 1982-1986.

Waiting Lists (North-East)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were on the waiting lists for *(a)* Hartlepool health authority, *(b)* Sunderland health authority and *(c)* Durham district health authority during the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of patients on in-patient waiting list at 31 March for years 1982 to 1987 (latest available)

District Health Authority	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Hartlepool	1,237	1,770	1,812	1,670	1,405	1,661
Durham	922	1,270	1,018	801	820	1,032
Sunderland	3,516	5,254	4,411	3,851	3,890	3,659

Source: SBH 203: In Patient Waiting List

AIDS

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to review Her Majesty's Government's policy on AIDS, in the light of the conclusions concerning the incidence and means of transmission of the disease contained in the book by Dr. Patrick Dixon entitled "The Truth about AIDS", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: This book contains no new facts concerning incidence of AIDS or means of transmission of HIV infection that cause us to question the current policy on AIDS.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his policy towards AIDS, in the light of the proposals put forward by the Christian Medical Fellowship, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the fellowship's leaflet "Ten proposals on AIDS". The Government consider AIDS a most serious threat to health and have given priority to the development of a flexible and responsive strategy to meet the growing challenge of this new disease. It comprises four parts:

public health measures, such as screening blood donations and a system of monitoring the spread of AIDS and HIV;
public education, so that people can learn how to avoid HIV;
research into vaccines against HIV infection and anti-viral therapies for those who are infected; and
development of services for those with AIDS or HIV infection.

As my right hon. Friend made clear when he addressed the United Nations general assembly on 20 October, we are also laying stress on the need for international co-operation in this field.

Southend General Hospital

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many letters he has now received from the general public on the proposed closure of the radiotherapy unit at Southend general hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We have received about 35,800 letters from members of the public.

Mentally Handicapped Babies

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has any information about the likely number of people waiting who are willing to adopt mentally handicapped babies.

Mrs. Currie: Information is not available in the form requested. There are many adoption agencies seeking adoptive parents for children of all ages with special needs, including children who are mentally handicapped.

Energy-saving Heaters

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to enable claimants in receipt of benefit and allowances to have an energy-saving heater installed in their homes.

Mr. Portillo: Single payments for heaters are available to supplementary benefit claimants if they, or a member of the assessment unit, are over pension age or chronically sick or disabled. Claimants who are moving into unfurnished accommodation for good reason, or who have been receiving supplementary benefit for at least 12 months, may also be able to qualify for help. The amount payable is £30, which claimants are free to spend on a suitable heater of their own choice.

Wythenshawe Hospital

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now designate Wythenshawe Hospital as the country's fourth heart transplant unit; and if he will make a statement about funding of the unit.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the right hon. Member to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health's statement on allocations to health authorities on 16 December 1987, at columns 1093-94.

The heart transplant programme at the Wythenshawe hospital will receive central funding of £183,000 in 1988-89, its first year of designation.

Milk Tokens

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the holding answer on 19 November, whether there is to be any change in the provision of milk tokens issued to childminders and playgroups by his Department under the welfare food service (milk for young children in day care) scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No.

Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reply to the letter sent to him on 8 October by the hon. Member for Gower on behalf of a constituent residing in Pontarddulais.

Mr. Portillo: I replied to the hon. Member on 14 December.

Pensioners (Milton Ernest)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of the recent post office closure, he will pay weekly pensions by post to pensioners in Milton Ernest, Bedfordshire.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that alternative post office facilities for encashment of pensions are available at Bletsoe and Oakley sub-post offices, both approximately one mile from Milton Ernest.

Post Mortems

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of post mortems done at the request of the coroner in National Health Service hospitals in each year since 1980.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the exact information requested is not available from the registration of deaths. However, the table shows the available statistics on the number of deaths occurring in National Health Service hospitals certified by coroners following post mortem which can be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Number of deaths occurring in National Health Service hospitals certified by coroners following post mortem England and Wales 1986

Place of death	*Number*
National Health Service psychiatric hospitals	1,409
Other National Health Service hospitals and institutions for the care of the sick	55,752
TOTAL	57,161

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the cost in *(a)* fees to consultants and *(b)* payments to health boards for post mortems done at the request of the coroner in National Health Service hospitals for each year since 1980.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current inclusive cost of maintaining community health councils; and how many full-time and part-time people are employed by them.

Mrs. Currie: The total cost of community health council expenditure in 1986-87, the latest available figure, was £7·2 million. This figure includes staffing, premises and other costs.

Regional health authorities are responsible for the number and grading of community health council staff.

No information is held centrally on how many full and part-time staff are employed by community health councils.

Day Nurseries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department collects statistics on trends in local authority day nursery places.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. The Department collects information annually on the number of local authority day nursery places which is published in "Children's Day Care Facilities at 31 March, England" (A/F/6), copies of which are available in the Library. Figures are given for each local authority for the most recent year; the national trend over a 10-year period is given in table 2.

Sight Tests

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to arrange that National Health Service sight tests include testing with an ophthalmoscope to ensure that glaucoma is detected if present.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the examination of the eye with an ophthalmoscope is normally carried out as part of the NHS sight test.

Whooping Cough Vaccine

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children received the petussis whooping cough vaccine in each of the years 1983 to 1986; and what are the latest figures available for 1987.

Mrs. Currie: The information available is given in the table. Figures for the first quarter of 1987 are not yet available.

Completed primary courses of whooping cough vaccination
Including multiple vaccines containing a whooping cough element

	Thousands	
Years	*England and Wales*	*England*
1983	425	407
1984	410	392
1985	434	414
1986	500	476

Invalidity Pensioners

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women invalidity pensioners are claiming for an adult dependent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 November, at column *468*. Of the 366,300 invalidity pensioners referred to in that reply, 364,600 were men and 1,700 women.

North Middlesex Hospital

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to refuse the request from Haringey district health authority for permission to close the North Middlesex hospital cancer treatment unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: We are currently considering a proposal from the North East Thames regional health authority to close the radiotherapy unit at the North Middlesex hospital. No decision has yet been taken.

Waltham Forest Health Authority

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the deficit for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89 currently anticipated by Waltham Forest health authority.

Mr. Newton: Regional health authorities are responsible for monitoring their districts' financial positions and the Department does not routinely collect such information in-year or for future years. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the North East Thames regional health authority, which may be able to assist with the information he seeks.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reverse the current policy in operation at St Bartholomew's hospital of refusing referrals in certain circumstances of out-of-district cases.

Mrs. Currie: This is essentially a local matter in which we have no plans to intervene.

Paracetamol

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to give greater publicity to the damage which can be caused to liver and other functions by paracetamol, in particular as respects pregnant mothers and babies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I am advised that paracetamol in recommended dosage is not harmful to the normal population, pregnant women, or children. Labels specify the dose and warn that it is not to be exceeded, because of the risk of damage to the liver from taking too much.

All medicines should be treated with respect and pregnant women should consult their doctors about medication.

Single Payments

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average monthly outturn expenditure on single payments over an equivalent period *(a)* before and *(b)* since August for (i) Waltham Forest and (ii) Great Britain.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is given in the table.

Average monthly expenditure on single payments

Office	*Period*	*Average monthly amount £*
Leytonstone ILO	30 July 1986—21 October 1986	63,807
Leytonstone ILO	29 July 1987—20 October 1987	30,370

Office	Period	Average monthly amount £
Walthamstow ILO	30 July 1986—21 October 1986	54,267
Walthamstow ILO	29 July 1987—20 October 1987	22,740
Great Britain	30 July 1986—21 October 1986	29,278,084
Great Britain	29 July 1987—20 October 1987	15,172,926

Note: The above information is provisional and subject to amendment.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the sum estimated to be spent on single payments in public expenditure projections in each of the last five years; and how much was so spent.

Mr. Scott: Estimates of expenditure on supplementary pensions and allowances were shown in the public expenditure White Papers for each of the last five years, copies of which are available in the Library. In the past, projections for single payments expenditure have not been separately identified. Infomation on single payment expenditure outturn figures were contained in my reply to the hon. Member of Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 17 November, at column *526*.

Mentally Handicapped Persons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he has issued to assist mentally handicapped persons exercise their rights of subject access under the Data Protection Act; when he expects to produce an order under section 21(9) of the Act; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Mentally handicapped people capable of managing their own affairs have the same right of access to personal data as do other people. We have advised interested organisations that anyone acting under an order of the Court of Protection or under an enduring power of attorney has an automatic right to apply for subject access on behalf of individuals who are incapable of managing their own affairs by reason of mental disorder.

Applications by persons so authorised can be made whether or not an order under section 21(9) of the Act were to come into force. Consideration is therefore being given as to whether there is any need for an order to be made.

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department is sponsoring any research into the emotional consequences of pregnancy, delivery and fostering and adoption procedures on mentally handicapped parents.

Mrs. Currie: No.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Nigel Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, what was the maximum time lapse in each hour of operation of the London Ambulance Service control room between the initiation of a call from the emergency switchboard of British Telecom to oral response, for each hour between 0900 and 2400 on Saturday 12 December.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is shown in the following table. The table also shows the total calls received in each hour and the average time to answer the call.

	Maximum	Average	Number of calls
0900—1000	3·25	0·63	84
1000—1100	3·28	0·63	116
1100—1200	4·49	1·04	157
1200—1300	8·13	1·45	137
1300—1400	9·42	1·45	122
1400—1500	6·36	0·83	118
1500—1600	7·29	1·66	128
1600—1700	4·53	1·04	78
1700—1800	5·08	1·87	119
1800—1900	2·31	0·63	92
1900—2000	7·56	1·25	98
2000—2100	8·15	1·45	88
2100—2200	6·25	0·83	72
2200—2300	6·57	1·04	94
2300—2400	3·56	1·25	116

The figures for maximum time to answer calls are misleading due to a fault in the LAS' telephone equipment which is currently receiving attention. It is British Telecom policy that its exchange operators try another line to control after a 30-second delay has occurred. The original line, though cancelled at the exchange end, continues to produce a signal in the control room and it is invariably these abandoned calls which produce the maximum times.

British Telecom is progressively dealing with this problem on the existing equipment and consideration is being given to bringing forward a new automatic call distribution system for the London Ambulance Service planned for July 1988.

National Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was Government spending on the National Health Service per household for 1979, and for 1986-87, at *(a)* current prices, *(b)* 1979 prices and *(c)* 1987 prices, showing the number of households taken as the base for each.

Mr. Newton: The figures requested are as follows:

Public spending on the National Health Service per household (Great Britain)

	£ cash	1978-79 prices	1986-87 prices
1978-79	385	385	749
1986-87	876	450	876

The number of households is estimated at 19·6 million for mid-1978 and 20·8 million for mid-1986. Household data are estimated by the Department of the Environment using past census trends and population data supplied by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Agency Staff

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each year since 1979, for England, Wales and Scotland, the total expenditure on

agency staff by the regional health authority at *(a)* current prices, *(b)* constant prices, and *(c)* expressed as a percentage of health authorities' budgets.

Mr. Newton: Figures for England for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83 derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities and those of their predecessor authorities, are shown in the table.

Comparable information for the years 1983-84 to 1986-87 is held in the Library.

Information about Wales and Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Revenue expenditure on non-National Health Service staff (agency, etc.)

Regions	As shown in annual accounts (£000)				At 1986-87 prices[2] (£000)				As a percentage of total revenue expenditure			
	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83
Northern	180	656	555	436	300	921	710	520	0·05	0·15	0·11	0·08
Yorkshire	311	350	299	1,244	518	491	382	1,484	0·08	0·07	0·05	0·21
Trent	810	674	514	812	1,348	946	657	969	0·18	0·12	0·08	0·12
East Anglian	668	1,050	1,162	1,373	1,112	1,474	1,486	1,638	0·35	0·43	0·43	0·48
North-West Thames	12,871	16,321	15,671	12,035	21,425	22,916	20,040	14,357	2·86	2·81	2·41	1·90
North-East Thames	12,161	14,959	14,593	13,862	20,243	21,004	18,662	16,536	2·49	2·35	2·08	1·73
South-East Thames	8,731	10,805	10,618	9,474	14,534	15,171	13,578	11,302	1·85	1·79	1·60	1·35
South-West Thames	8,840	11,005	10,192	8,401	14,715	15,452	13,034	10,022	2·45	2·36	1·98	1·58
Wessex	1,023	857	862	1,130	1,703	1,203	1,102	1,348	0·38	0·25	0·22	0·27
Oxford	1,732	1,485	1,184	1,131	2,883	2,085	1,514	1,349	0·77	0·52	0·38	0·34
South-Western	813	848	931	1,103	1,353	1,191	1,191	1,316	0·24	0·20	0·20	0·22
West Midlands	2,126	1,907	1,669	1,376	3,539	2,678	2,134	1,641	0·40	0·28	0·16	0·17
Mersey	620	659	467	388	1,032	925	597	463	0·22	0·18	0·11	0·09
North-Western	325	660	488	1,284	541	927	624	1,532	0·07	0·11	0·07	0·18
Regions Total	51,211	62,236	59,205	54,049	85,246	87,384	75,711	64,477	0·98	0·92	0·79	0·68
Special Health Authorities[1]	4,030	5,912	5,439	5,227	6,708	8,301	6.955	6,235	4·25	4·79	3·88	3·47
TOTAL	55,241	68,148	64,644	59,276	91,954	95,685	82,666	70,712	1·04	0·99	0·85	0·73

[1] Special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. (Boards of governors prior to 1982-83.)
[2] Figures have been expressed at 1986-87 prices by the use of the gross domestic product deflator.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the cost of housing benefit for elderly people in Scotland, for each year since 1982;

(2) what was for each year since 1982 the total cost of housing benefit in Scotland.

Mr. Portillo: The table provides the information requested on housing benefit expenditure on the basis of the latest available information from local authorities' subsidy claims. I regret that separate information on the cost of housing benefit for elderly people is not available.

	£ million
1982-83	42
1983-84	384
1984-85	436
1985-86	515
1986-87	576
1987-88	664

Notes:

1. The figures cover local authorities' total benefit expenditure and costs of administering the housing benefit scheme.
2. All figures have been rounded to the nearest £1 million.
3. The figures for 1982-83 and 1983-84 reflect the fact that housing benefit was partially introduced from November 1982, and fully from April 1983. The apparent large increase in expenditure in 1983-84 arose primarily from the reclassification of what was formerly supplementary benefit expenditure.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many households *(a)* in total, *(b)* by tenure and *(c)* by household type are expected to receive *(a)* more and *(b)* less housing benefit by up to £1 a week, £1 to £2 a week, £2 to £3 a week, £3 to £4 a week, £4 to £5 a week and £5 plus a week as a result of the main changes to the scheme to be implemented in April 1988 based on the most recent caseload statistics available.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The information is in the tables. These tables are from the same model and in the same format as those in the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", published in October 1987. A copy of this is in the Library. They illustrate the structural impact, rather than the cash position at the point of change, and include estimates for changes brought about by the new capital rule and by the minimum 20 per cent. contribution to domestic rates. These tables should be read in conjunction with those in the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", as many of those whose housing benefit entitlement will decrease may be wholly or partially compensated by increased entitlement to income support or family credit.

Structural change in housing benefit—all cases

(thousands)

Client Group	Gains						Total gainer	No change	Total losers	Losses					
	£5+	4–5	3–4	2–3	1–2	£1				£1	1–2	2–3	3–4	4–5	£5+
Pensioners 80+	*	*	10	40	30	30	110	120	490	170	230	60	10	*	20
Pensioners 60-79	20	20	20	50	170	200	480	660	2,410	630	1,090	320	130	50	190
Sick or disabled	10	20	20	10	10	10	80	30	130	40	60	20	*	*	10
Lone Parents															
—Full time work	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	60	*	10	10	*	10	30
—Not full time work	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	610	70	420	90	10	10	20
—Total	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	680	70	430	100	10	20	50
Couples with children															
—Full time work	*	*	*	*	*	10	10	*	330	20	60	60	30	40	120
—not full time work	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	20	740	80	510	140	10	*	*
—Total	10	*	*	*	*	10	30	30	1,070	110	560	190	40	40	120
Others															
—Full time work	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	10	140	20	40	20	20	*	30
—Not full time work	*	*	*	*	*	*	10	90	780	180	370	110	20	10	80
Total	50	40	60	110	220	240	720	960	5,690	1,220	2,780	820	250	130	500

Structural change in housing benefit—all cases

(thousands)

Type of tenure	Gains						Total gainer	No change	Total losers	Losses					
	£5+	£4–5	£3–4	£2–3	£1–2	£1				£1	£1–2	£2–3	£3–4	£4–5	£5+
Local authority rented	30	30	50	90	160	150	510	420	3,050	500	1,730	390	90	50	290
Private rented	10	10	*	20	30	30	110	190	790	250	310	70	40	20	100
Owner occupiers	*	*	*	*	30	60	100	350	1,850	470	740	360	110	60	110
Total	50	40	60	100	220	240	720	960	5,690	1,220	2,790	820	250	130	500

Notes:
(1) These estimates are based on the Family Expenditure Survey (FES) simulation model.
(2) The estimates exclude the effect of Family Credit calculations.
(3) The estimates are not adjusted for differential take-up.
(4) Some totals may not add due to rounding.
(5) An asterisk indicates less than 5,000 cases.

Family Practitioner Service

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown by programme of family practitioner service expenditure for 1986-87 and their latest estimate for 1987-88 for England, including administration costs.

Mr. Newton: The information requested in respect of the family practitioner services in England is set out in the following table:

Family Practitioner Services (England)—Net cost

£ million	1986-87	1987-88 (Estimate)
General Medical Services	1,131	1,236
Pharmaceutical Services	1,639	1,827
General Dental Services	521	571
General Ophthalmic Services	128	148
FPS Administration	94	99
Payments to British Telecom for priority fault repair	—	1
Compensation payments to pharmacists on withdrawal from contract	—	4
Net FPS	3,513	3,886

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total cost in the last full year for which figures are available, for England and Wales, of the 70 per cent. direct reimbursements to unrestricted principals in general practice under the ancillary staff scheme for ancillary staff salaries and a breakdown of the cost for each family practitioner committee.

Mr. Newton: The total cost during 1986-87 of the 70 per cent. reinbursement of ancillary staff salaries for England and Wales was £126 million. The breakdown for each family practitioner committee is as follows:

Ancillary Staff—70 per cent. Salaries—1986-87

Family Practitioner Committee	£ million
Avon	1·829
Barking and Havering	0·607
Barnet	0·761
Barnsley	0·446
Bedfordshire	1·572
Berkshire	2·422
Birmingham	2·403
Bolton	0·512
Bradford	0·924
Brent and Harrow	1·163
Bromley	0·801
Buckingham	1·655
Bury	0·356
Calderdale	0·435
Cambridgeshire	1·896
Camden and Islington	1·004
Cheshire	2·257
City and East London	1·189
Cleveland	1·363
Coventry	0·690
Cornwall	1·763
Croydon	0·659
Cumbria	1·366
Derbyshire	2·110
Devon	2·776
Doncaster	0·650
Dorset	2·059

Family Practitioner Committee	£ million
Dudley	0·559
Durham	1·795
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	1·426
Enfield and Haringey	1·145
Essex	3·622
Gateshead	0·509
Gloucester	1·649
Greenwich and Bexley	0·951
Hampshire	4·817
Hereford and Worcester	1·877
Hertfordshire	3·064
Hillingdon	0·470
Humberside	2·020
Isle of Wight	0·408
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	1·096
Kent	4·059
Kingston and Richmond	0·913
Kirklees	0·762
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	1·647
Lancashire	2·607
Leeds	1·700
Leicestershire	2·171
Lincolnshire	1·679
Liverpool	0·909
Manchester	1·070
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	1·375
Newcastle	0·784
Norfolk	2·373
Northamptonshire	1·550
Northumberland	0·877
Nottinghamshire	1·964
Oldham	0·255
Oxfordshire	1·879
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	0·896
Rochdale	0·353
Rotherham	0·398
St. Helens and Knowsley	0·689
Salford	0·477
Shropshire	1·085
Sandwell	0·504
Sefton	0·624
Sheffield	1·184
Solihull	0·594
Somerset	1·423
Staffordshire	2·162
Stockport	0·638
Suffolk	2·017
Sunderland	0·561
Surrey	2·880
Sussex (East)	1·863
Sussex (West)	1·604
Tameside	0·439
Trafford	0·465
Tyneside (North)	0·378
Tyneside (South)	0·340
Wakefield	0·751
Walsall	0·456
Warwickshire	1·492
Wigan	0·564
Wiltshire	1·519
Wirral	0·754
Wolverhampton	0·469
Yorkshire (North)	2·142
England	119·411
Wales	
Clwyd	0·814
Dyfed	0·951
Gwent	0·929
Gwynedd	0·728
Mid Glamorgan	1·204
Powys	0·355
South Glamorgan	0·866
West Glamorgan	0·913
Wales	6·760
England and Wales Total	£126·171 million

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for England and Wales for each year since 1979 the total family practitioner committee expenditure *(a)* under the ancillary staff scheme and *(b)* the cost of providing premises under the rent and rate scheme, with an indication of the costs adjusted for general price inflation.

Mr. Newton: Family practitioner committee expenditure since 1979-80 under the ancillary staff scheme (including related staff, national insurance contributions and training costs) and the rent and rate direct reimbursement scheme were as follows:

Year	Ancillary Staff		Rent and Rate Scheme	
	Cash	At 1986-87 Prices[1]	Cash	At 1986-87 Prices[1]
	£ million	£ million	£ million	£ million
1979-80	52	86	20	34
1980-81	68	95	26	37
1981-82	81	104	32	40
1982-83	92	110	38	46
1983-84	106	121	47	54
1984-85	119	130	54	59
1985-86	133	137	63	64
1986-87	145	145	74	74

[1] Adjusted in line with the GDP deflator at market prices.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for the last year for which figures are available, the total for England and Wales and a breakdown for each family practitioner committee, of *(a)* the number of general practice premises and *(b)* the amount directly reimbursed to unrestricted principals in general practice for the cost of providing premises under the rent and rates scheme.

Mr. Newton: The information requested on the number of general practice premises in England and Wales is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total amount directly reimbursed to unrestricted principals in England and Wales during 1986-87 under the rent and rates scheme was £74 million. The breakdown for each family practitioner committee is scheduled in the table.

Family Practitioner Committee	Practice accommodation. Rent—rates payments £ million
Avon	1·108
Barking and Havering	0·718
Barnet	0·614
Barnsley	0·250
Bedfordshire	0·980
Berkshire	1·612
Birmingham	1·487
Bolton	0·256
Bradford	0·538
Brent and Harrow	0·989
Bromley	0·543
Buckingham	1·316
Bury	0·153

Family Practitioner Committee	*Practice accommodation. Rent—rates payments £ million*
Calderdale	0·254
Cambridgeshire	1·119
Camden and Islington	0·768
Cheshire	1·302
City and East London	1·053
Cleveland	0·585
Coventry	0·486
Cornwall	0·698
Croydon	0·381
Cumbria	0·551
Derbyshire	1·130
Devon	1·582
Doncaster	0·197
Dorset	1·257
Dudley	0·262
Durham	0·797
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	1·280
Enfield and Haringey	0·937
Essex	2·594
Gateshead	0·267
Gloucester	0·950
Greenwich and Bexley	0·673
Hampshire	2·323
Hereford and Worcester	0·767
Hertfordshire	2·615
Hillingdon	0·311
Humberside	0·896
Isle of Wight	0·187
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	1·112
Kent	2·361
Kingston and Richmond	0·627
Kirklees	0·374
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	1·052
Lancashire	0·993
Leeds	1·096
Leicestershire	1·146
Lincolnshire	0·828
Liverpool	0·550
Manchester	0·565
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	0·726
Newcastle	0·421
Norfolk	1·333
Northamptonshire	0·766
Northumberland	0·337
Nottinghamshire	0·983
Oldham	0·115
Oxfordshire	0·740
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	0·910
Rochdale	0·220
Rotherham	0·222
St. Helens and Knowsley	0·393
Salford	0·266
Shropshire	0·450
Sandwell	0·344
Sefton	0·355
Sheffield	0·612
Solihull	0·321
Somerset	0·873
Staffordshire	0·991
Stockport	0·308
Suffolk	1·319
Sunderland	0·151
Surrey	1·556
Sussex (East)	0·996
Sussex (West)	1·268
Tameside	0·238
Trafford	0·219
Tyneside (North)	0·151
Tyneside (South)	0·153
Wakefield	0·518
Walsall	0·372
Warwickshire	0·792
Wigan	0·314
Wiltshire	0·794
Wirral	0·342
Wolverhampton	0·314
Yorkshire (North)	1.380
England total	70·053
Wales	
Clwyd	0·440
Dyfed	0·645
Gwent	0·522
Gwynedd	0·319
Mid Glamorgan	0·869
Powys	0·237
South Glamorgan	0·631
West Glamorgan	0·341
Wales total	4·004
England and Wales total	74·057

Bills (Payment)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent guidance he has given on the payment of bills from suppliers.

Mrs. Currie: The Department does not issue specific guidance to health authorities on the payment of bills from their suppliers. However, the Department does require health authorities to have sound procedures and systems for making all their payments and expects them to pay their suppliers in accordance with contract or custom.

Anaesthetists

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the shortage of anaesthetists and the availability of epidural anaesthetics.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to decide how many medical anaesthetic staff are required to meet their plans for the provision of anaesthetic services within the resources available to them. We are satisfied that there are at present adequate numbers of doctors training in anaesthetics to meet planned developments in these services but the position is closely monitored by the joint planning advisory committee. Epidural analgesia is available through all consultant obstetric departments. However, this service can be provided only by doctors trained and experienced in its administration and in resuscitation. Where the facility is not available, other forms of analgesia are used.

Cancer Screening

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now announce the result of the application from Quest for a Test for Cancer, received on 31 July, for funding clinical trials of cervical smear testing using an integrated microdensitometer.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth) on 17 December.

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the cost of establishing a national breast cancer screening service to provide screening for all women over 16 years of age at least once every three years.

Mrs. Currie: The national breast cancer screening service, which we are introducing over the next three years, is based on the conclusions in the report of a Government appointed working group, chaired by Professor Sir Patrick Forrest. The report concluded that the effectiveness of screening by mammography has so far been demonstrated only for women aged 50 and over and recommended that the priority for any screening programme should be to offer an initial screen to as many woman as possible aged 50-64 years.

We expect to spend about £55 million in the period 1987/88 to 1989/90 to set up the computerised call and recall screening service for all women in the age group 50-64, with a service, on request, for women of 65 and over.

Gold Purchases

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total value of gold purchases by the National Health Service for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will outline the arrangements for the purchase of gold for use by dentists.

Mrs. Currie: General dental practitioners purchase products for dental use in alloy containing gold direct from commercial dental laboratories. In the case of community and hospital dentists the purchase of these products or the materials to make them in hospital dental laboratories, is the responsibility of district health authorities in accordance with local arrangements.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what alternatives to the use of gold of similar durability for dental purposes have been considered by his Department.

Mrs. Currie: A wide range of gold and precious metal alloys is used in the manufacture of dental products. In particular, a number of alloys with specifications ranging from no gold content at all to one with at least 45 per cent. fine gold content is recommended as suitable for bonding with porcelain in the manufacture of certain types of bridges and crowns. The Department has commissioned research to evaluate the effectiveness of these alloys in the bonding process, and to identify alternatives of similar clinical efficacy.

Leaflet G11

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many copies of leaflet G11/July 1987 were printed; what was the cost; how many are still in stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A total of 3,000,000 leaflet G11/July 87 was printed. There are still 1,301,000 in stock. The cost of printing was £36,720.

Epilepsy

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the progress to date on each of the recommendations relevant to his Department contained within the report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy.

Mr. Scott: In July 1986 this Department and the Department of Education and Science issued a joint circular to draw the report to the attention of health, social services and education authorities. It was our intention that the report would stimulate discussion on the scope for improvement and be of assistance to both professional staff involved in the treatment and care of people with epilepsy and to managers and planners in the organisation of local services. It is for individual health and local authorities to consider the recommendations and decide the scope for adopting them in the light of existing services, availability of resources and local priorities.

Cancer Treatment

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the cost of the long-term treatment of cancer patients as a result of their cancer not being detected at an early stage.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has not made any such estimate. Our priority is to encourage the prevention and early detection of cancer wherever possible because of the benefit this has for patients.

Nottinghamshire Ambulance Service

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to how many miles were covered in each year since 1979 by the Nottinghamshire Ambulance Service in *(a)* emergency services, *(b)* non-emergency services, *(c)* mini-cabs and *(d)* volunteer drivers;

(2) how many emergency equipped ambulances have been available in Nottinghamshire for each year since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Nottingham health authority for more detailed information as his authority is responsible for managing the Nottinghamshire ambulance service.

Ambulance services: 1979 to 1986
Number of patient miles—Emergency and non-emergency cases
Nottinghamshire ambulance service

	Emergency cases (thousands)	*Non-emergency cases (thousands)*
1979	498·3	1,668·6
1980	712·3	2,041·1
1981	770·1	2,043·1
1982	822·1	2,051·8
1983	793·9	2,449·5
1984-85	751·4	2,183·0
1985-86	763·0	2,123·9

Source: 1979 to 1983 Department of Health and Social Services. 1984-85, 1985-86 York Health Authority.

National Health Service Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of consultants' contracts for each district health authority in Nottinghamshire.

Mrs. Currie: The 1986-87 annual account of district health authorities within Nottinghamshire records consultants' pay as follows:

District Health Authority	*Medical (£000's)*	*Dental (£000's)*
Nottingham	7,465	116
Central Nottinghamshire	1,974	0
Bassetlaw	863	3

The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the health authorities concerned for information on 1987-88.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to whether any consultants employed by health authorities in Nottinghamshire are partners or beneficiaries in private homes allocated patients under the Government's community care policy.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that we have no such information.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many consultants are employed by district health authorities in Nottinghamshire on contracts; and how many of these work full-time and part-time for the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: The Department collects manpower information on consultants according to employing authority. Regional health authorities hold the contracts of consultants for non-teaching district health authorities (in this case Bassetlaw and Central Nottinghamshire). Central figures are available for the total number employed by regional health authorities but these are not broken down by district. Contracts for consultants in teaching districts are held by the district health authority concerned (in this case Nottingham) and are thus available centrally. The figures for Nottingham are given in the following table. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Trent regional health authority for more detailed information on the other two districts.

Consultants at 30 September 1986 in Nottingham (T) DHA

	Whole-time	*Part-time*
Medical		
Number	92	84
Whole-time equivalent	84·7	72·0
Dental		
Number	2	2
Whole-time equivalent	1·2	1·7

Note: Excludes honorary and locum staff.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if the system for employing consultants has been reviewed by the Government since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: A new consultants' contract was introduced in 1980 following negotiations between the Health Departments and the profession. The longstanding arrangement whereby consultants' contracts are held by regional health authorities (apart from those working in teaching districts) was examined prior to the 1982 restructuring and again in 1983 during the management inquiry but it was decided not to make any changes.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what control regional and district managers have over the case of the time and resources used by hospital consultants; when the terms of contracts of consultants were last reveiwed; and under what circumstances the National Health Service authorities may dispense with the services of a consultant.

Mr. Newton: Health authorities are responsible for ensuring that consultants fulfil the terms of their contracts and that they organise services to patients in the most efficient and effective way. The present form of consultants' contract, which health authorities are expected to follow closely, was introduced in 1980 as a result of negotiations between the health departments and the profession. Like most other staff, consultants are appointed without term; they can be dismissed on the same grounds (eg. capability, conduct or redundancy) as other NHS staff. Where serious allegations of professional misconduct or professional incompetence are made against a consultant and the outcome might be dismissal, health authorities follow the procedures set out in circular MH(61)112 which makes provision for the establishment of an investigating panel with a legally qualified chairman.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much has been paid in the last eight years on special duty payments for nurses in each district health authority in Nottinghamshire;

(2) how many residential units for National Health Service staff there have been in each district health authority in Nottinghamshire for each of the years from 1979 onwards;

(3) how many nurses have left each of the district health authorities in Nottinghamshire for each year since 1979;

(4) whether any beds or wards will be closed over the Christmas period due to staff shortages or any other difficulties in each of the district health authorities in Nottinghamshire;

(5) what was the estimate of the annual running costs contained in the initial feasibility study on the building of the Queen's medical centre, Nottingham; and what have been the annual running costs since its completion.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information the hon. Member seeks is not held centrally. I suggest that he should direct his inquiries to the chairmen of the Nottingham, Bassetlaw and Central Nottinghamshire district health authorities.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appointments he has made to each district health authority in Nottinghamshire since 1983.

Mrs. Currie: Appointment of members to district health authorities is the responsibility of the regional health authority.

The Secretary of State has made three appointments to district health authorities in Nottinghamshire since 1983:

Mrs. V. A. Dickinson was appointed chairman of Bassetlaw health authority on 1 April 1986.

Mr. L. Teeman was appointed chairman of Central Nottinghamshire health authority on 1 April 1986.

Mr. D. H. White was appointed chairman of Nottingham health authority on 1 April 1986.

Waiting Lists

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out, region by region, the March hospital urgent in-patient waiting list in each district, together with the number of urgent cases waiting more than a month, and the percentage the latter represents of the former.

Mr. Newton: A table giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out, region by region, for March, the hospital non-urgent waiting list in each health district together with the number waiting more than a year, and the percentage the latter represents of the former.

Mrs. Currie: A table giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, region by region, the March waiting lists for *(a)* general surgery, *(b)* trauma and orthopaedics, *(c)* ear, nose and throat surgery, *(d)* opthalmology and *(e)* gynaecology for each district, together with the percentage change from the figures for March 1986.

Mr. Tony Newton: A table giving the information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional resources he proposes to make available to *(a)* Hartlepool district health authority, *(b)* Sunderland district health authority and *(c)* Durham district health authority to enable the existing waiting lists to be reduced.

Mr. Newton: Hartlepool, Sunderland and Durham district health authorities have each been allocated additional resources from the waiting list fund for 1987-88 as follows:

District	*Allocation (£)*	*Additional patients planned*
Hartlepool	67,000	200 in-patients
Sunderland	302,400	900 in-patients 1,900 outpatients
Durham	43,830	240 inpatients 400 outpatients

We shall shortly be asking regional health authorities for bids for 1988-89 projects to be supported through the national £30 million waiting list fund.

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made in computerising hospital waiting lists; and which regional or district authorities are experimenting with these procedures.

Mr. Newton: This information is not held centrally. Health authorities are currently engaged in a major programme of computerisation of their patient information systems. These will be capable of including information on waiting lists.

Health Authorities (Fund Raising)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on Government plans to allow health authorities to raise additional fumds for patient care.

Mr. Newton: Clause 4 of the Health and Medicines Bill, currently being considered in committee, creates new opportunities for health authorities to generate extra resources to improve health care. I refer my hon. Friend to what I said concerning this clause during the debate on Second Reading on 7 December 1987 at columns 41-42. I have no further statement to make at this stage.

Social Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amounts have been allocated to each office of his Department in Nottingham from the social fund for the first year and each subsequent year for which projections are available.

Mr. Scott: Information on the social fund allocations to local offices for 1988-89 was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-781*. Allocations for future years have not yet been decided.

Hospital Management System

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any representations from hospital managers regarding the integration of the medical professionals into the general management system.

Mr. Newton: Officials have frequent contact with health authorities about many aspects of general management, including the role of doctors in general management.

Sir Roy Griffiths

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he or his ministerial colleagues last had discussions with Sir Roy Griffiths, the deputy chairman of the National Health Service Management Board; what subjects were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend and I hold regular meetings with Sir Roy Griffiths over the whole range of subjects covered by Sir Roy in his capacity as deputy chairman of the National Health Service management board and as Government adviser on National Health Service management.

Health Care

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list separately what information he has as to the proportion of gross domestic product spent by the state and by private medicine on health care in each of the countries within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has to the percentage of gross national product in other countries spent on health care *(a)* from private sources, *(b)* from state resources and *(d)* as a total from all sources.

Mrs. Currie: The latest information available (1984) is as follows:

Proportion of GDP spent on:

	Public health Per cent.	*Private health Per cent.*	*Total health Per cent.*
EEC countries:			
Belgium	5·7	0·5	6·2
Denmark	5·3	1·0	6·3
France	6·5	2·6	9·1
Germany	6·4	1·7	8·1
Greece	3·6	1·0	4·6
Ireland	6·9	1·1	8·0
Italy	6·1	1·1	7·2
Luxembourg	—	—	[1]6·4
Netherlands	6·8	1·8	8·6
Portugal	3·9	1·6	5·5
Spain	4·2	1·6	5·8
United Kingdom	5·3	0·6	5·9
Others:			
Australia	6·6	1·2	7·8
Austria	4·4	2·8	7·2
Canada	6·2	2·2	8·4
Finland	5·4	1·2	6·6
Iceland	6·5	1·4	7·9
Japan	4·8	1·8	6·6
New Zealand	4·4	1·2	5·6
Norway	5·6	0·7	6·3
Sweden	8·6	0·8	9·4
Switzerland	—	—	[1]7·8
United States	4·4	6·3	10·7

Source: Table 1 "Financing and Delivering Health Care" — OECD 1987.
[1] 1982.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the percentage of the United Kingdom's gross national product spent on health care; and what is the United Kingdom's ranking within the European Community in relation to such spending.

Mr. Newton: The percentage of the United Kingdom's gross domestic product spent on health care in 1986 is estimated at 6·2. The latest comparative figures for the European Community are for 1984 when the United Kingdom's percentage of GDP spent on health care was slightly lower, giving a ranking of ninth in the European Community.

In terms of per capita health expenditure in 1980 (using either market exchange rates or health purchasing power parities for comparison) the United Kingdom ranked seventh in the European Community.

But such comparisons take no account of the effectiveness or efficiency with which these resources are used. It is generally acknowledged that the United Kingdom gets better value for money than some other countries.

Foreign Health Services

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to state-run health services in other countries with regard to *(a)* the number of administrative staff employed per 10,000 of the population, *(b)* the number of other non-medical staff employed per 10,000 of the population, *(c)* the number of nurses employed per 10,000 of the populaton, *(d)* the number of beds per 10,000 of the population, *(e)* the average length of stay of in-patients and *(f)* the number of doctors employed per 10,000 of the population.

Mr. Newton: Information in the precise form requested is not available. In particular no distinction is made in available statistics between state-run and other health services. However, I would draw my hon. Friend's attention to the following tables in two publications by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, "Measuring Health Care 1960-1983" and "Financing and Delivering Health Care" (Paris 1985 and 1987 respectively), which are available in the Library. The relevant tables are, in "Measuring Health Care", Table D.8 numbers of nurses and Table H.1 population; In "Financing and Delivering Health Care", table 18 on public sector and total health expenditure, table T.27 on bed numbers, table T.31 on average lengths of stay and table T.34 on numbers of doctors. In connection with these tables I would particularly draw my hon. Friend's attention to chapter 2 of the second publication which stresses the difficulties inherent in making inter-country comparisons because of differences of definition and so on from country to country.

In relation to administrative and non-medical staff numbers I would draw my hon. Friend's attention to tables 508(a) to (d) in volume 1 of "Eurocare: European Health Care Analysis" (Health Econ, Basle) which I am arranging to place in the Library.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the turnover of staff employed as medical laboratory scientific officers by health authorities and the blood transfusion service for the most recent available year.

Mr. Newton: Information on turnover of staff is not available centrally.

At 30 September 1985 there were 14,620 (whole-time equivalent) medical laboratory scientific officers in post in the National Health Service in England. Medical laboratory scientific officers working in the blood transfusion service cannot be separately identified from those employed in health authorities.

Amniocentesis (Statistics)

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women had amniocentesis during 1986; in what proportion foetal abnormality associated with mental handicap was detected; how many terminations were carried out as a result; and at what stage of pregnancy.

Mrs. Currie: Information about amniocentesis is not collected on the notification form and I regret therefore it is not possible to provide the information requested.

Claims (Transitional Protection)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give an estimate of the total number of claimants next April who will receive transitional protection *(a)* above and *(b)* below £10 per week.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that at the point of change next April around 40,000 income support claimants will receive a normal transitional addition of £10 per week or more and that 1·38 million will receive a normal transitional addition of less than £10 per week.

Drugs (Abuse Reactions)

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *355*, he will give the names of the two drugs for which there has been a possible failure to disclose serious suspected adverse drug reactions; for how long the investigations have been continuing; what form they are taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Neither of the investigations has yet reached a conclusion so it would be improper for me to name at this time the drugs concerned. The investigations, which began, respectively, in 1986 and very recently, are being carried out by correspondence and, where necessary, meetings and interviews.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 27 November, *Official Report*, column *355*, on past suspected under-reporting of adverse reactions, his officials make a note of such cases as they occur in addition to recording the operation in the product file; and how many such files are there.

Mr. Newton: Any information relevant to the licensing of a particular medicinal product is recorded on a file designated for that product; there are no separate files concerned specifically with the investigation of alleged under-reporting of adverse drug reactions. Licences have been issued for over 50,000 medicinal products, including some 39,000 licences of right issued when licensing began in the United Kingdom in 1971. Separate files, sometimes with many volumes, are held for all product licence and clinical trial applications made since 1971 as well as for many of the product licences of right.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many awards were made under the Vaccine Damage Payments Act 1979 in each of the years 1979 to 1986; and what are the latest figures available for 1987.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is set out in the table:

Vaccine Damage Payments

Year	*Number of awards*
1979	349
1980	255
1981	74
1982	43
1983	42
1984	29
1985	26
1986	15
1987[1]	10

[1] To 17 December 1987.

Abortion

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many mentally handicapped women have had terminations during 1986; for what reason; and at what stage in the pregnancy.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not available in the exact form requested from the notification of abortions. However, the tables show for 1986 the number of notifications of abortion carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 where mental retardation of the woman was mentioned, by statutory grounds and gestation in completed weeks.

Number of notifications of abortion carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 where mental retardation of the woman was mentioned, gestation in completed weeks. Residents and non-residents. England and Wales 1986

	Number
Under 13 weeks	14
13 and over weeks	6
Total	20

Number of notifications of abortion carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 where mental retardation of the woman was mentioned, by statutory grounds. Residents and non-residents. England and Wales 1986

	Number
Grounds 2 (alone or with others)[1]	18
Other grounds	2
Total	20

[1] Grounds 2: the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

Nurses' Homes

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his proposals for the privatisation of nurses' homes.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on 15 December at columns *495-97*.

Passport Checks

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what consultations he has had with representatives of the ethnic minority communities concerning the introduction of automatic passport checks for claimants; and what assessment he has made of the implications of this practice for good race relations;

(2) why the "Income Support Manual" instructs his Department's staff to inspect immigration documents, including passports, of those claimants who have come to live in the United Kingdom during the past five years, and whether this represents a change from the current supplementary benefit procedures.

Mr. Scott: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hepatitis B

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what encouragement he is giving health care workers in high-risk areas to seek vaccination against hepatitis B;

(2) if he will make it his policy to encourage district health authorities to formulate a policy of immunisation for health care workers, in view of the prevalence of hepatitis B in each district of individual hospitals.

Mrs. Currie: The current guidance of hepatitis B vaccination, contained in the memorandum "Immunisation Against Infectious Diseases" issued by the Health Departments on the advice of the Joint Committee of Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), sets out categories of health care workers at high risk of contracting the disease, and health authorities are expected to ensure that those workers are vaccinated.

The JCVI has recently been reviewing on this vaccination, and we hope to be able to promulgate its revised guidance at an early date, together with our own advice to health authorities on the action they should take.

Social Workers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work offers to trining bodies on training in child care for social workers.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the council has recently completed a survey of child care teaching in courses leading to the award of the certificate of qualification in social work and to the certificate in social services, and that council staff have been reviewing with course tutors their teaching about child care with special reference to child abuse.

The council has drawn up plans to provide a series of training workshops for all course tutors and practice placement supervisors to ensure that teaching is based on current knowledge of child development. Plans have also been made to involve experts from social work and other relevant disciplines to further the teaching of skills of observation of young children and communication with children of all ages. The council is in contact with departmental officials about the resource requirements of these plans.

The council recognises that much child abuse work requires advanced skills and knowledge that cannot be adequately covered on a basic qualifying course and is planning the development of post qualifying programmes in child care in all parts of the United Kingdom.

CCETSW has also submitted proposals to the Government for extending the basic training to three years, and these specify the child care knowledge and skills which all newly qualified social workers should be expected to have. We are giving urgent consideration to these proposals.

Pensions

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the percentage increase in the state retirement pension, the pensioners' price index, and the retail prices index since: *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1974.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table. The dates shown are those when upratings of retirement pension took effect.

Percentage increases in state retirement pension, pensioners' prices index and retail prices index to April 1987

	(a) Since November 1983	*(b) Since November 1979*	*(c) Since July 1974*
Retirement pension			
(single)	16·0	69·5	295·0
(couple)	16·1	69·6	295·3
PPI			
(single)	14·3	63·1	260·2
(couple)	14·6	63·2	258·0
RPI	17·5	69·0	266·1

Donor Organs

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will now publish the report by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg into the shortage of donor organs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have today placed copies of the report in the Vote Office.

Ministers welcome the report as a most helpful document. Our transplant programmes are already successful; for instance, the United Kingdom has more patients with a functioning kidney graft than any other country in Europe (nearly 7,000). However, this success has generated a need for more donor organs as increasing numbers of patients are considered suitable for this form of surgery. For this reason it is essential that the number of organ donors increases. The medical royal colleges' report rightly recognises that there is no single answer to the problem of improving the supply of donor organs. Many factors contribute to the shortfall and the report makes recommendations covering a number of areas.

The key recommendation is that each health authority should have an operational policy for organ donation, including procedures for identifying potential organ donors and recording the numbers so identified. The royal colleges believe that effective procedures would be preferable to a statutory system of required request such has been enacted in the United States of America. We accept this proposal, and with the health authorities are considering how such procedures might best be developed.

The report also recognises the value of good publicity. Many health authorities already have good arrangements for promoting donation, but we will be considering ways of extending the current initiatives, in the context of our discussions with the National Health Service.

The report contains many other recommendations. Some, such as the suggestion that district health authorities be reimbursed for the cost incurred in providing donor organs, are already being studied. Other recommendations affect bodies such as the royal colleges themselves and the European Community. The Department will be continuing consultations with the various bodies concerned to progress the ideas contained in the report.

Alphafetoprotein

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services at what stage of pregnancy the alphafetoprotein pregnancy test is offered to women in each of the health regions.

Mrs. Currie: When an alphafetoprotein test on blood is offered this is usually at around 16 weeks of pregnancy. The information requested on regions is not held centrally.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total of severe weather payments paid by benefit offices in the Nottingham, North constituency in 1986-87; if he will break down this figure by week of payment; and if he will estimate the total number of claimants involved.

Mr. Scott: The total and weekly number of exceptionally cold weather payments made by local offices in the Nottingham, North constituency — David lane, Shakespeare street and Station street—last winter is in the table. Figures are not available for the number of individuals receiving payment, but the great majority of successful claimants will have received £5 in respect of each of the two weeks for which help was available in the Nottingham area.

Number of Exceptionally Cold Weather Payments made by local offices in the Nottingham, North Constituency by week of payment in the winter of 1986-87

Payment made in Week commencing	*Number of £5 Weekly Payments made*
20 January 1987	1,426
27 January 1987	8,169
3 February 1987	3,065
10 February 1987	1,301
17 February 1987	539
24 February 1987	288
3 March 1987	103
10 March 1987	232
17 March 1987	79
24 March 1987	52
31 March 1987	51
7 April 1987	70
14 April 1987	20
21 April 1987	2
28 April 1987	119
5 May 1987	310
12 May 1987	36
19 May 1987	2
26 May 1987	28
2 June 1987	—
9 June 1987	2
16 June 1987	2
Total	15,896

Low Calorie Diets

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the report on very low calorie diets from the Chief Medical Officer's Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy.

Mrs. Currie: The COMA report, "The Use of Very Low Calorie Diets in Obesity", is being published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. I understand that it is the first international scientific report on the use of very low calorie diets (VLCD) and I welcome it wholeheartedly. I know it has been awaited with great interest in medical and scientific circles worldwide and is a notable British first.

The report's recommendations are far-reaching but balanced and moderate reflecting the authors' disinterested, methodical approach to a difficult task. I shall study them carefully.

The Government are taking immediate action on the recommendation to institute discussions with the United Kingdom manufacturers of VLCD about a code of practice, along the lines suggested by the COMA report.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to make a statement, based on legal advice from the independent adjudication authorities, concerning the definition of regular care in respect of existing invalid care allowance legislation; and if he will make a statement on the related freezing of backdated ICA payments.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The independent chief adjudication officer has issued guidance to adjudication officers deciding claims to invalid care allowance (ICA) about the statutory requirement that claimants must be "regularly . . . engaged in caring". There has never been any doubt that this requirement is satisfied where the claimant is providing 35 or more hours of care for an AA recipient every week, or virtually every week. The new guidance has confirmed that the requirement is also satisfied where the claimant provides 35 or more hours care weekly throughout the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays for an AA recipient who is otherwise normally away from home at, for example, a special school. Care undertaken during other visits home will also qualify, provided the basic weekly requirement of 35 or more hours is satisfied. Isolated or infrequent spells of care will not qualify.

Claims that have been held pending this guidance will now be submitted for adjudication, and will be eligible for arrears in the same way as other ICA claims.

Health Authorities (Finance)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many health authorities have not been able to fix a balanced budget position for the current financial year.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total current size of the reported deficit of the 14 regional health authorities in the present financial year; and what year-end total is implied by this figure if no additional cut-backs are made in expenditure.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimates he has of possible overspending in the current financial year by each of the regional health authorities; and what proposals he has to deal with this problem.

Mr. Newton *[holding answers 4 December and 16 December 1987]:* The expenditure of health authorities, like that of Government Departments, is controlled in cash terms against cash limits. Regional health authorities' spending is therefore routinely monitored in cash terms. Regions are expected to maintain their spending within their cash limits this year. Under the normal conventions of Government accounting, authorities are expected to manage their working balances — that is, cash, stocks, debtors and creditors — at a sensible level. Regional health authorities are responsible for monitoring their districts' positions. The Department has not up to now routinely collected figures on the income and expenditure

position of health authorities in-year, but the National Health Service management board has this autumn reviewed with regional health authorities their current estimates of total expenditure levels for this year on both cash and on an income and expenditure basis, in the latter case covering not only authorities' views on likely trends in their working balances, but also the extent to which continuing expenditure was being financed by short-term savings.

As I announced in the House on 16 December, this monitoring revealed an immediate problem in the current year. In the light of this we have made an additional £75 million available to English health authorities, together with a further £13·3 million to offset the costs of damage caused by the severe weather on 16 October. Regular formal monitoring of the income and expenditure position of authorities is to be introduced.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what budgets have been allocated under the social fund for 1988-89 to each of his Department's offices situated in *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Knowsley, *(c)* Sefton, *(d)* St. Helens, *(e)* Wirral, *(f)* Clwyd and *(g)* Gwynedd;

(2) how many claimants received payments of supplementary benefit from his Department's offices situated in *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Knowsley, *(c)* Sefton, *(d)* St. Helens, *(e)* the Wirral, *(f)* Clwyd, and *(g)* Gwynedd during 1986; and at what total cost in each case;

(3) what estimate he has of the number of claimants likely to be receiving income support payments from Department of Health and Social Security offices situated in *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Knowsley, *(c)* Sefton, *(d)* St. Helens, *(e)* the Wirral, *(f)* Clwyd, and *(g)* Gwynedd after April 1988; and at what estimated total cost in each case.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Local offices which serve the areas requested are as follows. Their boundaries are not conterminous.

(a) Liverpool—
Liverpool—
Belle Vale
Breckfield
City
Edge Hill
Garston
Norris Green
Toxteth
West Derby (part)

(b) Knowsley—
Liverpool—
Huyton (part)
Kirkby
West Derby (part)
Widnes (part)

(c) Sefton—
Liverpool—
Bootle
Crosby
Southport

(d) St. Helens—
Liverpool—Huyton (part)
St. Helens
Warrington (part)

(e) Wirral—
Birkenhead North
Birkenhead South
Wallasey

(f) Clwyd—
Colwyn Bay (part)
Rhyl
Wrexham

(g) Gwynedd—
Anglesey
Caernarfon
Colwyn Bay (part)
Porthmadog/Dolgellau

The allocation of social fund budgets to these offices was contained in my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled's reply to my Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-781*.

The table sets out the number of claimants who received payments of supplementary benefit at each of these offices during 1986.

Number receiving payment of supplementary benefit

Office	*Number*
Birkenhead—	
North	11,802
South	8,747
Liverpool—	
Belle Vale	6,600
Bootle	7,521
Breckfield	7,248
City	3,656
Crosby	7,156
Edge Hill	5,046
Garston	5,829
Huyton	8,818
Kirkby	10,596
Norris Green	3,983
Toxteth	6,997
West Derby	6,259
St. Helens	12,650
Southport	8,620
Wallasey	7,686
Warrington	14,344
Widnes	10,416
Wales—	
Anglesey	6,356
Caernarfon	5,680
Colwyn Bay	7,719
Porthmadog/Dolgellau	5,982
Rhyl	13,107
Wrexham	19,246

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases, this data is provisional and subject to amendment.

I regret that no information is available on either total benefit expenditure or estimated numbers of income support recipients for the individual areas.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all those hospitals in England for which closure proposals have been referred to him for decision following local consultation procedures, during the past four years; and if he will indicate for each one whether closure was approved, refused or whether a decision is still pending.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The table lists the information available about hospitals in England for the four years up to December 1986, the latest date for which information is currently held. Partial as well as total closures are listed.

District/Special health authority	*Health Building*	*Closure*	*Proposal referred to Secretary of State*	
			Approved	*Refused*
Maidstone	Preston Hall Hospital	PC	January 1983	
Postgraduate Board of Governors Hospital	Hospital for Sick Children, Tadworth Court, Surrey	PC		March 1983
Wirral	Cleaver Hospital	TC	June 1983	
Brent	Leamington Park Hospital	TC	August 1983	
Frenchay	Wendover Maternity Hospital	TC	August 1983	
Camberwell	St. Giles' Hospital	TC	August 1983	
Barnet	West Hendon Hospital	TC	September 1983	
Haringey	Prince of Wales Hospital	TC	November 1983	
Wandsworth	South London Hospital for Women	TC	November 1983	
Queen Charlotte's BG	Convalescent Home, St. Leonard's-on-Sea	TC	November 1983	
Norwich	Home Place Convalescent Home	TC	December 1983	
Norwich	Longacre Maternity Home	TC	December 1983	
Hounslow and Spelthorne	St. John's Hospital	TC		December 1983
Hammersmith SHA	Community Health Centre, The Curve, Westway	N/A	January 1984	
Milton Keynes	Westbury Maternity Home	TC	January 1984	
Wigan	Ashton Hospital	TC	February 1984	
Liverpool	Newsham General Hospital	TC	March 1984	
Liverpool	Princes Park Hospital	TC	March 1984	
Tower Hamlets	Mildmay Mission Hospital	TC	March 1984	
Wakefield	Snapethorpe Hospital	TC	March 1984	
Wakefield	Pinderfields General Hospital	PC	March 1984	
Bradford	Thornton View	TC	April 1984	
Bradford	Shipley	TC		April 1984
Brent	Wembley Hospital	TC	May 1984	
Waltham Forest	Lugano Nursing Home	TC	May 1984	
Waltham Forest	Harts Hospital	TC	May 1984	
Paddington and North Kensington	Chepstow Lodge	TC	June 1984	
Hammersmith and Fulham	West London Hospital	PC	June 1984	
City and Hackney	The Mothers	TC	June 1984	
City and Hackney	The German	TC	June 1984	
City and Hackney	St. Matthew's	TC	June 1984	
Worcester and District	St. Wulstan's Hospital	TC	June 1984	
Chester	Ellesmere Port	PC	June 1984	
Brent	Central Middlesex Hospital	PC	July 1984	
Salisbury	Westminster Memorial Hospital	PC	July 1984	
Hammersmith and Fulham	Charing Cross Hospital	PC	August 1984	
Newham	St. Andrew's Hospital	PC	October 1984	
East Yorkshire	Woodgates Maternity Home	TC	November 1984	
Liverpool	Heswall Hospital	TC	November 1984	
Bury	Ainsworth Hospital	TC	November 1984	
East Hertfordshire	Hertford County Hospital	PC	December 1984	
Liverpool	Sir Alfred Jones Memorial	PC	January 1985	
Liverpool	Newsham Hospital	PC	January 1985	
Gateshead	Whickham Cottage Hospital	TC	February 1985	
North Bedfordshire	Park Hospital	TC	February 1985	
Mid-Downs	Horsham Hospital	PC	February 1985	
South West Surrey	Haslemere and District Hospital	PC	February 1985	
Preston	Fullwood Continuation Hospital	TC	March 1985	
Leeds Eastern	Marguerite Hepton Hospital	TC	May 1985	
Leeds Western	Grassington Hospital	TC	May 1985	
Victoria	Westminster	PC	May 1985	
South Warwickshire	Monroe Devis Maternity Home	TC	June 1985	
National Heart and Chest Hospitals SHA	Brompton Hospital, Frimley	TC	July 1985	
North Warwickshire	Colchester Holiday Home	TC	September 1985	
Salford	Salford Royal Hospital	PC	September 1985	
Airedale	Wharfedale Children's Hospital	TC	September 1985	
Greenwich	Dreadnaught Seaman's Hospital	TC	November 1985	
Greenwich	St. Nicholas	TC	January 1986	
Gateshead	Norman's Riding Hospital	TC	January 1986	
South West Durham	Holywood Hall	TC	January 1986	

District/Special health authority	Health Building	Closure	Proposal referred to Secretary of State	
			Approved	Refused
North Tyneside	Moor Park	TC	May 1986	
Waltham Forest	Forest Hospital	TC	July 1986	
Northumberland	Silverton House	TC	August 1986	
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Mary's (Harrow Road)	TC	August 1986	
Wandsworth	St. James' Hospital	PC	September 1986	
Lewisham and North Southwark	New Cross Hospital	TC	December 1986	
Shropshire	Oswestry and District Hospital	PC	Decision outstanding	

TC = Total Closure
PC = Partial Closure
N/A = Not applicable—no beds involved.

Gloucester Family Practitioner Committee

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement regarding the current level of services provided by the Gloucester family practitioner committee;

(2) how many general medical practitioners have been employed by the Gloucester family practitioner committee for each of the most recent five years for which figures are available;

(3) how much the Gloucester family practitioner committee has spent on revenue services for each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will express the figures in actual and in constant 1987 prices;

(4) how many general dental practitioners have been under contract to the Gloucester family practitioner committee for each of the most recent five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* Following is the information requested:

General Medical Practitioners[1]

	Number
1 October 1982	261
1 October 1983	266
1 October 1984	269
1 October 1985	279
1 October 1986	294

Notes:
[1] Number of unrestricted principals under contract with the Family Practitioner Committee (FPC).

General Dental Practitioners[2]

	Number
30 September 1982	163
30 September 1983	167
30 September 1984	168
30 September 1985	175
30 September 1986	181

Notes:
[1] Number of principals carrying out majority of their general dental services work under contract with the FPC.

	1982-83 £ million	1983-84 £ million	1984-85 £ million	1985-86 £ million	1986-87 £ million
Revenue expenditure[1] on Family Practitioner Services (actual):	27·61	29·22	32·12	34·03	37·77
Revenue expenditure[1] on Family Practitioner Services (1986-87) prices):	32·93	33·32	35·09	35·05	37·77
Revenue expenditure[2] on Family Practitioner Committee administration (actual):	—	—	—	0·41	0·43
Revenue expenditure[2] on Family Practitioner Committee adminstration (1986-87 prices):	—	—	—	0·43	0·43

Notes:
[1] Includes medical, dental, pharmaceutical and opthalmic services.
[2] Figures not available before 1985-86 when FPCs became independent of District Health Authorities.

The performance of this FPC is due to be reviewed by my noble Friend, on 22 January, 1988.

Nurseries and Playgroups

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was *(a)* the total public expenditure on local authority day nurseries, local authority playgroups and grants to the voluntary sector for provision for under fives for each year from 1975 to 1985 and *(b)* the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of these years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The table shows net current expenditure in England for the years 1975-76 to 1985-86.

(£000's)

(1) Year	(2) Day nurseries	(3) Playgroups	(4) Local authority grants (included in cols. 2 & 3	(5) Central grants	(6) Total of cols. 2, 3 & 5	(7) As percentage of United Kingdom GDP
1975-76	24,351	1,909	633	93	26,353	0·02
1976-77	30,135	2,388	903	164	32,687	0·03
1977-78	33,496	2,662	860	183	36,341	0·02
1978-79	37,654	2,965	1,089	213	40,832	0·02
1979-80	44,153	3,888	1,638	219	48,260	0·02
1980-81	58,099	4,543	2,400	278	62,920	0·03
1981-82	66,228	5,377	2,415	305	71,910	0·03
1982-83	73,082	5,790	2,797	355	79,227	0·03
1983-84	79,450	5,591	4,032	1,048	86,089	0·03
1984-85	84,743	6,300	4,788	2,309	93,352	0·03
1985-86	86,097	6,841	N/A	2,320	95,258	0·03

Notes:
The GDP figures used are the average of GDP (income), GDP (expenditure) and GDP (production). The GDP figure is for the United Kingdom as a whole.
The central grants shown comprise the Pre-school Playgroups Association, the voluntary Liaison Committee for Under Fives and the under fives initiative. Other voluntary organisations are also concerned with children under five, but it is not possible to identify their expenditure on under fives separately.
From 1982-83, chold-minding is included in grants from local authorities.
From 1983-84, central grants for the under fives initiative are included.

Rates

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount of rates or payments in lieu of rates, paid *(a)* by each regional health authority and *(b)* in respect of other National Health Service property not attributable to any particular regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 19 November 1987]:* The following are provisional, that is, as yet unaudited, figures derived from 1986-87 annual accounts submitted to the Department:

Expenditure on rates/payments in lieu of rates

	£000
Regions[1]	
Northern	13,360
Yorkshire	13,065
Trent	20,817
East Anglian	7,449
North West Thames	11,709
North East Thames	15,025
South East Thames	11,280
South West Thames	9,599
Wessex	7,888
Oxford	7,427
South Western	9,131
West Midlands	14,618
Mersey	10,465
North Western	12,939
Other NHS Bodies/Authorities[2]	
Special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals	1,991
Family Practitioner Committees	1,291
Prescription Pricing Authority	423
Dental Estimates Board	100

[1] Includes expenditure by regional and district health authorities.
[2] Excludes certain NHS bodies and authorities, etc. (eg the Central Blood Laboratories Authority) whose annual accounts do not separately identify their expenditure on rates or payments in lieu of rates.

District Health Authorities (Patient Treatment)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority *(a)* the total numbers of people waiting for treatment in September 1982, *(b)* the total numbers of people waiting for treatment in March 1987, *(c)* the percentage change represented by *(b)* over *(a)* ordering that list so that the district with the biggest increase is first and that with the largest decrease is last.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list with national ranking by percentage change—NHS Hospitals England

District health authority	September 1982	March 1987	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Number	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Percentage	Rank
Milton Keynes[1]	6	2,614	2,608	43,466·7	1
Halton	7	141	134	1,914·3	2
Islington	1,098	2,826	1,728	157·4	3
Huntingdon	471	922	451	95·8	4
Hounslow and Spelthorne	3,127	5,863	2,736	87·5	5
East Surrey	1,257	2,327	1,070	85·1	6
West Essex	2,555	4,645	2,090	81·8	7
Lewisham and North Southwark	5,335	9,341	4,006	75·1	8
Bexley	1,123	1,953	830	73·9	9
Dartford and Gravesham	2,916	4,846	1,930	66·2	10
Harrogate	1,274	2,059	785	61·6	11

District health authority	September 1982	March 1987	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Number	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Percentage	Rank
City and Hackney	4,586	7,140	2,554	55·7	12
Kidderminster and District	1,070	1,585	515	48·1	13
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	4,474	6,488	2,014	45·0	14
Mid Essex	3,246	4,672	1,426	43·9	15
Bloomsbury	9,632	13,446	3,814	39·6	16
Redbridge	1,719	2,392	673	39·2	17
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,475	2,052	577	39·1	18
Waltham Forest	3,271	4,504	1,233	37·7	19
West Suffolk	2,027	2,762	735	36·3	20
West Lambeth	6,038	8,111	2,073	34·3	21
North Warwickshire	1,944	2,576	632	32·5	22
South East Staffordshire	2,026	2,679	653	32·2	23
Worcester and District	2,651	3,477	826	31·2	24
Tower Hamlets	6,003	7,865	1,862	31·0	25
Hillingdon	6,009	7,867	1,858	30·9	26
Wolverhampton	3,677	4,802	1,125	30·6	27
Herefordshire	2,272	2,945	673	29·6	28
Lancaster	1,784	2,312	528	29·6	29
Eastbourne	2,552	3,298	746	29·2	30
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	3,708	4,763	1,055	28·5	31
South West Surrey	2,385	3,005	620	26·0	32
North West Surrey	2,315	2,915	600	25·9	33
Rochdale	2,342	2,933	591	25·2	34
Winchester	2,309	2,880	571	24·7	35
Airedale	1,686	2,100	414	24·6	36
Kettering	2,848	3,546	698	24·5	37
East Dorset	4,361	5,424	1,063	24·4	38
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,288	4,074	786	23·9	39
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1,688	2,088	400	23·7	40
Paddington and North Kensington	2,813	3,459	646	23·0	41
West Berkshire	3,256	3,999	743	22·8	42
Central Manchester	5,358	6,543	1,185	22·1	43
Cheltenham	1,782	2,157	375	21·0	44
Trafford	1,301	1,542	241	18·5	45
Chorley and South Ribble	651	770	119	18·3	46
Canterbury and Thanet	4,136	4,889	753	18·2	47
Wycombe	1,134	1,333	199	17·5	48
Southend	3,248	3,788	540	16·6	49
Bromley	1,931	2,242	311	16·1	50
Leicestershire	7,177	8,278	1,101	15·3	51
Rotherham	3,871	4,461	590	15·2	52
Bristol and Weston	7,142	8,213	1,071	15·0	53
East Cumbria	3,323	3,796	473	14·2	54
Greenwich	2,362	2,687	325	13·8	55
Hastings	2,547	2,882	335	13·2	56
Swindon	2,825	3,194	369	13·1	57
Maidstone	2,190	2,461	271	12·4	58
Northallerton	623	699	76	12·2	59
Sandwell	1,721	1,927	206	12·0	60
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,831	7,644	813	11·9	61
Basildon and Thurrock	5,888	6,541	653	11·1	62
Peterborough	3,770	4,176	406	10·8	63
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	4,117	4,546	429	10·4	64
West Birmingham	4,269	4,699	430	10·1	65
South Birmingham	6,878	7,569	691	10·0	66
Leeds Western	4,330	4,758	428	9·9	67
Somerset	4,949	5,436	487	9·8	68
Brent	1,737	1,903	166	9·6	69
East Suffolk	3,097	3,381	284	9·2	70
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	313	2,521	208	9·0	71
North Deven	1,558	1,693	135	8·7	72
Bradford	6,663	7,172	509	7·6	73
South West Hertfordshire	1,986	2,136	150	7·6	74
Exeter	4,436	4,737	301	6·8	75
South Cumbria	1,152	1,217	65	5·6	76
Stockport	4,430	4,668	238	5·4	77
Shropshire	8,441	8,842	401	4·8	78
Brighton	3,863	4,022	159	4·1	79
Medway	3,273	3,393	120	3·7	80
North Hertfordshire	3,155	3,267	112	3·5	81
South West Durham	803	831	28	3·5	82
West Lancashire	2,433	2,495	62	2·5	83
North Staffordshire	8,862	9,058	196	2·2	84
West Dorset	2,015	2,057	42	2·1	85
Isle of Wight	1,349	1,368	19	1·4	86

District health authority	September 1982	March 1987	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Number	Percentage	Rank
South Bedfordshire	2,382	2,415	33	1·4	87
Ealing	1,489	1,504	15	1·0	88
Mid Surrey	2,150	2,157	7	0·3	89
Enfield	3,068	3,074	6	0·2	90
Southport and Formby	1,373	1,360	−13	−0·9	91
Salisbury	4,770	4,717	−53	−1·1	92
Plymouth	5,897	5,800	−97	−1·6	93
Leeds Eastern	6,169	6,064	−105	−1·7	94
Hull	7,050	6,911	−139	−2·0	95
Barnet	3,628	3,545	−83	−2·3	96
Oldham	5,071	4,925	−146	−2·9	97
East Berkshire	8,244	7,905	−339	−4·1	98
Wigan	4,677	4,458	−219	−4·7	99
York	2,710	2,575	−135	−5·0	100
Salford	5,371	5,101	−270	−5·0	101
Riverside	5,888	5,590	−298	−5·1	102
South Lincolnshire	4,428	4,190	−238	−5·4	103
North East Essex	3,510	3,296	−214	−6·1	104
Chester	2,940	2,759	−181	−6·2	105
Bolton	3,348	3,138	−210	−6·3	106
North Bedfordshire	2,657	2,421	−236	−8·9	107
Southampton and South West Hampshire	9,080	8,217	−863	−9·5	108
Hartlepool	1,841	1,661	−180	−9·8	109
Liverpool	8,553	7,704	−849	−9·9	110
Chichester	2,786	2,464	−322	−11·6	111
Northumberland	1,896	1,668	−228	−12·0	112
Mid Downs	2,621	2,288	−333	−12·7	113
Preston	5,287	4,586	−701	−13·3	114
Camberwell	3,388	2,913	−475	−14·0	115
Wandsworth	3,239	2,768	−471	−14·5	116
Calderdale	1,166	996	−170	−14·6	117
Harrow	1,370	1,168	−202	−14·7	118
Gateshead	1,661	1,412	−249	−15·0	119
Gloucester	4,959	4,214	−745	−15·0	120
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	5,238	4,434	−804	−15·3	121
Oxfordshire	7,003	5,901	−1,102	−15·7	122
Walsall	3,324	2,740	−584	−17·6	123
South Warwickshire	3,194	2,631	−563	−17·6	124
Worthing	3,756	3,058	−698	−18·6	125
Croydon	3,093	2,518	−575	−18·6	126
Newcastle	11,524	9,363	−2,161	−18·8	127
Merton and Sutton	3,639	2,946	−693	−19·0	128
Pontefract	2,569	2,079	−490	−19·1	129
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	4,194	3,364	−830	−19·8	130
Southern Derbyshire	6,322	4,991	−1,331	−21·1	131
South Manchester	8,120	6,408	−1,712	−21·1	132
Scarborough	2,200	1,724	−476	−21·6	133
Doncaster	6,132	4,686	−1,446	−23·6	134
Darlington	3,140	2,397	−743	−23·7	135
Rugby	864	659	−205	−23·7	136
Kingston and Esher	3,194	2,418	−776	−24·3	137
Wirral	4,714	3,564	−1,150	−24·4	138
Sheffield	14,678	11,051	−3,627	−24·7	139
Sunderland	4,889	3,659	−1,230	−25·2	140
Bury	979	731	−248	−25·3	141
West Cumbria	1,870	1,396	−474	−25·3	142
East Yorkshire	1,924	1,429	−495	−25·7	143
Cambridge	6,708	4,945	−1,763	−26·3	144
Newham	2,222	1,638	−584	−26·3	145
Tunbridge Wells	6,220	4,566	−1,654	−26·6	146
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	3,294	2,404	−890	−27·0	147
North Derbyshire	3,511	2,520	−991	−28·2	148
East Hertfordshire	1,847	1,325	−522	−28·3	149
Dudley	5,441	3,889	−1,552	−28·5	150
Central Birmingham	7,635	5,427	−2,208	−28·9	151
Wakefield	3,216	2,241	−975	−30·3	152
South Tyneside	1,047	727	−320	−30·6	153
Durham	1,489	1,032	−457	−30·7	154
Solihull	2,278	1,578	−700	−30·7	155
Central Nottinghamshire	7,154	4,955	−2,199	−30·7	156
Bath	8,079	5,570	−2,509	−31·1	157
Crewe	5,128	3,512	−1,616	−31·5	158
North Lincolnshire	4,129	2,819	−1,310	31·7	159
Torbay	2,368	1,602	−766	−32·3	160
Mid Staffordshire	2,440	1,648	−792	−32·5	161

District health authority	September 1982	March 1987	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Number	Change September 1982 to March 1987 Percentage	Rank
Barnsley	3,934	2,600	−1,334	−33·9	162
Huddersfield	3,308	2,175	−1,133	−34·3	163
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	3,698	2,411	−1,287	−34·8	164
South East Kent	3,946	2,564	−1,382	−35·0	165
East Birmingham	4,600	2,865	−1,735	−37·7	166
Scunthorpe	4,609	2,832	−1,777	−38·6	167
Warrington	3,037	1,864	−1,173	−38·6	168
Northampton	6,793	4,144	−2,649	−39·0	169
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	3,542	2,148	−1,394	−39·4	170
North Tyneside	1,721	1,043	−678	−39·4	171
Nottingham	10,988	6,625	−4,363	−39·7	172
Grimsby	2,355	1,400	−955	−40·6	173
Frenchay	5,855	3,458	−2,397	−40·9	174
Haringey	1,708	1,004	−704	−41·2	175
Norwich	10,980	6,377	−4,603	−41·9	176
Tameside and Glossop	2,866	1,645	−1,221	−42·6	177
North West Hertfordshire	2,697	1,544	−1,153	−42·8	178
Coventry	8,759	4,813	−3,946	−45·1	179
South Sefton	6,332	3,409	−2,923	−46·2	180
North Manchester	4,726	2,528	−2,198	−46·5	181
South Tees	10,319	5,519	−4,800	−46·5	182
North West Durham	1,325	683	−642	−48·5	183
Aylesbury Vale[1]	6,450	3,300	−3,150	−48·8	184
Southmead	2,958	1,415	−1,543	−52·2	185
North Birmingham	2,723	1,300	−1,423	−52·3	186
North Tees	1,958	930	−1,028	−52·5	187
Bassetlaw	1,185	535	−650	−54·9	188
Dewsbury	1,181	429	−752	−63·7	189
Macclesfield	2,302	760	−1,542	−67·0	190
Hampstead[2]	1,979	..	—	—	

[1] The waiting list for Milton Keynes was formerly held by Aylesbury Vale health authority but was taken over by Milton Keynes health authority in 1984 following the development of Milton Keynes general hospital. The above table shows a comparable reduction in the Aylesbury Vale figures.

[2] As no March 1987 figures available for Hampstead health authority this authority has been excluded from the national ranking.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 124**

SESSION 1987–88

7th December–18th December 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

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Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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[Mr. Robin Cook]

Bill have chosen not to be present. Perhaps I could refer to that part of the dissenting minority report of the Farm Animal Welfare Council which deals with this slaughterhouse. The minority report says that at that time the slaughterhouse had been operating for two years

"under extremely closely controlled conditions and cannot be compared to normal slaughter operations."

It says that the deer were,

"slaughtered after normal working hours when all the usual bustle and noise of the slaughterhouse had ceased."

I suggest that one cannot have an opinion too widely on that limited experiment.

Dr. Godman: I readily agree with my hon. Friend. I am simply trying to give a balanced view, and I shall say something about the Buchan Meat Producers Association premises. I have been told by Mr. Bill Hamilton of the reasearch unit in Laurencekirk that there is need for systematic regulation of this method of slaughter. Mr. Hamilton and his colleagues told me that they strongly recommend that those who are to be involved must be properly trained in the handling of deer. For example, animals must be treated quietly, cannily and gently. There must be no stick-waving of the sort that we sometimes see in abattoirs, and there must be a pronounced division between the animals going through.

On the basis of the limited research conducted in Scotland, there are three essential elements in the management of abattoirs in which the slaughter of deer is carried out. One is the training of the personnel, which I have just mentioned; and another important and essential element is the design of the abattoir. Many abattoirs are simply not adequate for the slaughter of deer. But of supreme importance is the design of the stunning cage because that is crucial to this form of slaughter. Those are very important considerations.

Mr. Corbett: Would my hon. Friend care to comment on transport?

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend's sedentary intervention is important, especially for Scotland, with its huge land mass.

I shall restate the three elements that are crucial to the regulated and humane slaughter of farm deer. I am sure that the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West will take those elements on board, because they are important. They are the training of personnel, the design of the abattoir and, of critical importance, the design of the stunning cage. If she does that, I would look upon the Bill with a little more sympathy than I had before the debate. I have been reassured to some extent, but I bear in mind the strictures of my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about the work conducted by the Macaulay institute in Scotland. The considerations that I have mentioned are important and the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West must take them on board.

2.28 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on her good luck in coming eighth in the ballot and on choosing a controversial subject. As she will have found out, the subject has generated a good deal of interest in all parts of the House. In the remaining two minutes, I shall sum up my reactions to the Bill in a few words.

This is a lengthy and ambitious Bill. My hon. Friend's fault is that she has assumed that without any bad effects one can cart deer around the country in the way that cattle, sheep and pigs are carted to slaughterhouses. I believe, from my discussions with my hon. Friend, that she is sincere in that belief. She feels that deer, which most of us know to have the characteristic of great timidity, can lose that characteristic within a generation. There I differ from her. I have seen red, fallow and roe deer that have been farmed for three generations, and they are quite different from cattle, sheep and pigs. However, my hon. Friend seems to think that they can be carted around the country——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 15 January.

Private Members' Bills

PROTECTION OF ANIMALS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Today, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): It might help the House, as this is the first private Members' Bill day of a new Parliament, if I tell hon. Members that it is sufficient for the hon. Member in charge to shout, "Now, Sir".

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

LICENSING (RETAIL SALES) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On behalf of the hon. Member in charge, I beg to move.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall take that as a "Now, Sir".

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

ABORTION (FINANCIAL BENEFIT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 January.

RIGHT OF PRIVACY BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 5 February.

ROAD TRAFFIC (RANDOM BREATH TESTING) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

Coventry District Health Authority

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I wish to begin this half-hour debate on the crisis facing the Health Service in Coventry with the apologies of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry North-East (Mr. Hughes), who intended to be here today, both to support the debate and to make his own contribution. Yesterday afternoon his wife Ina was taken to hospital, suffering from a suspected heart attack. Let me place on record my hope, and no doubt that of all hon. Members present, that it is not a serious condition. I also wish to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who is shadow Secretary of State for Social Services, for staying at least for the beginning of the debate.

The core of the debate is the Government's underfunding of the Coventry district health authority, and the authority's consequent inability to deal with the growing crisis facing the Health Service in Coventry. The position is deteriorating daily, as is witnessed by the large volume of letters that I receive from constituents and others in Coventry who are experiencing the effects of the crisis. Only this morning, I received a letter from Carol Cilia, a single parent with three small children who lives in Coventry, South-East. The letter reads:

"Dear Sir,

I was diagnosed as having the early stages of cervical cancer from a smear test taken August 1986 . . . finally called for final laser treatment on 19 November 1987 . . . was taken to a Day Room on B1 east (Gynaecological Ward). Due to this ward having to cut its beds from 52 to 26, there were no beds available for use and 10 of us sat for 7 hours in the day room, watching people have lunch, tea and coffee whilst we were not allowed to eat or drink . . . We had to change into operating gowns in the treatment room and see the doctor in the scan room. The ward had men from rather over-crowded wards in it, so sitting round in a gown which revealed everything was also disturbing. Finally the first patient taken down to the operating room at 2.00 p.m. whereupon the laser broke down. Walsgrave only has one laser for . . . neuro-surgery; ear, nose and throat as well as cervical cancer. It is therefore not surprising that this one piece of vital equipment sometimes gives up. We were kept until 4.00 p.m. whilst they tried to mend it. Unfortunately, they could not and we were all sent home after a very stressful day. I was called again for laser surgery on 3 December and went through the same procedure. This time, however, they managed to find us beds, but not on the gynaecological ward. I was placed on the men's ward which for such a personal thing as cervical cancer was extremely embarrassing when in-patients asked what I was there for. Again I starved and thirsted all day only to discover at 4.00 p.m. that the laser had broken down once more, and I was sent home without treatment. I am a single parent with 3 small children. I also have a pressurised job with Community Programme for Warwickshire County Council where I am the Personnel Officer and Training Advisor. I organise training for 400 long-term unemployed people under the government's scheme to re-introduce them to the work situation and up-date their skills."

This lady adds that she loves her job and refers to the stress that her condition is placing on her in the service that she is trying to give to the 400. She continues:

"I have no complaints against the hospital. They are attempting to cope in a situation outside their control. Both the consultant and the nursing staff were also upset about the delay and have done their utmost to correct the situation. However, there is little they can do without money being fed into the hospital for new equipment . . . and for re-opening beds that have been taken away. I cannot understand why the

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

government insist that they are putting in more money . . . into the health service as in my experience, and everyone else at the hospital, it is on the brink of disaster."

I hope earnestly that, when the junior Minister replies, we shall not get the litany of 10-year-old National Health Service statistics that we have had to put up with over the past seven weeks from the Prime Minister every Tuesday and Thursday. We want to deal with what we are only too well aware of—the effects of the crisis on real people such as Ms. Cilia, whose letter I have read.

I understand that last night Mr. David Loughton, the general manager of the hospital at Coventry, said that the plans for a special unit for separate gynaecological operations are laid out, but the cash has not yet been made available. The Minister will have received a copy of the letter from which I have quoted. I accept that she may not be able to reply to it today, but I hope that she will give an assurance that the case will be investigated on behalf of my constituent.

The morale of NHS staff in Coventry is being undermined by the deterioration of the service that it provides. This is exacerbated by low pay and worsening conditions of work.

Another of my constituents, Andy Sutcliffe of Binley, a medical physics technician, complains about the 5 per cent. pay award to him and his colleagues, which was paid in November. Back pay is owed and it will not be paid until after Christmas.

Another of my constituents, Mrs. Hall from Wyken, is a state registered nurse. She has worked on the night shift for 14 years. She complains bitterly that special duty payments and out-of-hours moneys are being threatened by the Government. She speaks of becoming increasingly alarmed and revising her opinion on strike action to defend services and wage conditions in the Health Service.

These constituents speak on behalf of hundreds of Health Service employees in Coventry. We have had lobbies and meetings with the Minister and her current gaffer. There have been meetings also with the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), who was the Secretary of State for Social Services and is now the Secretary of State for Employment. There was a 40,000-strong petition—the greatest petition ever in the history of Coventry—to protest about the threatened closure of the Whitley hospital. The reluctance of NHS workers in Coventry to request the assistance of their brothers and sisters in manufacturing and other industries in Coventry to support them in taking action in response to the crisis is fast disappearing, especially with the experience of the past seven months and the effect of the cuts in Coventry.

What does it mean to be on the waiting list? I have no doubt that the Minister will refer to the welcome reduction of about 1,000 of those on waiting lists during the past year or so, but there are still about 5,000 who are waiting for an operation or appointment. Four days ago I received a letter from another constituent, Mr. Barnett of Stoke Green. In October 1986, he was given a note by his doctor to take to the referral hospital. The doctor wrote that X-rays and blood tests should be taken because of chest pains. Incidentally, the pains have become much worse over the past three or four weeks. Finally, Mr. Barnett was given an appointment in August 1988.

That is the position for hundreds or thousands in Coventry. Almost every day there are features in the local newspaper and the regional press about the state of the Health Service, cuts in specialist services, bed closures, delays in building programmes, 100-hour working weeks for junior doctors, cancelled or delayed operations and cuts throughout the region and district that are now affecting every family in the area to some extent. Patients in Coventry and elsewhere do not know whether they will stay in the same hospital from one week to the next.

The cuts are enthusiastically carried out by Government appointees on the district and regional health boards. We know that from the experience of our recent Lobbies over the threatened closure of the geriatric hospital at Whitley, in Coventry, South-East. The district health authority's original decision was passed by exactly the same number of votes, despite the 40,000 petition and the hundreds of people who expressed dissent in other forms, including lobbies of the district health authority.

When the matter went to the regional health authority, it occupied 10 minutes of the committee's time. The majority of the members of the committee had not had the papers relating to the closure for more than 48 hours before the meeting. One delegate abstained, I believe completely wrongly, because he had not had time to study the papers. I do not believe that those members, the majority of whom were appointed by the Government, have a heavy heart when they make these cuts and decisions on financial grounds. They have alternatives. They could do what the district health authority in Leeds did or what the heroic Socialist council in Liverpool did, which is refuse to implement the cuts on behalf of the Tory Government. They could do on an individual basis what the general manager in the Berkshire health authority did on being requested to close hundreds of beds—that is, resign. Four of his colleagues who are consultants in the area refused to carry out the surveys necessary to make the Government's cuts.

The cash crisis affecting the district health authority in Coventry was first revealed in its most recent detail to a meeting at the beginning of April which was attended by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) and me. We were told that the underfunding by the Government of the Coventry district health authority was the punitive amount of £1·5 million this year. The district health authority managers and chairman proposed to implement £1 million-worth of cuts and hoped that the Government would produce the additional £500,000. Despite lobbies and meetings with Ministers at all levels in the DHSS, that additional £500,000 has never arrived. Three weeks after that meeting, like a bolt from the blue, the local press made it clear that the health authority intended to meet that local gap in finance by closing Whitley hospital for geriatric patients. That was never mentioned at our meeting with the district health authority.

Last week, I received a letter from the Minister offering to meet a delegation and me to discuss the closure of Whitley hospital, as part of the statutory procedure, now that the closure has been approved at district and regional levels, before it is approved by her Department. I welcome that offer and at present I am trying to arrange a delegation and date, and I shall shortly contact her office. I do not want to pre-empt the discussions that we shall

have then, but I should like to give a couple of minutes of background information and ask two questions which I hope she can answer before the meeting.

Whitley hospital is the NHS facility for the elderly in Coventry. Its closure would end the care of the long-term frail and elderly by the NHS in our city. Seven years ago, it was planned to be the second district hospital and was to be upgraded to 500 beds. Four years ago, it was redesignated as a centre of excellence for rehabilitation services. Those detailed plans have been quietly buried as the financial crisis of underfunding continues.

In case I am challenged on that, I shall use in evidence a letter from the regional health authority chairman, Sir James Ackers, who is responsible for allocating the budgets to Coventry, to Dr. Taylor of Dudley road hospital. I received it at the end of November and it deals mainly with Birmingham. Nevertheless, Sir James Ackers writes:

"We have been able, over the past few years to continue to expand the quantity of health care provided but we have been particularly affected in the last two years by outturns in salaries and prices considerably higher than the assumptions in the resource planning. This has meant the five Birmingham Districts have had to find a sum of approximately £4 million from their allocation over the last two years".

In Coventry, almost £2 million has had to be found.

If Whitley is sold to private enterprise, I do not believe that the Department of Health and Social Security will make savings. For a start, the district health authority will have to pick up interest charges on the sale. The cost of running that private enterprise hospital will be transferred from the budget of the National Health Service to the DHSS. As much, if not more, will end up being paid by the Government although they will be able to claim a cut in NHS money.

I hope that the Minister will be able to answer some questions before I arrive with the official delegation. First, what is the purpose of a statutory procedure for the district and the regional health authority considering a closure which arrives on the desk of the Secretary of State if, before the decision is taken in London, people in Coventry are acting as if the decision has already been taken? I refer to three things — first, the architects and surveyors designing the women's hospital at Walsgrave, which, according to the overall plan in Coventry, is to be funded by the proceeds from the sale of Whitley, have been appointed before the sale of Whitley has been agreed.

Secondly, Coventry churches housing association — which has nothing to do with the Churches, and is the designated body to which the hospital is supposed to be sold — for six weeks has had an office on the site of Whitley, in the old GP unit. The organisation has its own plaque on the wall outside the door of the office, yet it has not been given the authority to buy the hospital. It has set up operations on the site already. Is it a sham that we are going through? The Secretary of State is supposed to be reviewing the case properly, yet the organisation that is designated for the sale has already set up its office on the site of Whitley.

Finally, yesterday, Coventry city council planning department — the department of economic development and planning — issued, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, a development plan direction notice that the regional health authority has applied for outline planning permission for the residential development at the "old" Whitley hospital in London road.

Thus the council, the housing association, the architects and surveyors are acting as if the Secretary of State had already given his approval. Will my trouble in organising the delegation be worth while? The only assurance that the Minister can give me today to prove that that is so is that everything is fair and above board, and, on the balance of evidence, that she intends to reject the application from the district and regional health authorities; otherwise everyone in Coventry will assume that that has been planned and has gone through.

I should like to refer to a couple of points that the Minister made to me in a letter of 27 November. The first is about incontinence pads supplies. She wrote that she understood that the difficulties of the supply of incontinence pads to my constituents and others had been effectively resolved. The thickness of my file should illustrate the problems that have arisen over the past few weeks because of the district health authority's decision to stop the supply of incontinence pads to mentally and physically handicapped bairns and elderly folk. I have had distressing letters from, among others, a constituent called Mrs. Flint on behalf of her mother, Annie Tarry, MENCAP, the family practitioner committee, the community health council and Coventry council for the disabled. I have also received a letter from an anonymous person, who says:

"there isn't much I can do about it on my own. I don't think there will ever be a march of the Incontinents to Downing Street. It is a very embarrassing problem I and thousands of others suffer from. Not something I have the courage to shout about. So I will hide behind you, and hope you can. I enclose a copy of a letter I have sent to the Director of Nursing."

There is complacency about that problem being solved. My hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East, in his maiden speech in the Chamber, talked about what it is like to sit in a cold room where the central heating does not work, in incontinence pads that are soaked with urine. Mrs. Flint's mother dries hers out on a radiator overnight because the supplies are not there.

At Boots or White's the chemist in Coventry, people are told that there will be no more supplies of incontinence pads for the next 10 days, and that when they arrive, they will cost £4 per pack of 10. Let the Minister tell those people in Coventry that the problem of incontinence pads has been solved and that their distress is a figment of their imagination.

I have received letters from the local medical committee about the third of a million pounds in cuts that the health authority is demanding. If there are any serious winter illnesses or infectious diseases in the city, the chairman, Dr. Keenan, says that in the light of the cuts in hospital services, the health authority will be unable to cope.

The hospitals in Coventry are being funded by raffles, sponsored events, charitable appeals and donations. Walsgrave hospital has lodged an appeal for an intensive care unit under what I suppose is the attractive slogan of the "I care" appeal. Coventry and Warwickshire hospital is launching an appeal for redecoration and for the provision of carpets and curtains in the outpatients department — but, more than that, for beds and operating tables in the hospital. Yesterday, the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* donated a £2,000 prize that was won by a reporter and photographer to buy a computer and software for a consultant orthopaedic surgeon to check that all new babies born in Coventry do not have hip weaknesses.

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What other Department has this flag-day approach to raising money? Does the Ministry of Defence organise flag days for Trident or cruise? Does the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food organise flag days for the grain surplus? Does the Home Office organise flag days for the police or the other services that it runs? How much charitable fund raising was there for that £36 million new office building opposite 10 Downing street, which was opened yesterday for the Minister and her colleagues? Was there a flag day to pay for the Secretary of State's regency chandelier and his private bidet and shower room? Of course, he is not enjoying it at present; because of his health problems he is in a £195-a-day private hospital.

After the tragedy of King's Cross, the Minister correctly praised firemen, ambulancemen and hospital workers. She said:

"I am so proud of the health service staff and everyone else. They were so brave, dignified, impressive, professional."

She should say exactly the same to the ambulance workers in Coventry who, for the past 12 months, have complained about underfunding, understaffing and the under-provision of vehicles, which has meant the deaths of some people who have suffered heart attacks.

Finally, may I mention a matter that I have raised during the past six and a half weeks? That is the scandal and disgrace of the provision of heart operations for my constituents and those of other hon. Members who rely on Birmingham Children's hospital. There have been some successes. When the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West, and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) intervened on behalf of babies such as Ben Plant and William Pound, those few-week-old babies were given the heart operations that they urgently needed. But how many families have access to a Minister or a member of the governing party? How many families can telephone their Members of Parliament and arrange at short notice for their children's cases to be considered?

I asked the Prime Minister about this yesterday and she completely ignored the question. What would the Minister say to Adrian Woolford, the seven-year-old lad in Coventry who has waited two years for his heart operation? What would she say tonight in Birmingham to the dozens of parents meeting me and other hon. Members from the midlands, together with the doctors and nurses from Birmingham Children's hospital, to discuss the crisis of the cancelled and delayed operations? What would she say——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): If the hon. Gentleman will give me a minute, I will tell him.

Mr. Nellist: The Minister has had plenty of time during the past week alone to justify the problems in the Health Service. I have waited seven weeks for this opportunity. I appreciate that she wants time to reply, and I will do my best to conclude.

What would the Minister say to the parents of Chintu Kumar, the one-day-old baby from Coventry who died earlier this year after a 100-mile mercy dash from Coventry to Liverpool because beds had been closed in the intensive care unit of Birmingham Children's hospital?

We hear this morning that the Prime Minister has told her special adviser, Sir Roy Griffiths, that there are to be no more closures of hospital beds, in a bid to take the NHS out of the political limelight. She has said that there must be no more ward or bed closures for whatever reason. If that is true, I hope that it means the reopening of the intensive care beds in the children's hospital that have been closed in recent days. There is plenty of money kicking about for Zircon satelites, so there should be plenty of money to inject into the Health Service. It should not be, as the Minister has suggested, that people should be private patients and thereby bleed the NHS of staff. There should be a Health Service for the people, many of whom have paid their contributions for 40 years. It is supposed to be a free Health Service for those in need.

A crisis is facing the families of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends in Coventry and the midlands generally. Indeed, it is a crisis that faces the whole country. We do not want to hear today, or in any replies from Ministers, a litany of statistics — which the Prime Minister repeated yesterday—that sound like a cracked gramophone record. We want the task force approach that the Government can bring to bear in a war 10,000 miles away in the south Atlantic, when they moved heaven and earth to resolve a problem that they thought to be important. We understand the importance of the lives of our constituents, from the youngest bairn to the oldest person facing a lack of incontinence pads. They are just as important as anything that the Government consider important. We want money in Coventry and Birmingham, and we want it now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The Chair has limited power to curtail hon. Members' speeches, but it must appeal to hon. Members who have been fortunate enough to secure an Adjournment debate to recognise and uphold the conventions of the House.

2.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): This is the fifth time that I have been at the Dispatch Box this week, but it is the first time in daylight. I congratulate the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on his success in the ballot. I am only sorry that he has left me barely five minutes in which to reply. Will he please convey my good wishes to the wife of his hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes), who he said has recently been taken ill. I hope that she soon recovers.

I am sorry to hear about the specific difficulties of the hon. Gentleman's constituent who needed laser treatment for gynaecology. I know that he has sent me a letter, but I have not yet seen it. I will ensure that the matter is drawn to the attention of Mr. Guy, the chairman of the health authority.

On the supply of incontinence pads, I have written to the hon. Gentleman saying that the health authority had decided that

"it could no longer give a free service to private home owners and the Social Services Department."

I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman criticises me on the former, and I recommend that he has a word with his heroic Socialist colleagues on the latter. Perhaps they will provide money out of Coventry's considerable rates to assist, and thereby accept their responsibilities.

Mr. Nellist: They have.

Mrs. Currie: I am delighted to hear that.

I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the children whose heart operations in the west midlands have been cancelled. I hope that he recognises that I am well acquainted with the Birmingham Children's hospital. I know of its constant efforts on behalf of sick children. I also know the problem that it has had for years in recruiting and training the right sort of nurses.

I wish to make three main points. First, we are concerned, and have been for some time, that there is no financial incentive for nurses to take the additional post-basic courses necessary to serve in specialised areas such as intensive care, coronary care, paediatric work and so on, which is working to the detriment of staffing in those areas. We commissioned work to address that question last year, and the proposals form part of a comprehensive clinical grading review will be put to the nurses and midwives review body shortly. It will be for that body to make recommendations to the Prime Minister.

As for the west midlands, departmental officials are in close touch concerning staffing at Birmingham Children's hospital and elsewhere to deal with the regional specialties. I am informed that proposals are in hand to increase the number of places for the registered sick children's nursing course. The regional health authority will pay for the tutors and 50 per cent. of the costs of releasing staff to go on it. New places will be provided not only in Birmingham, but in Coventry, Stafford, Stoke and Wolverhampton.

In addition, central Birmingham has applied to the English National Board for Nursing for approval for the post-basic paediatric intensive care course which, if agreed, would be the first outside London. It hopes to appoint a tutor early in 1988. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health is conducting the ministerial review of the West Midlands regional health authority right now, when all these matters are to be thoroughly discussed.

However, I believe that we can go further. My concern is that we should investigate whether we can avoid such terrible tragedies in the first place. In the United Kingdom about 6,000 babies are born each year with a defect that may kill them or cripple them for life, and such defects include the heart and lung complications suffered by the hon. Gentleman's constituent. The proportion of babies born alive with low birth weights — less than 2,500 grammes or 5 lbs.—is about 7 per cent. It was the same percentage over 20 years ago. When I examine closely regions where a sharp improvement in the perinatal mortality figures has occurred, I often find that the improvement is due to better care—which is marvellous —rather than due to a fall in the incidence of foetal handicap, which has not budged for many years. That is not good enough, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman would agree.

I have commissioned two of the most senior advisers, both of whom have medical qualifications, to check the research findings all over the world and advise me whether anything can be done to prevent abnormality in the first place. Much of it seems to occur in the very first weeks of pregnancy — perhaps at conception itself, but certainly when a woman may not know that she is pregnant. I recently met the Maternity Alliance, an umbrella body for more than 70 organisations, which shares my concern and I shall work closely with that body to establish what we know and what advice, if any, we can offer to parents, health professionals and all those who want to prevent such difficulties arising in the first place.

I have barely one minute left. Coventry was allocated £56·1 million last year and managed to spend £63·9 million. That is a gap of nearly £8 million. Some of that was found from in-year additions from the regional health authority and some was covered by the cost-improvement programme; Coventry has done very well on that. However, the overall result — from a health authority that knew what its budget was at the beginning of the year — was an overspend of just over £1 million. The regional health authority said that that could be carried over, but Coventry is overspending its budget again this year, although by slightly less, because of further cost-improvement programmes and the temporary closures. That is expected to leave a gap of just under £1 million by the end of the year. The regional health authority believes that Coventry health authority is adequately funded for the health needs of its people. On all the calculations, Coventry's allocated finances are bang on target.

I recognise the force of the hon. Gentleman's argument. Proposals have been put to us for permanent changes, some of which the hon. Gentleman outlined. I am sure that he will realise that it is not appropriate for me to comment in detail on the proposals while they are still under consideration.

The motion having been made after half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at one minute past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 14 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Imported Coal

1. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal to discuss the cost of imported coal; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Cecil Parkinson): I meet the chairman of British Coal regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Barron: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman, will he discuss the current comparison between the price of British and international coal? Will he take into account the present level of international stocks as they reflect the investment in 1973, after the oil crisis, and how that price reflects the current weakness of the dollar, which is causing great concern when compared with European currencies? Will he also consider the fact that if we turned to the international market, international prices would rise immediately as a result? Will the Secretary of State answer the question raised by the chairman of British Coal recently as to whether we are to close more pits against such an uncertain background? Such closures are totally unjustified.

Mr. Parkinson: No. The Government have made it clear, through what they have said and in financial support for the industry, that we want a strong, viable, competitive British coal industry. It may surprise the hon. Gentleman to learn that I agree with him that it is misleading to consider the marginal cost of coal in international markets and to state that 80 million tonnes could be purchased at that price. If the Central Electricity Generating Board were to enter the market for that quantity of coal, the price would be bound to rise.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that metallurgical coke is required for the United Kingdom steel industry and should be imported? Considering the true figures for importation prices, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Chinese, the Colombians, the South Africans and the Australians can all undercut us in real prices? We must face that situation.

Mr. Parkinson: I have said that we must have a competitive coal industry. Equally, I agree with my hon. Friend that we do not produce enough of certain grades of coal—for example, anthracite and coking coal. That is one reason why British Coal has proposals to invest at Margam. To make that investment pay there must be flexible working and a new approach to working arrangements. Without those we will have to continue to import the coking coal that we could produce in this country.

Mr. Benn: Has it occurred to the Secretary of State that the policy of importing coal — including some from South Africa—of further pit closures and of the selling of profitable pits confirms almost every forecast made by Arthur Scargill since he became president of the National Union of Mineworkers? He forecast those events with clinical precision. Is it not a fact that that must be set against the problem of hypothermia, which is likely to kill many people this winter because of the lack of cheap fuel?

Mr. Parkinson: I am very surprised that the right hon. Gentleman wants to talk about closures. No other Minister has ever approached the right hon. Gentleman's record for closing pits. What is more, under the right hon. Gentleman, miners did not receive the redundancy compensation that they receive under this Government. Coal imports represent about 8 per cent. of total coal consumption in this country. I want to see a strong British coal industry. We are putting up £2 million a day to ensure that the industry receives the investment. We need modern working practices to accompany the investment, and the industry will then have a bright future.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best way to beat the attractions of foreign coal is to continue the increase in efficiency and competitiveness that the industry has already seen? In that connection, does my right hon. Friend agree that our congratulations are due to the entire industry on the magnificent figures recently announced by British Coal in respect of productivity per man shift?

Mr. Parkinson: I am glad that my hon. Friend has brought that up. The breaking of the "4 tonnes per man shift" barrier is something for which the entire industry deserves credit. It deserves credit also for achieving that during an overtime ban. It just shows what the industry is capable of doing if men and management work together and make use of modern investment.

Mr. Eadie: I have listened to what the right hon. Gentleman has said about the importation of coal. However, he must spell it out more clearly. He is on record as saying different things to different audiences. Does he deny that he has told audiences that if the electricity industry is privatised private industry will be allowed to buy coal in whatever market it chooses? That means another slaughtering of the coal industry, with more pit closures and job losses.

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman has quoted only half of what I said. I said that we would not bind the privatised industry to buy British. I went on to say that we believe that the British coal industry, if it continues to improve productivity, will become a supplier of choice, not of necessity. The hon. Gentleman should not quote the first part without quoting the second.

Electricity Council

3. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what the budget for the Electricity Council has been in each of the last five years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): The net operating costs of the Electricity Council borne by electricity boards in England and Wales from 1982-83 to 1986-87 were respectively £28·2 million, £30·8 million, £32·4 million, £35·3 million and £36·5 million.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister confirm that the Electricity Council employs more people than the Department of Energy; and will he tell us what they all do?

Mr. Spicer: The answer to the first question is yes. The answer to the second is that those people are responsible for the policy formulation of the industry, including, for instance, industrial relations and financial planning.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the Minister tell us what proportion of the budget in each of the years that he mentioned has been spent on research into the efficient use of electricity, renewable sources of electricity and its renewable sources abroad?

Mr. Spicer: I do not have the exact figures, but it is highly unlikely to be very much. All those matters are undertaken by the Central Electricity Generating Board, not the Electricity Council.

Mr. Hannam: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), when he was Minister for Energy back in the 1970s, did not carry out the recommendations of the Plowden committee for the reorganisation of the electricity industry, and that, as a result, not only has the Electricity Council's staff exceeded that of the Department of Energy, but its spending is far greater than that of the Department?

Mr. Spicer: The Electricity Council's budget is considerably larger than that of the Department of Energy, which this year is £22·9 million. As for the first part of the question, I am sure that, as my hon. Friend has asked it, it must be right.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the Minister tell us what subsidy is paid per tonne of South African, Polish and American coal coming into this country to be supplied to the CEGB?

Mr. Spicer: I think that that relates to the last question. However, I believe that the figure—which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has given me—is 2·5 per cent.

Electricity (Privatisation)

4. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity boards to discuss privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I met the area board chairmen collectively on 1 October to discuss various aspects of the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, and I plan to meet them again early in the new year.

Mr. Moss: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the area board chairmen are overwhelmingly in favour of privatisation and believe that they will give customers a better deal in the private sector?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The area board chairmen are overwhelmingly in favour of the industry's privatisation.

Mr. Hardy: What did the area board chairmen tell the Secretary of State about the future of the national grid, and, secondly, about the maintenance of jobs within their areas and in the industry generally? Would he care to express his own view on those matters?

Mr. Parkinson: The area board chairmen and I discussed the question of privatisation. In spite of rumours to the contrary, nobody in the Electricity Council, the area boards, the CEGB, or the Government wants the grid to be broken up. The area board chairmen believe that their industry has a bright future — the consumption of electricity has been increasing—and that in the private sector they can offer their employees a more secure and better-paid future. They all intend to ensure that their work force receives worker-shareholdings at preferential rates.

Mr. Adley: I am delighted to hear what my right hon. Friend has said about the national grid. Does he agree that the national grid is the jewel in the crown of our electricity industry? Is he prepared to go a little further and give a categorical assurance that, when the legislation comes, the preservation of the national grid will be written into it?

Mr. Parkinson: There is not and never has been at any time any question of breaking up the grid. An integrated grid has served the country well and will continue to do so in the future.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Secretary of State intend the ownership of the national grid to be in private or public hands? Did the chairmen of the electricity boards make it clear to him that the 9 per cent. increase in prices was completely unjustified, that the industrial rebate for prices may mean that, yet again, consumers will pay more for electricity, and that it may be illegal?

Mr. Parkinson: No. When I talked to the area board chairmen about prices I explained that the industry was entering a period of substantial capital investment and that it had to develop an income base to fund that investment, whether it be in the private or public sector. They saw the sense of that argument, as, I am sure, one of these days the hon. Gentleman will.

Mr. Rost: Will my right hon. Friend note that the area boards want not only privatisation but that 10 out of the 11 wish to be privatised as individual utilities? They believe that they can compete against one another, and one or two have confirmed that they can produce electricity in their area more economically than they can buy it from the national grid.

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend is correct. The area board chairmen all said that they would like to have the right to generate in their areas. At the moment, with the exception of one power station in Hereford, none of the area boards has any generating capacity. They would like such a right to be among the rights that they will acquire when they are privatised.

Fuel Disconnections

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to require the fuel industries to satisfy themselves about the state of health of consumers who are in arrears with payments, before proceeding to disconnection; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Peter Morrison): The gas and electricity industries operate a

voluntary code of practice on paying electricity and gas bills. Under this code, if the sick or disabled inform the industries of their circumstances, the industries undertake to try to reach an agreement on payment arrangements which would avoid the need for disconnnection.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister accept that the position is still far from satisfactory? The number of disconnections in the gas industry in the first six months of this year, compared with last year, increased by 40 per cent. There are currently about 1,200 deaths each year from hypothermia, so, with the winter coming, we must establish a system whereby all vulnerable customers are recorded at the local billing and registration points. If they are behind with their payments, they can be visited and, in every possible case, disconnection avoided. Thus, the numbers of disconnections would be substantially reduced.

Mr. Morrison: Like the hon. Gentleman, I am concerned that the number of gas disconnections has been increasing. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that the National Gas Consumers' Council is looking into this matter, and I discussed with it the manner in which it should do so. With regard to the code of practice, it is important that the points that the hon. Gentleman made in his supplementary question are covered. I believe that, by and large, that is precisely the case.

Sir Dudley Smith: I commend to my hon. Friend the East Midlands electricity authority, which covers my constituency, which bends over backwards in its efforts to avoid having to cut anybody off. It is very humane in its approach. Perhaps other authorities might copy its example.

Mr. Morrison: Perhaps my hon. Friend is not aware that only two weeks ago I was in part of the East Midlands electricity authority's area and observed what it was doing. The number of disconnections in the electricity industry is on a downward trend. There is an undertaking that no pensioner household will be cut off before the end of March.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not clear that the Government's criterion is that those organisations have to make a commercial profit? Is it not clear, therefore, that the Government are concerned more with profit than with the interests of the people? That is an absolute disgrace. It is about time that the people of this country recognised that the Government are concerned only with private interests and not with the people as a whole.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to hear that I do not agree with what he has said. Somebody has to pay for the fuel consumed, whether it is gas or electricity. The Government have a number of projects, incuding the homes insulation scheme, which help those least able to help themselves. However, as I said, somebody has to pay for the fuel consumed.

Alternative Energy Sources

6. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Council of Ministers about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I expect alternative sources of energy to be discussed at the Council of Energy Ministers planned for 21 March 1988 under German presidency.

Mr. Knox: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the balance between United Kingdom national research and European Community research is about right at present, or does he think that more should be undertaken on a Community basis?

Mr. Spicer: Over a period of years we have done reasonably well from the EEC on the matter of renewables. Our present renewable programme is valued at about £77 million, of which the Commission pays £5 million. As my hon. Friend probably knows, we have decided to increase our expenditure on renewables next year.

Mr. Chapman: As Government funds available for research into alternative forms of energy have more than quadrupled in the past few years, will my hon. Friend assure the House that at the meeting next March the question of duplication of research into alternative forms of energy will be avoided and that it ought to be part of a co-ordinated European programme to ensure that the extra money is being used in the most cost-effective way?

Mr. Spicer: Part of the agreement that Ministers reached last month was that there would be a common form of information and an improved and enhanced data base, which would overcome some of the worries of duplication that my hon. Friend has rightly stressed.

Electricity Charges

7. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent estimates he has made of the impact upon *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* low-income families and *(c)* domestic users generally, of increased electricity charges.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There has been no overall increase in electricity tariffs since April 1985, nor will there be any increase this winter. It will be for the Electricity Council to determine the effects on tariffs from next April of the new financial targets that we set for the industry.

Mr. Madden: Why are the old and the cold being asked next year and the year after to pay big increases which are wholly unnecessary and unjustified and will simply give City slickers a big profit when electricity is privatised? Does the Minister understand that it will not wash for Ministers to make comparisons between United Kingdom and Common Market electricity prices, when pensions in the Common Market are substantially higher than here? Does he further understand that it is deeply shameful for pensioners and low-income families to be ripped off in that way by Ministers whose entire lives are cosseted and who are protected against the cold at a time when there is great anxiety about the plight of pensioners and low-income families?

Mr. Spicer: The precise increases will depend upon what further success the industry has in reducing costs. We expect the average householder's expenditure to increase by 40p a week and the average pensioner's expenditure by 30p or 35p a week. I should stress that any increase next April will be the first effective increase since April 1985. Since that time single pensions have increased by £5·25 a week and are due to rise by a further £1·65 a week next April.

Mr. Baldry: Does my hon. Friend agree that it does not lie in the mouth of any Labour Member to express concern

about rising prices when the previous Labour Government presided over record increases in inflation and record increases in prices, to the detriment of the poor and the pensioners?

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend is correct. Under Labour, electricity tariffs rose by 30 per cent. in real terms; under us, electricity tariffs have fallen by 15 per cent. in real terms.

Miss Mowlam: Does the Minister intend after April next year to continue lower tariffs for industries such as ICI? If he does, will that continue to be to the detriment of, and cause increased handicap to, pensioners and people on low incomes?

Mr. Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has just said that the Opposition have rather changed their tune, having learnt what is happening—*[Interruption.]* Last week the Opposition were complaining about heavy increases in industrial costs, so their tune has changed. It is for the industry to determine exactly how the prices will be distributed. Our understanding is that the bulk and intensive discounts will remain.

Mr. Oppenheim: Can my hon. Friend tell us how much higher electricity prices would be now if we had given in to Scargill in 1984-85, as the Opposition urged us to do?

Mr. Spicer: I do not have the calculations with me, I am afraid, but that is a very good question. Prices would undoubtedly be much higher.

CEGB

8. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what subjects he expects to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet Lord Marshall regularly to discuss a range of issues concerning the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Darling: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman, will he say that the public liability insurance in respect of each nuclear plant of only £20 million is woefully inadequate? Will he tell him that, if the industry is privatised, it should make proper provision for this risk and not rely on the state to underwrite the risk, thereby giving a generous public subsidy to cover one of the major running costs of the industry?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. There is a great deal of additional expenditure—far in excess of £20 million—to ensure that accidents do not take place. We set high standards of design, construction and operation. We have a Nuclear Inspectorate, which is wholly independent and has the right to license, or refuse to license, plants. We set a great deal of store by safety. The £20 million cover is cover of last resort. The real effort goes into making sure that it is never necessary.

Mr. Jack: When my right hon. Friend next speaks to the chairman, will he remind him, as the provider of cheap off-peak electricity, that that electricity is being taken up in Lancashire by only 6·2 per cent. of the population and that further promotion of cheap-rate electricity would assist those low-income categories who will have to bear the extra charges to which reference has been made in earlier questions?

Mr. Parkinson: I shall make sure that I make that point and that the area boards press hard the opportunities for taking off-peak electricity at very keen prices. I shall make sure also, as I have already done, that my Department runs a campaign to make elderly people aware of the possibilities that are available for saving energy and for using energy efficiently at little cost to themselves.

Mr. Skinner: Before the Secretary of State meets the chairman, will he give a guarantee to the House that, unlike what happened with British Telecom—when both industries were fattened up before privatisation—if the electricity industry is privatised, the fattening-up process will not allow any Tory Member of Parliament or ex-Cabinet Minister to take on the job of non-executive or executive director of the privatised industry?

Mr. Parkinson: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but I cannot give him that undertaking.

Mr. Butler: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman, will he discuss the CEGB's ability to import coal freely? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, if the CEGB were able to import coal freely, it would be able to meet the real rate of return on assets which he requires of it and that there would be no need for a price increase next April?

Mr. Parkinson: I should tell my hon. Friend that we dealt with this question a little earlier. I made the point that although it is possible to buy coal more cheaply from overseas, I doubt whether one could buy the quantities necessary to replace the coal produced by British Coal. We are approaching the problem the other way round. We are trying to help British Coal to make itself a modern, efficient and competitive supplier. We think that our coal reserves are a very important asset, which should be used properly.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the members of the Central Electricity Generating Board are unanimously agreed that the transmission grid should not be separated from the generation of electricity? What does the right hon. Gentleman think of Lord Marshall's view that if the two were separated—whether in public or private ownership—the security of our electricity supply would be lowered and there would be a greater risk of blackouts?

Mr. Parkinson: It is true that the CEGB thinks that the grid should be retained by it and that we need an integrated system, whereby the CEGB controls the power stations and the grid. However, others in the industry do not think that that is essential. There is a strong body of opinion that argues that transmission should be separated from generation if one is to encourage private generators to come into transmission and competition in generation. We have not yet made a decision about those two arguments.

Insulation

9. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many homes occupied by (i) pensioners and (ii) others, have been given financial assistance for insulation since 1983.

Mr. Peter Morrison: From 1983 to 1986 some 1,540,000 grants were paid under the homes insulation scheme, of which 312,000 were 90 per cent. grants to low income

households, and some 267,000 low-income households were assisted by the community insulation projects. Many of the beneficiaries have been pensioners.

Mr. Watts: I thank my hon. Friend for that most encouraging reply. Does he envisage any changes in the homes insulation scheme or the community insulation project?

Mr. Morrison: On the homes insulation scheme, the Government have already announced that the 90 per cent. grant will be extended to all households claiming supplementary benefit or housing benefit. That will mean that more than half as many homes again will be eligible. On the community insulation projects, all low-income households claiming income support, housing benefit or family credit will be eligible for the service from next April. That will more than double the number of eligible households, from fewer than 3 million to about 7 million.

Mr. Meale: Will the Minister confirm that yesterday British Coal agreed to sell 1,400 homes in Nottinghamshire to an organisation called the Lancashire Housing Association, which has assets worth less than £500,000? British Coal has agreed to sell them at a figure of £9·2 million.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Are they insulated?

Mr. Meale: I am sorry that I took so long to get to the question, Mr. Speaker. These houses are very badly insulated. They house more than 2,500 pensioners, most of whom have given their lives to the coal industry, and now British Coal in Nottinghamshire is selling them and their homes down the river.

Mr. Morrison: If the households to which the hon. Gentleman referred have a case for help under the homes insulation scheme or the community insulation projects, I shall ensure that those householders have the right to find out what might be available for them. I am not in a position to say more than that.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend should be congratulated on the amount of insulation that has been installed, but what is the Government's thinking on windows? Windows allow the greatest heat loss from houses. Why is double glazing not an automatic feature of new house build? Why is it not put into the specifications, and what encouragement are the Government giving to the building industry to ensure that double glazing is installed to prevent heat loss and help with energy problems?

Mr. Morrison: On housing and building regulations, I assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has recently issued a directive that draws attention to the need for double glazing as well as many other ways of insulating people's houses.

Nuclear Power Plants (Working Practices)

12. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans he has to introduce legislation relating to working practices in nuclear power plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Existing legislation provides the basis for effective control of working practices in nuclear power plants. These practices are regulated by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate.

Mr. Davies: I am disappointed that the Minister has not seen fit to answer my question. As there is increasing evidence, especially from investigations into the results of the explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that levels of radioactivity formerly considered safe are no longer acceptable, will the Department thoroughly review its attitude and introduce far more stringent safety standards at British nuclear plants?

Mr. Spicer: I did answer the hon. Gentleman's question directly. The implication was that there were no plans for further legislation because existing legislation is adequate at present. In direct response to his question about risk levels, the industry complies with and works entirely within the limits implied in the National Radiological Protection Board's new risk assessments.

Dr. Michael Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that drawing the legislation more tightly might be counter-productive, in that tightly drawn legislation provides loopholes, whereas the present broad legislation indicates more widely what the Government intend?

Mr. Spicer: That is a fair point. Under the present legislation a great deal is left to the wisdom and discretion of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. The inspectorate, with the operator, ensures that the plant is safe. That is the important point. My hon. Friend is quite right. Very detailed legislation and rules might actually lead to a decline in safety standards.

Mr. Lofthouse: The Minister will be aware that in December last year the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate expressed great concern about safety standards at Sellafield and, indeed, suggested that if standards were not improved within 12 months it would have to consider closing the plant down. Now that that period has expired, has the Minister received any information from the inspectorate as to whether its recommendations have been carried out and whether it is satisfied with safety standards at Sellafield?

Mr. Spicer: That is not exactly how it was. The NII laid down certain conditions for Sellafield and a time scale within which they must be carried out. They have, indeed, been carried out—and within the time scale laid down.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: As it takes three years to train an inspector, and as the nuclear industry is being considerably expanded and may be affected by privatisation, does the Minister recognise the need to increase the inspectorate beyond the level currently proposed? Does he agree that he should be putting plans into action to ensure that more inspectors can be trained than is currently possible?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is a time lag between advertising for new inspectors and recruiting them. He will be aware, I am sure, that we have engaged in a substantial recruitment programme for the NII. I understand that the programme is going extremely well and it is planned to have 120 inspectors by the early part of next year. We are therefore well on target, including the provision of the training required.

Electricity Charges

11. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from *(a)* district or regional health authorities or *(b)* other centrally funded public service employers relating to the proposed increases in electricity charges.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None, Sir.

Mr. Wareing: Nevertheless, in view of the serious financial crisis facing the hospital service, which according to the *Daily Telegraph* is recognised by the vast majority of people in this country, does the Minister agree that the Department should either give concessions to health authorities or press the Secretary of State for Social Services to provide added budget allocations for health authorities to cover the quite unnecessary increases in electricity charges?

Mr. Spicer: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's view that the increases are unnecessary. On present assessments, electricity accounts for slightly less than 1 per cent. of health services costs. The expected increases will thus be less than one tenth of 1 per cent. How that increased cost —estimated at about £8 million in a total budget of £22 billion next year—is finally accommodated is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Dykes: As I understand it, the Government want to increase the rate of return by increasing the charges because the rate of return is under 2·5 per cent., which is only one quarter of the rate of return in private industry. Once that rate of return has been increased and attracts private investors into the electricity generating industry, competition will drive down prices. Obviously, there is in the Government's policy a subtle point that has escaped my attention, but does that make sense?

Mr. Spicer: That is pretty good. The only additional point is that it was the Labour Government who introduced the concept of a 5 per cent. rate of return on new investment in the public sector. The Government are trying to edge the rate of return in the electricity industry towards that 5 per cent.

Mr. John Garrett: The Minister has just confirmed an answer given by one of his colleagues in the DHSS in a written answer on 24 November, in which the hon. Lady said that the increased cost of electricity would add about £8 million to the annual costs of the National Health Service. The Prime Minister frequently makes great play about giving extra funds of far less than that to the Health Service. Given the underfunding of the National Health Service and the great public concern about that, is it not right that hospitals should have some exemption from these electricity charges?

Mr. Spicer: I do not know whether it is my place to engage in the question of the funding of the Health Service. If it is, I have to say that the Government have raised expenditure on the Health Service by almost 30 per cent. in real terms since we came to office. Let us get the context in which these things are being discussed. It is that expenditure of £22 billion is planned for next year, out of which this £8 million looks a rather small item.

THE ARTS

Scottish Arts Council

63. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council to discuss the level of funding for the arts in Scotland in 1988-89.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I met him informally recently. I have announced the Arts Council's grant in aid for 1988-89, and the council will now determine the share for Scotland.

Dr. Godman: Why is the Minister failing to invest in the arts in Glasgow in preparation for the City of Culture year, which will bring cultural prestige and tourist income not only to the city of Glasgow but to Scotland and to Great Britain as a whole?

Mr. Luce: I was pleased to have been able to choose Glasgow as the European City of Culture for 1990. One of the conditions for all the British cities that put in bids was that they should themselves be able to provide the resources for the City of Culture. I am glad that the city of Glasgow gave that undertaking as part of its bid. That was one of the many reasons why I chose Glasgow to undertake this task.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: When the Minister next meets the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council, will he impress upon him the importance of providing the maximum assistance to Crawford arts centre in St. Andrews, which is under threat because the university is unable to continue its previous level of support?

Mr. Luce: The hon. and learned Gentleman has written to me on this matter and I know about the importance of the work in the Crawford arts centre. I shall draw this to the attention of the chairman of the Scottish Arts Council because, as the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, it is for that council to determine whether it can give any help.

Lincolnshire and Humberside

64. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts to discuss the level of arts funding in Lincolnshire and Humberside in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman of Lincolnshire and Humberside Arts on 3 December during my visit to the region.

Mr. Morley: Is the Minister aware that a delay in letting Lincolnshire and Humberside arts association know what its budget is to be for the forthcoming year can cause tremendous problems in its planning strategy? Is he further aware that the whole calculation of the grant to the Lincolnshire and Humberside arts association means that it is discriminated against because the Arts Council formula is based on population? This area is one of small scattered communities, and small organisations such as the Humberside dance project are put at a disadvantage because of this sort of calculation and because of a delay in giving the figures.

Mr. Luce: When I visited the area two weeks ago I was impressed by the work of the regional arts association. It does an excellent job and has already drawn up a regional development plan for the arts, drawing together the strands of the local authorities and the arts bodies and those of the regional arts association itself. Against the background of three-year funding which is now to be introduced, the regional arts association for that area will feel that it can help the arts bodies to plan ahead, to diversify their sources of funding and to become more self-reliant. I am confident that against the background of a

53 per cent. increase in real terms of resources available to the association in the last eight years its case will be carefully considered by the Arts Council.

Cultural Co-operation

65. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to further European cultural co-operation.

Mr. Luce: I attended an informal meeting in Copenhagen last week of European Community Ministers responsible for cultural affairs. This provided a useful exchange of views on a variety of matters which are to be considered subsequently in more detail at official level. In September I attended the fifth conference of Council of Europe Ministers responsible for cultural affairs in Portugal, at which public and private funding of the arts was the major topic.

Mr. David Nicholson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the United Kingdom's bilateral co-operation with our EEC partners, including Greece, is in good repair? In view of the great budgetary pressures on the EEC, will he discourage grandiose and expensive schemes from Europe which would pre-empt large national contributions?

Mr. Luce: I can confirm that bilateral relations in respect of cultural affairs with all our European partners seem to be in good order. So far as the wider front of Community action is concerned, I agree with my hon. Friend's comments that we do not gain, either in this country or elsewhere, from vast grandiose schemes in the European Community. However, there are certain matters, for example, sponsorship and heritage conservation, where we can all gain from co-operation. I am glad that, as a result of the meeting last week, we agreed that we should take the pragmatic and practical approach to these matters.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: In encouraging European cultural co-operation, will the Minister give an assurance that he will not overlook the needs of minority cultures, particularly Gaelic in Scotland and Welsh in Wales?

Mr. Luce: These matters have come up from time to time and they featured last week. It is worth making the point that a resolution was passed during the British presidency a year ago supporting the idea that money should be made available for translations of works, particularly from minority communities. I hope that that will be a contribution.

Mr. Cormack: Has my right hon. Friend thought of getting all the European Ministers for Arts and Culture together to persuade the Finance Ministers that we in Britain have by far the best system of VAT when it comes to literature and reading matter?

Mr. Luce: That point is already well understood, but I take my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Tony Banks: Given that, in our imperialist past, we looted many of the art treasures of Europe and brought them here—I am thinking primarily of the Parthenon marbles — does the Minister think that it is now appropriate to initiate a general discussion between Culture Ministers in Europe to try to eliminate the legacy of bitterness brought about by that theft? Does he further agree that arrangements could perhaps be made for a civilised exchange of various national art treasures looted from one European country by another?

Mr. Luce: All I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that the oceans of the world would be extremely busy in all directions if we were to fulfil what he is advocating. It is not just a matter of objects of art in this country which, for one reason or another, originated from other countries. The same applies to many other parts of the world. If we start down that road, where shall we end?

Arts Council

66. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the base budgets of the Arts Council's major clients for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to determine the allocation of its grant-in-aid between individual arts bodies. The chairman will keep me informed of the council's decisions.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Minister confirm that, when the £5 million in this year's settlement which is earmarked for touring and incentive funding has been deducted, the Arts Council, when deciding how to distribute the money, will have a very small sum? Does he further agree that the impact of this for major clients, such as the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, will mean that they will probably get no more than a 2 per cent. increase this year, which will be a cut in real terms? Is that the measure of success of the so-called triumph of the Minister's budget settlement?

Mr. Luce: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman seems to be changing his tune a little from last time, when he appeared to welcome the settlement. I would have thought that an increase of 10 per cent. in the next financial year was a substantial increase. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures for the Arts Council, he will see that they will go up from nearly £139 million to £150 million—an increase of £11 million—in the coming financial year, of which £5 million will be taken for incentive funding and touring. If the hon. Gentleman cannot see that as a good settlement, I am not quite sure what he would see as a good one.

Mr. Jessel: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the main source of financial strength for the Arts Council's major clients is not only the splendid settlement that he obtained for grants to the Arts Council for the coming year, with its warmly welcomed increase of 10 per cent., but the growth in the British economy over the past eight years? It has meant that more people who want to see performances can pay for tickets.

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. Looking to the next three years, it is an extremely important point. The challenge that I am putting down to arts organisations all around the country is that, with three-year funding, they can look to their third year, not just the next year, and plan their long-term finances. The more professional they are, the more positive they are with regard to marketing policies, and the more successful they are in encouraging the public to go and enjoy their actitivies, the more income they will raise from other sources and the more

encouragement they will get from incentive funding. This is the direction in which we are going so that we may encourage greater self-reliance for the arts world.

CIVIL SERVICE

Job Satisfaction

90. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how he intends to make the work of civil servants more effective and rewarding.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): A great deal is already being done to make civil servants' work even more effective. A number of major reforms are directed towards this end, including development of the financial management initiative, departmental budgeting systems, a new staff appraisal system, and the scrutiny approach to reviewing activities.

Mr. Butler: I accept what my right hon. Friend has said. How will the taxpayer benefit from value from money gained from such reforms?

Mr. Luce: One supremely important example is the efficiency scrutinies that have been carried out over the past several years. They have led to recurring savings of £300 million a year. Many scrutinies are being carried out each year, and that improvement is increasing all the time in terms of value for money for the consumer.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: What is the Minister doing about performance-related pay? Does he accept that in the National Audit Office it has been of particular value in being able to get a rather wider range of pay, depending on the kind of work that is performed?

Mr. Luce: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. Although it is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is important to re-state the value that we attach to performance-related pay. As the right hon. Gentleman may know, for the first time we are introducing performance-related discretionary awards for senior grades 2 and 3. Performance bonuses are already being allocated from grade 2 down to grade 7. The three-year experiment will be completed at the end of this financial year. We shall have to decide how to proceed from there. The principle of performance-related pay is now well accepted within the Civil Service.

Mr. Stokes: I realise the steps that have been taken by my right hon. Friend under his great stewardship. Does he agree that one of the best ways of encouraging individual performance is to give each person an individual task and objective and then to praise and reward him when he has done them well?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Of course, we have now introduced the staff appraisal system, which enables individuals all the way through the bulk of the Civil Service to determine in an open way with their senior managers their objectives and what is expected of them and then to appraise their overall achievements. The principle of giving some discretionary award to those who have an outstanding contribution to make and whose performance has been outstanding is the right principle to encourage.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister agree that the work of the Crown Suppliers is effective, rewarding and certainly provides value for money? Does he agree also that morale is low at present because of the intention of the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), to try to privatise the agency for reasons relating to political dogma? Will he inquire into the matter, ask for the views of the head of the Home Civil Service, Sir Robert Armstrong, and, after that, have a quiet word with his hon. Friend?

Mr. Luce: I am most grateful for the hon. Gentleman's advice, which I shall consider, but I am not sure whether I shall react to it in that way. I agree that the Crown Suppliers do an excellent job. We are concerned to ensure that the service is managed in such a way that we get the best possible value for money for the taxpayer from the management of that service, and we are concerned at all times with the quality of the service that it offers the public. There are different ways in which such management can take place. No doubt those matters are being examined in that context.

Management Development

91. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress is being made in the improvement of management development in the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Since 1984 we have set up a framework of management development programmes, which include staff at all levels from executive officer to grade 3, and good progress is being made.

Mr. Cran: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will he indicate the Government's priorities in providing management development courses for staff at appropriate grades within the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is right. Training in the Civil Service is a matter of the highest importance if we are to meet the requirements of good value for money, the highest possible standards of professionalism—which we have — and good quality service to the public. The courses, including courses at a very senior level, range from the new top management programme—a six-week course — to the senior management development programme, and the management development programme itself, for more junior staff. All those courses, and many others, are designed to ensure that we have the highest possible standards within our service.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Minister give an assurance that no one involved in the management stucture of civil servants will be involved in training people so that they can be beaten until they beg for mercy? Will there be any way in which anyone in the Civil Service at management level will be able to establish whether a chief constable is sane?

Mr. Luce: My responsibilities are for the Civil Service, and I propose to maintain my responsibility for that and go no wider.

Mr. Cormack: As gamekeepers undoubtedly make the best poachers, would it not be a good idea if we could ballot the Civil Servants in the House, so that a given number of hon. Members could use the services of an expert civil servant for a year, to goad Ministers?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend is in a very innovative mood today, and I owe it to him to consider carefully what he has said.

Mr. John Garrett: Has the Minister read the address by Sir Robert Armstrong to the conference of the Royal Institute of Public Administration last week, saying how unhappy he was with the level of morale in the Civil Service? What point is there in spending money on management development when Ministers so often villify the Civil Service and take as their main aim its reduction in numbers?

Mr. Luce: It is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that Ministers villify the Civil Service. The fact that there has been a reduction in the numbers of civil servants by about 18 per cent. is not a criticism by Ministers of the Civil Service, but follows from a requirement that we rightly set ourselves in 1979, when we said that the Civil Service was too large and that we needed to reduce Government functions. Side by side with increased efficiency in the Civil Service we said that numbers should be reduced. That is not a reflection on the calibre of the Civil Service, which is a slimmed-down and professional service.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is management development influenced by pay, and are the rates of pay for civil servants now the same as those in the private sector for equal work?

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are now introducing into the Civil Service a much more flexible pay scheme which takes into account the need to ensure adequate recruitment, retention and motivation of civil servants. To that end, we have a more flexible system which allows us to provide more for specialist groups who otherwise may leave the service. That flexible system is leading to better results.

THE ARTS

Touring Companies

67. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what steps he is taking to encourage touring companies to perform more in the regions.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I have included a contribution towards the cost of additional regional touring in the Arts Council's grant-in-aid for 1988-89 and the two succeeding years.

Mr. Bowis: I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement. Will he underline the fact that many of the quality touring companies are based in the regions and provinces as well as London? Will he request that, when such companies tour the country, they contact local education authorities to ensure that they can contribute to the education of the area in which they perform?

Mr. Luce: I agree that touring must not be seen as a one-way business out of London. Rather, it should be regarded as a two-way business. Excellence in the arts in parts of the country other than London should be available to the regions and London. That is the purpose of the proposals for more touring that are being developed by the Arts Council. My hon. Friend knows that I have set aside more money for touring to ensure that excellence in the arts is available to as many people as possible in as many parts of the country as possible.

Glasgow

69. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what further support he intends to give towards Glasgow as City of Culture in 1990.

Mr. Luce: The city authorities have undertaken to provide enough money themselves to finance a substantial and varied programme of events.

Mr. Buchan: When the Minister says that Glasgow has been given City of Culture status on condition that no Government money is forthcoming, will he bear in mind that, in 1989, Paris will be spending considerably more than he will allow in Glasgow and that it will not be rate capped? Will he do one thing which will not cost him money—persuade his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to allow the city borrowing powers so that it can go ahead with the concert hall which is so much needed?

Mr. Luce: I am aware of the anxiety that has been expressed about the plans for the concert hall and I realise that recent proposals have come to nothing so far. I know that my right hon. and learned Friend is sympathetic to the problem and that he is waiting for the alternative proposals which might be put forward with a view possibly to constructing a concert hall. As for the city of Glasgow, I repeat that the condition upon which I accepted nominations from cities to qualify as European City of Culture was that they should provide their own resources. I admired Glasgow for saying that it would do that, and it has achieved that aim.

Retail Price Index (Miscalculation)

3.32 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the recently announced miscalculation in the compilation of the retail price index as a result of computer error.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): I regret that, in 1985, a mistake was made in one of the programmes for computerising the monthly compilation of the retail prices index. As a result, both the level of the index and the year-on-year inflation rate have in most months from February 1986 to October 1987 been understated, on average by about one tenth of 1 per cent.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled hopes to make a statement to the House later this week on the action to be taken in line with the principle that the Exchequer should not benefit from the effects on social security expenditure.

The computer programme error has now been put right, and I believe our calculation system to be wholly correct. I am however, asking the head of Government statistical service to review it.

Mr. Meacher: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that this new system of calculation is the direct result of the cost-cutting Rayner review of the Government's statistical service in 1982-83, which was designed to cut the number of statisticians by one third from 1,430 in May 1979 to 960 in April 1984? What is the point of installing computers if the number or calibre of statisticians employed to use them is cut so much that fundamental errors such as this are made? Does this not show that the Government's cost cutting, so far from improving efficiency, is often a false economy?

Why, when the right hon. Gentleman's officials round the figures, do they alway seem to round them down rather than up, knowing that millions of pensioners and others on benefit will be deprived of the full increase in line with the cost of living, which is their legal right?

The Secretary of State has said that pensioners and the severely disabled will be compensated. I should like to know whether full compensation will be paid to them in a lump sum bonus before Christmas. Why will this compensation not extend to all other persons in receipt of other benefits that the Government are under a statutory obligation fully to uprate in line with inflation — especially widows, the unemployed, the sick, the war and industrial disabled and those receiving maternity allowance, attendance allowance, invalid care allowance and mobility allowance, including their dependants?

As tax allowances and index-linked savings have also been under-calculated, are not the Government obliged under the statutory indexation provisions and the Rooker-Wise amendment to recompense others who have lost out, such as those with national savings and occupational pensioners? Will they all be contacted and repaid?

Finally, the Secretary of State has said that supplementary pensioners whose benefit is not statutorily index-linked will be compensated. We welcome that statement, and believe that that principle is right. If pensioners on supplementary benefit are compensated, however, why should not others on supplementary benefit, whose need is just as great, be compensated as well? As there are no lengths to which the Government will not go to claw back money from those whom they allege have been overpaid, surely they must now be even-handed in repaying all whom they have short-changed?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman has it entirely wrong; and not untypically. First, the miscalculation has nothing to do with staff cuts. His assertion that it has is entirely wrong. It is the result of a simple human error, which we regret, but it does not stem from staff cuts. There was a computer programme error. If I may put it this way, there was a computer programme designed for Socialist inflation. In other words, the programme missed out everything after the decimal point. That might have been all right when inflation was running at 20 per cent.—it might not have mattered then—but now that it is down to 4 per cent. it is obvious that such a fault will have an effect.

It seems that the hon. Gentleman insists on refighting all the social security battles of four years ago. He should remember that the greatest clawback fidddle was perpetrated by the last Labour Government, who changed the basis of the uprating from historic to forecast. Pensioners lost £1 billion, and they never got it back.

I repeat that the Exchequer will not gain from the social security underpayment. My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled, who is seated on the Treasury Bench, will be making a statement on this issue later in the week. The average retirement pensioner has lost so far about £2, which is about 5p per week. For the financial year 1987-88, he will lose £2·60. For the financial year 1988-89, he will lose £5·20 if we do nothing about the miscalculation. However, we do intend to do something about it, and we shall be making special extra payments to national insurance retirement pensioners, supplementary pensioners and the severely disabled. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to await the statement of my hon. Friend the Minister of State on the way in which the special extra payments are to be made.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Is my right hon. Friend aware that most people will welcome the prompt way in which the Government have announced that the miscalculation will be rectified? It is right that pensioners should be recompensed for any marginal error that has been made, but does he agree that the position is rather different from that of many social security beneficiaries who move in and out of entitlement? Does he agree also that it would be wrong if the miscalculation were to be used as an opportunity further to extend the payments for which Parliament has provided? Does he not think that it is rich to hear what we have from the Opposition, because, if anyone short-changed recipients of social security benefit and pensioners, it was they during periods of high inflation?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: no one stole more from pensioners than the Labour Government, and the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) knows it. We are seeking to put the mistake right as soon as possible. The point that my hon. Friend makes about people moving in and out of benefit is right. People will believe it is entirely sensible that we should seek to recompense pensioners.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): It appears that the error took place some two and a half years ago,

in 1985. What changes has the Secretary of State made to arrangements for checking computer programmes in future so that they do not go so long again without checking? He said that the Treasury will not benefit from the error. Is the import of what he said in response to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that some citizens will still lose because of the error?

Mr. Fowler: I shall have to ask the hon. Gentleman to wait for the social security statement. I have made it clear that we will seek to make special payments to the pledged beneficiaries; those include the people to whom I have referred. The error itself came to light as part of one of our regular checks. I believe that the system is correct now, but, as I said, a review is being made to check just that.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): If, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) suggests, my right hon. Friend was part of a conspiracy to defraud the poor, why is it that my right hon. Friend, the moment he discovered the error, confessed it publicly and has made a statement in the House today?

Mr. Fowler: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. We are by this time used to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher); he normally manages to blow any opportunity that is given to him.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can the Secretary of State explain why this error went unnoticed for 21 months? It seems an extraordinary length of time. In anticipation of the DHSS statement, can he make a straightforward statement now that no one will lose because of the mistake? The Government are dealing with the poorest of the poor. If he cannot make that statement, it means that, because of their incompetence, the Government are about to chisel some of the poorest in the country.

Mr. Fowler: I will not try to pre-empt the statement that my hon. Friend will make. What I have said is that the Exchequer will not gain from the social security underpayment. That is a firm pledge by the Government. I have also said that special extra payments will be made to national insurance retirement pensioners, supplementary pensioners and the severely disabled, but for the rest the hon. Gentleman must wait for the statement.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the public would much rather have a 0·09 per cent. inflation error from this Government than the 26 per cent. inflation rate they had under the Labour Government? If my right hon. Friend discovers, in looking for the source of the error, that the programme was written to anticipate the return of a Labour Government and to concentrate on the big figures rather than the decimal points, will he instruct the programmers that such an eventuality is unlikely?

Mr. Fowler: That I confirm. My announcement on Friday was that inflation had come down to just over 4 per cent. and could well come down further. We are comparing that with an inflation rate in the Labour Government's term of office of over 20 per cent. Nothing did more damage than that to pensioners' standards of living.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Although the Secretary of State is attempting to minimise the error, I think that the House recognises that several million pounds are involved. May I remind the Minister that when people default payment of income tax, interest is charged? I wonder, therefore, whether calculations and attempts will be made by the Minister to ensure that the money goes back to the people who are entitled to it? While I am on this point, I want to inquire about another group which has not been mentioned so far—students and student grants. Students are on miserable rates of pay. Will they be included in the calculations for improvements?

Mr. Fowler: I do not think that the RPI has anything to do with students' grants. I have announced clearly, I hope, that the Exchequer will not gain from social security underpayment. I have also drawn, as is only fair, the distinction made by my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) between pensioners and those moving in and out of benefit. The Government do not draw back from that distinction.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members will think that he has come forward very quickly to admit the error? That is a good thing for a Minster to do. Does he also accept that many of us who have been told that computers are infallible have now learnt that they can make human mistakes? Does that mean that in future we do not have to accept that computers are infallible and that they are almost as bad as human beings?

Mr. Fowler: What one gets out of a computer obviously depends on what one puts in. If the programme has been written incorrectly, incorrect information will obviously come from the computer. That is precisely what happened. I accept what my hon. Friend has said.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question. I remind the House that there will be a further opportunity to question Ministers later in the week. I have noted carefully those hon. Members who have been rising and who have not been called.

Points of Order

3.46 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to draw your attention to the composition of the Standing Committee to consider the Health and Medicines Bill. The Committee has 18 members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg) from the Opposition Front Bench and my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) from the Labour Back Benches. They will offer the Committee a great deal of expertise. Unfortunately, there is no Scottish Office Minister among the 18 Committee members. Indeed, there is no Scottish Conservative Member of Parliament on the Committee.

As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, the Health and Medicines Bill contains a great deal of controversial matter. It introduces charges and affects in a number of ways the structure of the Health Service and how it operates. Normally, we have separate Scottish legislation on the Health Service because there is a distinct tradition and a very different structure in primary health care and hospitals in Scotland. It is very important that there is a Minister in the Standing Committee to deal with the Scottish dimension. Can you, Mr. Speaker, offer any remedy in the interests of proper scrutiny of legislation and in the interests of Parliament?

I notice that the Scottish Office Minister in charge of the Health Service announced in the press the other day that he was

"only too happy to . . . discuss the concerns expressed over the future of the NHS"

by the president of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. I very much welcome that. However, it is equally important — and even more important for the House — that the Minister appears in the Standing Committee to debate the issues affecting the future operation of the Health Service in Scotland. It is deplorable that he does not intend to do that. Is there any remedy or any way in which, you, Mr. Speaker, can help to safeguard the parliamentary processes in those circumstances?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The remedy is for the hon. Gentleman to take the matter up with the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. I have no role in the matter, as the hon. Gentleman well knows.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is the proper action for the hon. Gentleman to take.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may remember on Thursday that you were good enough to call me during business *questions when I referred to an early-day* motion that I have tabled asking for a proportion of the profits from the Refreshment Department to be donated to the Ethiopian famine appeal. In reply, the Leader of the House suggested that that was a matter for the House of Commons Commission. I understand, Mr. Speaker, that you are the head of the House of Commons Commission. I would therefore be very grateful for your advice on how I can attempt to raise the matter with you. Would it be possible for some resolution to be put before the House so that a Division can be secured on the matter? If not, I can see no way in which I can raise this matter effectively with you and the House of Commons Commission.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that I replied to his letter and made a suggestion. It is a matter for the Commission, but I think it unlikely that the Commission will meet again before Christmas. I hope that his suggestion can be resolved on the lines that I suggested to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have dealt with that.

Mr. Maxton *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot say more.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I have put together four statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

EDUCATION (MANDATORY AWARDS)

That the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1261) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

SCHOOL GOVERNMENT

That the Education (School Government) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1359) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

TEACHERS' PAY AND CONDITIONS

That the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1433) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY (FEES)

That the draft Department of Trade and Industry (Fees) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Question agreed to.

Unemployment

3.50 pm

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the continuing level of unemployment in the United Kingdom and its devastating effect on individuals and communities in the North, Scotland, Wales, Merseyside, inner London, the Midlands and many other areas; believes that temporary schemes provide no permanent solution but instead pose an increasing threat of conscription into enforced cheap labour; further notes that recent events in Britain and around the world threaten further increases in unemployment and demonstrate the fundamental instability of the casino economies with their continuing cycles of boom and slump which cannot be fundamentally solved by adjustment in exchange rates, interest rates, privatisations or market forces; therefore calls for the adoption of socialist policies which place human need before profit, such as a massive expansion of socially useful jobs and services and a major reduction in working time, including a 35 hour week, longer holidays, earlier retirement and similar measures; and believes that this can only be achieved by public investment and ownership subject to democratic control, thus enabling the majority of people in communities and in regions, in workplaces and in national enterprises to plan a society of full employment.

I am grateful for this opportunity, because I believe that the topic of unemployment has begun to be seen as something of a bore by the Government, and perhaps by some of their supporters. There is a danger that the view will begin to get around that the present disgraceful levels of unemployment are a permanent, God-given state of affairs. There is also a danger that unemployment will be seen and presented, especially by the Government and their supporters, as a local difficulty in one or two areas that can be massaged and marginally helped through certain schemes.

Although my own region in the north, to which I shall make several references, has the highest unemployment in Great Britain, I recognise that unemployment is not a local problem. Throughout the country there are similar problems, in some cases nearly as bad as those in the north.

It is interesting to read the document produced by the Library, last updated on 19 November, which lists unemployment by constituency in a league table. I note, for instance, that, according to the latest calculations, the highest unemployment in any British constituency is not in the north, the north-west or inner London, but in Birmingham, Small Heath. Another Birmingham constituency, Ladywood, has a fifth highest unemployment level. A number of Glasgow constituencies appear on the list: Maryhill, Central, Provan and Springburn. They come eighth, ninth, 10th and 11th, respectively. Sheffield, Central comes sixth.

Even London, which some regard as part of the prosperous south — the area that is, according to the Government, flowing with milk and honey — is well up in the first 30, with constituencies such as Bethnal Green and Stepney, Islington, North, Bow and Poplar, Vauxhall, Hackney, South and Shoreditch and Hackney, North and Stoke Newington. Inner London as a whole, which has a population of approximately 2·5 million — roughly the same as that of the entire northern region — had 175,000 unemployed at the last count. That is a rate of 14·4 per cent., nearly as high as the current northern rate.

Some will say that that appalling position is now being ameliorated by the creation of some new jobs. Occasionally, there are announcements of new inward investment, even in regions as badly hit as mine. However, even today's announcement of new jobs from Nissan, some of which had already been announced as part of the phase 2 go-ahead given last year — I comment on that because I am sure that the Minister will; and, of course, every new job is more than welcome, and desperately needed — will bring the number of new jobs in my borough since 1980 to a total of slightly below 6,000. That compares with confirmed redundancies for the same period, according to the Department of Employment figures, of 22,938. Despite the inward investment, such as it is, and despite whatever new jobs have been created, there is a net loss of jobs in the borough of Sunderland of 16,000. That shows the scale of the problem with which we are faced.

In the Tyne and Wear area, of which Sunderland is a part, since 1979, when the Government were elected, until August 1987, the total number of confirmed redundancies was 98,784. With the recent closure that was announced at Huwoods, which made mining machinery, and the shipyard redundancies on the Tyne that have been announced, there will have been over 100,000 job losses. There is no sign that the problem is going away, and I am sure that the same difficulties prevail in many other parts of Britain.

The notion that the Government are trying to perpetrate — that we have a strengthening enterprise culture that relies on the private sector to provide jobs where the public sector has allegedly failed — is a myth. I could prove that with regard to my area, and I am sure that many other examples could be given from other parts of the country.

Our shipbuilding industry — the merchant building part of which is in public ownership — has contracted dreadfully, but at least there is some merchant shipbuilding left. The way in which the mining industry has contracted is appalling, but at least some of it is still left.

In my constituency, the failures of private enterprise are littered all around us. One of the major shipbuilding yards left in Britain, the Pallion yard, would not be there now were it not for my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who, in a previous incarnation in 1975, faced with the collapse of Court Line Ltd. — a private enterprise company that had been milking its shipbuilding, repairing and marine engine interests to prop up a holiday company — took that yard and other shipbuilding facilities into public ownership. That is the only reason why Pallion is still there now.

Plessey, which is a massive multinational company, is pulling out of Sunderland, killing off 3,500 jobs; that is the act of a ruthless multinational company. In the past couple of years a major private sector firm, Camrex Ltd., which had been in the area for 100 years and was a marine company, was bought out by a multinational company, Ruberoid plc, which then discovered that Canadian Pacific Ltd. had an insurance claim against Camrex, and deliberately bankrupted it, thus causing a massive loss of jobs to avoid a fairly dubious insurance claim.

Joplings foundry, which was another historic company in my constituency, was bought two years ago by an entrepreneur in the mould that Conservative Members praise to the hilt as an example of the new, dynamic enterprise culture, Mr. Andrew Cook. He said: "I will buy this foundry and I can guarantee jobs and work." Within

[Mr. Bob Clay]

days he closed it and offered employees work in another of his factories in Leeds. Within weeks of some of them going to Leeds, they were told that they were being sacked.

Any empirical analysis of the history of private enterprise in my area, and in many others, shows that one cannot have faith in the private sector and that, inadequate though it is in many ways, it is only public enterprise that has maintained jobs in the area.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Surely there is empirical evidence that at least 13 Japanese companies have moved into the north-east region that unemployment in the northern region has dropped by 25,000 over the past year and that self-employment has doubled over the past four years. Are those figures myths?

Mr. Clay: I will not be distracted and tempted into that sort of statistical debate. The hon. Gentleman represents a region that still has a total unemployment rate of 17 per cent. with nearly 200,000 people unemployed. I find it incredible that he has the audacity to claim that things are in some way looking up. I anticipated that such comments would be made by Conservative Members, so I have already said that one has only to look at the net job losses compared with the net gains to see that there is massive net loss overall.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): We all know that there has been a massive growth in self-employment. However, does my hon. Friend agree that the figures on the income of those who are self-employed show that the overwhelming bulk of them are on fantastically low incomes and that most have gone into self-employment through desperation rather than any great support for the enterprise economy that Conservative Members boast about?

Mr. Clay: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

Another myth is the notion that most people who are self-employed are prosperous and expanding business people. However, my hon. Friends and I deal with the reality. On advice, people have taken some grant, such as an enterprise allowance, and put their redundancy money into an effort that often collapes within a year. I do not have the figures to hand, but recent parliamentary questions have shown that a remarkable percentage of the businesses that are set up fail within 12 months and many more fail within two years. It may be a moving target: at any given time, certain people are self-employed but, as with many other forms of employment such as the temporary schemes, they do not feel secure for the future.

I want to argue strongly that, even on the Government's figures, allowing for the 17, 18 or 19 fiddles that have been used since 1979 and the inadequate temporary schemes, many of those who are seen as being permanently and properly in work are in a position that leaves much to be desired. Many of those people live in permanent fear of losing their job. The figures I have given for the Tyne and Wear area show 100,000 redundancies. However, I cannot believe that that is, 100,000 separate individuals. Concealed within those figures there will be people — I can give examples — who have been made redundant two or three times. Many people do not know from week to week whether their jobs will be safe. That is not a satisfactory way for people to live their lives.

Another major problem concealed within the statistics is the large number of people, the gastarbeiters, from the north of England who are working away from home. Labour Members will be familiar with those who come to their surgeries and advice sessions and say, "I have finally found a job. It is low paid and it is not satisfactory but at least it is a job. I have had to move 200 miles and I could not even put a deposit on a house in the south of England or London even if I sold my home in Sunderland." More and more people are having to work away from home and cannot afford to take their families with them. That is a growing problem and it is an indictment of the Conservative party, which claims to be the party of the family.

Many young people seek work in London because of the misery in the area from which they come. There is still an illusion that the streets of London are paved with gold. That is a component of the London housing crisis and shows how unemployment in one area feeds the social problems of another. The London borough of Camden contains the station of King's Cross, St. Pancras and Euston and is a significant borough in that many young people arrive there from the north, Merseyside, Scotland and other areas looking for work. That borough spent £17 million this year alone on providing bed-and-breakfast accommodation. That is £17 million from a total housing budget of £66 million and a total revenue budget of £138 million. That is an extraordinary amount to spend on bed-and-breakfast accommodation and is a classic example of how the London housing crisis is being fuelled by unemployment in other areas.

People in fear of losing their jobs because of bankruptcy, privatisation, takeover and rationalisation all form part of the figures the Government use to show how many people are in work. It is unreasonable and disgraceful that people should have to eke out their lives unable to make decisions about holidays, marriages, partnerships, buying homes or cars, buying consumer goods and furniture and supporting their children in higher education because the future of their employment is uncertain. Many working people in many areas are in that position.

Many of those who do not work not only face the problem of poverty but find that their health is affected. Recent surveys and statistical evidence have demonstrated that clearly. Richard Smith, the assistant editor of the *British Medical Journal*, detailed the link in a recent series of articles. He said:

> "The unemployed tend to be more anxious, depressed, unhappy, dissatisfied, neurotic and worried, and they have lower confidence and sleep worse than the employed."

K. A. Moser of City university studied the health of 6,000 unemployed men from 1971 to 1981. His figures show that, for every extra 100,000 unemployed men there will be 97 extra deaths among the men each year and 49 among their wives. If those calculations are correct, there have been many thousands of deaths as a result of unemployment since that time.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, I believe that she will speak about the temporary schemes. Therefore, I will not dwell on that for too long. However, I wish to comment on the notion that the community programme, youth training schemes and other Government schemes are some sort of solution. They are far from being a solution. I recall—I shall remember it

all my life—visiting Pallion Residents Enterprises in my constituency during the election campaign. It is a useful scheme. An old clothing factory has been rebuilt and it houses several training schemes, co-operatives and small businesses. I was asked questions by all of those who were working there on youth training schemes. It was the most extraordinary experience.

Those young people had no conception of what full-time permanent work meant. However much one tried to talk to them about policies that might some day, under a different Government, produce real long-term work for them, they showed no interest. They thought it was just pie-in-the-sky talk from politicians. They only wanted to ask questions about the different sorts of schemes. They asked what happened when one completed a scheme, how long it took to get on another scheme, what one scheme paid as opposed to another, how the different schemes could be improved, how they could move from YTS to the community programme and how that would affect their benefits. I was asked question after question and they were interested only in a world of schemes because that is what faces them as there are so few real jobs to be had.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: I will give way just this once.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman take on board the fact that, 10 days ago, I opened two YTS buildings in the north-east of England? The buildings had been operational for some time. In one, 100 per cent. job success has been achieved with those trained in the building industry. In the other, 92 per cent. have been successful elsewhere. To suggest that children in the north-east of England have no concept of full-time employment is to say that none has ever met a school teacher.

Mr. Clay: I made it clear that I was relating my experience which, sadly, is a familiar one. At least there is some improvement in that the hon. Gentleman is making such illustrations. This contrasts with his performance during the past few years, which involved continually taking newspapers from Buckinghamshire, where he used to live, to his constituency and telling people to apply for the jobs advertised in them.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: I said that I would give way once to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: No.

I remember the stories about some of the people who went on that fool's trail and were back within a few days. The hon. Gentleman did not publicise that as much as he publicised the advertisements.

Mr. Holt: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order or a point of disagreement?

Mr. Holt: It is a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not normal for an hon. Member who names another hon. Member in the way I have been named by the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) to give way?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr Holt) intervened. I think that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) disagreed with what he said. It is for the hon. Member for Langbaurgh to seek to take part in the debate later.

Mr. Clay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) once insulted Norman Lansbury a bus cleaner and a personal friend of mine, whom I had known for years when I lived in that constituency. The hon. Gentleman asked what a bus cleaner was doing as chair of a planning committee. Norman Lansbury did not have the opportunity to answer that point here, so the hon. Gentleman was lucky to be allowed one intervention.

Mr. Holt: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: One of the obscenities of such high unemployment is that many people are overworking. I am not one of those who always calls for work, as though work were a virtue, a necessity and a perfect way of life. I recognise that work literally kills — the health and safety statistics are appalling — and that many of the deaths and serious accidents are caused by the stress and fatigue resulting from overwork as well as many other factors. I recognise that a great deal of work is dirty, dangerous, boring, repetitive and tiresome. That is why it is absurd that many people are unemployed whereas many others are overworking. The simple and logical action is to redistribute the work.

As examples of overwork, I cite the disgraceful and tragic position of Northumbria ambulance drivers recently. Of the 78 drivers in the reorganised Sunderland and Washington division of the Northumbria ambulance service, two have died from heart disease in the past 18 months and four have left because of coronary-related diseases and are permanently sick. This happened because the ambulance drivers suffered appalling stress. That is a tragedy not only for them but for all those in the National Health Service who depend on the ambulances. Why do not the authorities shorten their hours? Why not have more ambulance men and a better service? It is estimated that, in the Northumbria ambulance service as a whole, there is a 22 per cent. rate of illness or vacancy related to stress.

What is the position with nurses, especially in some specialties? There are nurses who work for agencies contracted to the NHS as well as working their straight NHS contracts. There are nurses working double shifts. But, at the same time, there are people who would queue up for jobs as nurses if the wages were not so appalling, thanks to the Government. Part of the appalling crisis of the NHS is the obscenity of understaffing while those nurses who are working work hours that cannot conceivably be safe for them, let alone for their patients.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: I want to continue.

Mr. Janman: It is one small point.

Mr. Clay: The hon. Gentleman should try to catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker.

The problems illustrated in the NHS apply to many types of shiftwork and to much of the public services. I remember, having worked in public transport, the ludicrous hours worked, with people starting work one week at half past 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, driving through rush hour traffic in cities or rural areas, then

[Mr. Clay]

starting work another week at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, with their body clocks wrecked. This applies to many workers. It is ludicrous that in a modern society the people who work such shifts do not have their hours of work dramatically reduced.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose*——

Mr. Clay: That is why the present position in the coal industry is so important and why it is essential that Arthur Scargill succeeds in his campaign to be re-elected as president of the NUM. Essentially, he is fighting on that front and saying that it is ludicrous that miners should be asked to work longer shifts and a six-day week when, more than any other group, they should be talking about shorter shifts and a four-day week.

It is obscene that hon. Members on either side of the House — although, of course, it comes from Conservative Members—should pooh-pooh any of these suggestions when they have goodness knows how many months holiday a year. They do not even start until half past 2 in the afternoon, so they can go moonlighting in the morning, and work one of the shortest weeks in society. It is a central hypocrisy of society that the people who make the legislation can pay so little attention to the hours and conditions of others.

It is ironic that people in this country, which has the highest unemployment, work longer hours than any similar countries. Some interesting points about the length of time worked emerge from the International Labour Organisation statistics for the last year for which figures are available. The average working week of full-time employees in the United Kingdom was 42·8 hours in 1985, which includes overtime. The figures in other countries were: Canada 32·5 hours; United States 34·9 hours; Belgium 33·3 hours; and Spain—which, until recently, was regarded as one of the poorer countries of Europe —39·1 hours, nearly three hours less than in the United Kingdom. Even in West Germany, the allegedly hard-working industrious Germans put in an average week of 40·7 hours — more than two hours less than in the United Kingdom. In Australia it was 34·5 hours and in New Zealand 39·2 hours. There is not a significant country, whether the United States, or in Australasia, or western Europe, that compares with Britain.

One clear way to start to reduce unemployment in this country is to reduce working hours. It is a matter not just of reducing the working week but of providing longer holidays, earlier retirement on proper pay, and sabbaticals. Why can only a few people — usually the allegedly "well-educated", "professional" people — say that every five or even every 10 years they need a year out to think about things, to recharge their batteries, to go in a new direction and to reflect? Why should not those who work with their hands, get dirty, who risk their lives, go through the sweats—

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has already been speaking for half an hour in a short debate. Would it not be fair if he gave way to others?

Mr. Speaker: I have no authority to curtail speeches. However, this is a half-day debate and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind that many hon. Members, on both sides of the House, wish to take part.

Mr. Clay: Why should not all workers in our society have time off on pay — especially as we have high unemployment? A training programme that allowed people to take a year out on full pay at any time in their life to contemplate a different occupation or search for a new career would be a training programme that was worth looking at.

We can look to the European labour movement not only for examples of shorter hours but for examples of how to achieve them. As someone who was once naive enough to believe that the labour movement in West Germany was moderate, tame and employer-oriented, I was interested to learn that, as a result of a successful strike in 1984, IG Metall, the German steel and engineering worker's union managed to reduce its members' working week from 40 hours to 38½ hours and thus to create 100,000 jobs. Since then, the union has negotiated a 37-hour working week, which puts them well ahead of us. Nevertheless, it is preparing to launch another big offensive in the new year to achieve a 35-hour week. On the union's calculations, that will create another 100,000 jobs, which the union desperately needs.

One has only to look at recent press reports — for example, in *The Guardian* last Friday and in *The Observer* on Sunday — to discover the action that is being taken by German workers to protect jobs. The workers at a steel mill in Rheinhausen, which the Krupp company is attempting to close, are taking action. It is interesting to note that at Rheinhausen, in Duisburg, the steel complex of the Ruhr, steel jobs have been reduced from 58,000 to 40,000. The workers are saying, "That is enough." The steel industry in this country, and in many others, has been slashed to a much greater extent than that. Unfortunately, we have yet to see resistance such as the steelworkers in the Ruhr are putting up. *The Guardian* article states:

"Throughout the Ruhr, steelmen, supported by miners, teachers, postal workers and public service employees, blocked motorway access routes, occupied bridges across the Rhine, and set up road blocks, to demonstrate that the closure of the Krupp mill, with the loss of 6,000 jobs, would spell the beginning of the 'slow death of the Ruhr'.

In Rheinhausen, Duisberg, and in seven other cities, shops, pubs, and cafes remained closed, schoolchildren were given the day off, post deliveries were scrapped and policemen helped to guide demonstrators and onlookers through the road blocks in an unprecedented display of solidarity."

This comes from the moderate German working class.

"Mr. Frank Kwasny, a welder, said his trade union would not allow 'workers to be divided, as they were in Britain. We will stand together.' The Krupp management and political leaders have been somewhat taken aback by the unprecedented radicalism of the protesters, who earlier this week stormed the Villa Hügel, in Essen, the mansion that was once the home of the Krupp steel barons. About 60 protesters stormed into Hamburg stock exchange . . . throwing eggs and tomatoes, before traders repulsed them with a fire extinguisher, a spokesman said."

We have some lessons to learn from the German working class, and not for the first time. The Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund, the West German equivalent of the TUC, calculates in a very useful pamphlet called "Arbeit für Alle", which means work for everyone, that a 35-hour week throughout West Germany would create 1·4 million jobs. West Germany's working week is already two hours shorter than ours and its experience tells us about the number of jobs that could be created — not just by a shorter working week. If we had a shorter working week of 35 hours or thereabouts, reductions in hours for shift workers, earlier retirement on reasonable pay for those in

the most strenuous jobs and sabbaticals, we would reduce unemployment. That package of measures alone could reduce real unemployment by more than half.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Clay: No, I want to get on.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members are complaining that my hon. Friend is going on for too long. It is his debate, and if he wanted to, he could speak for the entire time allowed and hon. Members could do nothing about it. He is perfectly entitled to do that.

Mr. Speaker: That is absolutely correct, but I hope that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) will bear in mind that many of his own colleagues wish to participate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is a very good speech.

Mr. Clay: My speech would have been a few minutes shorter had there not been so many interventions, Mr. Speaker. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has referred to the number of hours worked in West Germany and to the possibility of even fewer hours being worked. Will he bear in mind that, although the West Germans work fewer hours than the British, West Germany has a balance of payments surplus of nearly $40 billion. The Labour party members who draw up the manifesto have not paid enough attention recently to reducing the number of hours worked, which would appeal to those in work and to those outside in the dole queue waiting for a job. I am pleased that my hon. Friend is drawing attention to that.

Mr. Clay: My hon. Friend has made the point that I was coming to far more eloquently than I could have done.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is not about the length of speeches.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Opposition Members have shown that they do not especially wish to speak. Perhaps you will take that into account when calling Conservative Members, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Clay.

Mr. Clay: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover referred to the extraordinary fact that, although the Germans work fewer hours, they have a massive balance of trade surplus. That was the point that I was coming to. I do not wish to dwell on it, It may be a subject for another debate and it has been discussed in the house before. It is extraordinary that, only a few weeks ago, some were arguing that popular capitalism and increased share ownership represented the answer to everything. They thought that the future looked rosy, but then came the crash that many people had expected. The slide in the dollar has made it more difficult for British companies to export. All shipbuilding prices around the world are quoted in dollars, with the result that there has been a loss of competitiveness of about 25 per cent. for what is left of British shipbuilding since black Monday. That has affected my constituency and others.

Interest rates, oil prices and the pound are going up and down. When the pound goes up, it is good news for some and bad for others; when it goes down, it is good news for some and bad for others. The more that process continues, the more it demonstrates the instability of the system, which makes it quite impossible for enterprise to plan and for people to be secure. The final irony is that, according to today's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*, that great successful sector the City of London is predicting the loss of 50,000 jobs in the City as the result of the stock exchange crash. That figure was cited in *The Daily Telegraph* today. How much longer will this go on? That is the reality of the enterprise culture.

Many other things could be done to reduce unemployment. It would be useful for regions such as mine to have development agencies to cut through the bureaucracy facing what little investment there is at the moment. It would be useful if civil servants were dispersed more fairly round the country. It would be useful to have more generous and sensible Government grants. On that point, I take the opportunity to ask the Minister to comment on a piece in the *Financial Times* on 1 December this year headed

"Britain plans to limit regional aid".

That will not be very helpful. The article says:

"The new discretionary policy will be much more to the liking of the Treasury."

I am sure that if it will be more to the Treasury's liking it will mean less opportunity to create jobs in regions such as mine. I ask the Minister to come clean about the predictions in the *Financial Times*.

There are many policies which could produce more jobs in this country, but they depend on not leaving things to the private sector and the casino economy of the City. For example, it would make absolute sense to deal with the problem of acid rain, about which the Opposition have campaigned for so long. In September 1986, *The Engineer* calculated that if three flue gas de-acidification plants were manufactured in the United Kingdom, 30,000 man years' work would be created over a decade. Depending how one does the sums, that means about 3,000 jobs over 10 years. But that extraordinary opportunity is going begging due to the Government's lack of will.

So much needs to be done in our localities. A Government who consign so many people to full-time leisure through unemployment should allow local authorities to provide facilities. I compliment the much-maligned local authority in Liverpool which has built new leisure centres and swimming pools as well as housing. Instead of providing jobs in hypermarkets, which are springing up everywhere and competing with one another to sell consumer goods, we should build leisure complexes, libraries, and so on, so that jobs are created in socially useful ways. Nurseries are also desperately needed. I recently attended the opening of a dial-a-ride service in my constituency. That is part of the community programme. Why are the drivers of minibuses, which provide such a marvellous service for the disabled, not regarded as doing real jobs because they are on the community programme? It is ridiculous to change the drivers every few years. Those jobs should be permanent employment for trained people.

[Mr. Clay]

Public transport could be extended in many ways to get over the ridiculous congestion on the roads and the waste of precious resources. We need more rapid transit systems —not the yuppie expressway specials being built in the London docklands and threatened in other places, but the type of system that we have in Tyne and Wear and for which people in Manchester and elsewhere are asking.

I make no apology for saying that I do not regard many of our traditional industries as sunset industries. With regard to shipbuilding, for instance, the shipping market analysts Detnorske Veritas recently calculated that 250 million tonnes would need to be built in the next decade to replace old and inefficient tonnage and that further expansion of world trade would probably require a further 150 million tonnes. That is 400 million tonnes in the next decade. If the Government would give British Shipbuilders enough assistance to obtain even 1 per cent. of that total, the remaining merchant ship yards in Britain would be employed beyond their present capacity and could be expanded. We also need new coal-fired power stations as the basis of a sane energy policy. I could give many more examples.

Before Conservative Members start asking the usual question, I will spend a couple of minutes explaining where the money is to come from. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has pointed out many times, when people start asking where the money is to come from, the real question is, "Where did the money go?" A Government who have allowed more than £70,000 million in capital to be transferred overseas since 1979 have a nerve asking the Opposition to explain themselves. I need not dwell on the wealth from North sea oil that has also been squandered. According to the July White Paper, which is available in the Library, in the last four years this country's net contribution to the Common Market has been £4,400 million. If we have that kind of money to spend on aid, we could do better than giving it to inefficient farmers. We should give it to the people of Ethiopia and Bangladesh and set up trading relationships with them which will benefit the British working class as well as those under-developed countries.

We live in an economic system in which the City of London can allegedly raise £5 billion for a private project to get people across the channel half an hour quicker. Why cannot the same amount be raised to build hospitals and schools and to create the work that we need? Whatever the various arguments about defence and weapons, whether nuclear or conventional, every million pounds spent on public transport, social services, teaching and other socially useful activities creates more jobs than if it is spent on conventional weapons, let alone nuclear weapons. Scrapping Trident is thus another way to create a great many jobs. We could then provide proper conversion programmes so that people at Swan Hunter and Barrow are not thrown out of work but have jobs which make full use of their skills in a socially useful way.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is interesting that the Government are prepared to hive off jobs in public enterprise but when it comes to defence, which they and their Back Benchers regard as so important, they retain public ownership. They have not decided to sell off the Army to Securicor——

Ms. Clare Short: Give them time!

Mr. Cryer: —because the Government know, as we know, that the best way to organise facilities is through public ownership.

Mr. Clay: Again, my hon. Friend made the point more effectively than I could. As every Opposition Member knows, at whatever level one pitches it, the amount given away in tax handouts year after year to the very rich and super-rich would go a long way to fund the expansion of work and a return to full employment.

Above all, we must ask ourselves the following question. On recent figures—there is little dispute about this—more than half the money sloshing around in the City of London casino comes in one way or another from pension funds — deferred wages and salaries deducted week by week and month by month from working people's pay. Why have those people no democratic say in what happens to their pension funds? The simplest way to institute widespread public ownership would be to give those people the right to say that their contributions should not be invested in South Africa or in Californian real estate, or in oil when the contributors are coal miners, but in activities that will create jobs and develop industry in this country and in useful projects abroad. That can be achieved only if there is the will to take control of those financial institutions and to give people the democratic right to plan the use of their own money.

Finally, while we are considering where the money is to come from, we must consider the cost of unemployment. The unemployment unit, a highly reputable and reliable organisation, has calculated the cost of keeping people out of work. For the three constituencies in the borough of Sunderland, the cost is £161 million per year — £48 million in Houghton and Washington, £62 million in Sunderland, North, and £51 million in Sunderland, South. That is the cost of keeping people unemployed in terms of lost taxation, lost insurance contributions and the cost of benefits paid. That total of £161 million is more than the net revenue spending of the borough of Sunderland in a year. We are paying more to keep people unemployed than we are spending on education, social services and all the other things that the council has to do. That is the clearest evidence of the obscenity of maintaining people unemployed and then having the audacity to ask where the money will come from to do something about the situation.

It is perfectly possible to return to full employment. It is a question of the will and the policies and it comes down to an old Socialist philosophy. Humankind can put men on the moon, can carry out heart and lung transplants and can at least play around with the notion of star wars, SDI, and go to such advanced frontiers of technology. Why not use that technology to organise human relationships in a way that will ensure that people do not die of overwork and underwork and to create a society of full employment?

Britain's unemployment is the most appalling indictment of the Government and the capitalist system they stand for. The clearest illustration of the need for Socialism is the obscene situation of a world in crisis, millions starving and a mountain of misery at the dole queues while others are dying and becoming sick from overwork. It would be simple to organise society if it were not for the class interests represented by Conservative Members. If that were done, all the things that I have mentioned would be a miserable memory of the past.

4.40 pm

The Minister for Employment (Mr. John Cope): The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) has done the House a service by using his good fortune in the ballot to express his concern, which the Government share, about unemployment. However, he has exposed both his own and his party's prescriptions for dealing with it and we think that they are gravely mistaken. The hon. Gentleman's speech was wide-ranging and I would not earn the thanks of the House if I followed up all the points that he raised.

Unemployment is now firmly established on a downward trend. By October, it had fallen for 16 months in succession and by almost 500,000 — the largest sustained fall on record — to its lowest level for nearly five years. In the year to October the United Kingdom's unemployment rate fell by more than that of any other major industrialised country. It is now lower than the rate in France or in Belgium, and since June unemployment has fallen in every region of the country. Over the last six months it has been falling at the record rate of over 50,000 per month. The reason for that is that jobs are being created.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): If the firm downward trend about which the Minister speaks continues, how long will it take to reach the unemployment total of 1979?

Mr. Cope: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we do not forecast unemployment and I do not propose to follow him down that road. If he does not like the unemployment figures, I shall give him the employment figures. Since March 1983 total jobs have increased by well over 1·3 million and that is more than in the whole of the rest of the European Community. This is the longest period of continuous employment growth in almost 30 years. What is more, this growth is gathering pace. The rate of increase in jobs has strengthened in each of the last five quarters. Last year alone the number of jobs grew by well over one third of a million. Those are real productive jobs created by customers, jobs that customers think are useful. Those are not Government-created jobs for which the hon. Gentleman's motion calls.

In his motion and in his speech the hon. Member for Sunderland, North spoke about socially useful jobs. He seemed to think that keeping the peace and the defence of Britain were not socially useful jobs. I entirely reject that idea. Unlike most of their critics, the Government have always known that unemployment could only be tackled through the creation of new jobs in the wealth-creating sector of the economy. We also knew, and know now, that new jobs would be forthcoming only if the economic climate favoured rather than penalised the process of wealth creation. To that end we have consistently pursued policies to stimulate and encourage enterprise. By these methods we can give more positive help in job finding to the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend talks about finding jobs. Does he agree that it was on my initiative that the joblink scheme was started? As a consequence, many people throughout Britain found employment. More important, from that little acorn the Government have now taken the scheme on board on a more permanent and proper basis. They have taken up the advertising of jobs on television. Oracle television is shortly to take this up first of all in the Tyne-Tees area and then nationwide.

Mr. Cope: The scheme to which my hon. Friend refers was good and very helpful.

We have brought inflation down to levels not seen since the 1960s, have brought public spending firmly under control, and have reduced public borrowing to historically low levels. At the same time we have been able to improve incentives through the reduction and simplification of taxes. We have introduced a whole range of measures to promote the growth of small firms and of self-employment, which we welcome, because such small firms have created many of the new jobs.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): The Minister mentions the range of measures that the Government have introduced to help small firms. May I draw his attention to the case of Mrs. Eleanor Dalkin in my constituency, which is adjacent to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay)? She is a model of the kind of enterprise that your Government allege they are determined to create.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): They are not my Government.

Mr. Mullin: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I meant the Minister's Government. Mrs. Dalkin set up a factory in January and now employs 44 people. On a technicality she has been denied regional employment grant. In nine months she created employment for 44 people in a town where the unemployment rate is about 21 per cent. She was denied aid under the range of measures about which the Minister speaks.

Mr. Cope: I cannot respond precisely to the case that the hon. Gentleman mentions, but if he writes to me about the grant I shall certainly look into the matter. The lady that he mentions makes my point about the creation of jobs in small businesses. If she managed to create 44 jobs in nine months, she is doing very well. If she has been able to do it without a Government grant, so much the better.

The Government's policies have been successful and we have emerged from the world recession of the early 1980s into well over six years of continuous economic growth. In that time we have grown faster than any of our major European competitors, although, as the House knows, we previously languished at the bottom of the growth league during the 1960s and the 1970s. This year our growth is expected to outstrip that of all other major industrialised countries. Industrial production is at its highest ever level. Since 1980 manufacturing productivity has grown faster than that of any other major country. In the third quarter of this year it was nearly 7 per cent. higher than in the previous year.

Government policies and their effects have improved employment. The success of our policies and the sustained fall in unemployment have made both possible and necessary the development of our policies. That is why we shall concentrate more on, for example, training the long-term unemployed in new skills. At the same time, it also becomes easier to make sure that benefit goes to those who qualify and not to those who do not.

The Government recognise that unemployed people often need special help to compete for the jobs that are increasingly becoming available. This is especially the case

[Mr. Cope]

with the long-term unemployed, who have to cope with a combination of disadvantages, such as deteriorating skills, loss of motivation in looking for work and sometimes resistance from employers. That is why my Department has developed a comprehensive range of measures specifically aimed at the long-term unemployed. This year, my Department and the Manpower Services Commission are spending over £3 billion and providing more than a million opportunities on over 30 employment training and enterprise measures. This represents a comprehensive package of measures offering positive and practical help towards employment.

Of that sum, about £1·5 billion is being spent on schemes to help the long-term unemployed. Of this, we are spending, for example, £1 billion this year on the community programme, which has provided work experience for more than a million long-term unemployed people since its introduction in 1982. About 60 per cent. of the participants in the community programme go into a job under a year after leaving the programme. Under the restart programme, more than 2·3 million long-term unemployed people have been interviewed to assess the best means of helping them back on to the road to employment, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has announced today a development of the restart programme.

From next April, we shall issue a questionnaire to all those claimants invited for their six-monthly restart interviews. The questionnaire will have two purposes. First, it aims to enhance the restart programme for the very many people who are genuinely unemployed and available for work. Currently, restart interviewers have, in a very brief space of time, to establish a rapport with the claimant, find out something about his or her qualifications, training and recent job-seeking efforts, identify a suitable employment or training opportunity and, in addition, seek to persuade the claimant to take it. By giving the interviewer the head start of knowing something more before the interview about those whom he or she is seeing, this questionnaire should enable more time to be spent on identifying the best opportunity available. The second purpose of the questionnaire is to enable a check to be made to ensure that claimants continue to satisfy the fundamental condition for receipt of benefit —that they are available for work. This new procedure will be launched in a small number of offices in February next year, before its national introduction at the end of April.

Another way in which we help the long-term unemployed is through our network of more than a thousand job clubs which give their members help and facilities for intensive job-hunting. Some 135,000 people will be helped through job clubs this year and about 60 per cent. of all those leaving job clubs will go into jobs. We have also introduced the ambitious new job training scheme to help long-term unemployed people gain the skills and qualifications needed to compete on the labour market—a massive investment in reskilling Britain.

However, it is time to take these programmes a stage further. The task ahead is to help long-term unemployed people in a more coherent way and our priority must be to help them meet the challenge of the steadily improving labour market through the provision of worthwhile training. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 18 November that our present programmes for unemployed adults are to be brought together into a new training programme. From September next year, the new programme will offer up to 12 months' training to those who have been out of work for six months or more. By building on existing programmes, including the community programme and the new job training scheme, the new programme will be able to take us forward into the 1990s with a flexible and relevant range of training opportunities.

First and foremost, the new programme will be a training programme. It will include practical experience with employers and on projects. It will be tailored closely to the needs of individual praticipants as well as to those of the economy. The emphasis will be very much on practical training, ranging from basic working skills, including numeracy and literacy, to training at technician level. The new programme is all about quality training which will significantly improve the number of people moving on to permanent jobs when they leave.

Existing measures have helped to ensure that, in spite of all their difficulties, which we recognise, the long-term unemployed have shared fully in the benefits of an expanding labour market. In the year to October, the total number of people unemployed for more than a year fell by a record 169,000 to the lowest level for nearly four years. It is very pleasing to see that our hard work in helping the long-term unemployed is bearing fruit in this way. I am confident that this success will continue with the new programme we are introducing next year.

The fall in unemployment has also enabled us to see more clearly whether someone really qualifies for benefit and whether he or she is available for work. The House will know that the law on this subject has remained the same for very many years and it was last re-enacted by the Labour Government in 1975. When unemployment is high or rising, it is more difficult to detect cheating and to identify those who are not really looking for work, but now, particularly in the areas where the job market is strongest, we can do better. Until 1982, those on benefit had to register at jobcentres. Since then, a special form has been signed by claimants. At first, it was a simple declaration, but that was criticised, among others, by the Public Accounts Committee of this House and, as a result, a more elaborate questionnaire was introduced for new claimants to fill in. The House will wish to know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has today replied to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), giving details of changes in the procedure.

From 1 February next year, we are introducing a revised questionaire for all new claimants, asking for more information about the work that they are seeking and the steps that they are taking to find it. The new form seeks more information on such subjects as claimants' qualifications and experience and on the type of work being sought by them. We also intend to supplement the revised questionnaire as soon as possible after 1 February by providing new claimants, in areas of buoyant labour demand, with information about occupations in which jobs are immediately available. We see this as a particularly important means of bringing directly to the attention of more newly unemployed people the expanding job opportunities now available in many places.

Mr. Holt: Is my hon. Friend aware that recently, in the north-east of England, many people who were drawing benefit and working for private contractors have been fined? Will the Government consider fining those who cheat directly by being employees and those who cheat indirectly by acting as employers in this way?

Mr. Cope: We shall certainly consider that suggestion. I cannot tell my hon. Friend off the top of my head whether the matter has been considered before.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Cope: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. It would be difficult for employers to know whether someone was claiming unemployment benefit while they were employed.

Mr. Skinner: It is clear to Opposition Members that the Minister's announcement is another turn of the screw against people who do not have a job and are not likely to get one in the place where they live. As the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) put forward a novel suggestion about those who are supposedly moonlighting, why does the Minister not apply that to those Tory Members who have four, five or six directorships, work in the law courts in the morning and turn up for Parliament only when it suits them? Some of them come in for only half the time. If that suggestion is applied to people at the lower end of the income scale, why should it not also be applied to Tory Members?

Mr. Cope: The conduct of individual Members of Parliament is no longer my direct responsibility.

Ms. Short: Following the intervention made by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), I have been approached in my advice bureau by many people who have been driven down to the dole office by their employers to sign on because they are paying such low wages that people cannot survive on them. Mass fiddling is being pushed on to people by employers. I agree with the hon. Member for Langbaurgh. If people are to be penalised, such employers should be penalised too.

Mr. Cope: I should be interested in the hon. Lady's evidence of such fraud and cheating. I should be grateful for further particulars if she will supply them.

I have talked about improvements in unemployment generally. I also want to say something about Sunderland and the north-east. I originally came from the midlands. I now live near Bristol. As it happens, I have always had relations in the north-east. I have at least some idea of the economic and social strains that have been imposed on the hon. Gentleman's region by the decline, in real terms and in employment terms, of the great industries that have employed many people for over a century. I have also seen something of the efforts of successive Governments to help the region, even way back since the days of my noble Friend Lord Hailsham.

People talk in an oversimplified way of the differences between north and south. In fact, as we know, the situation is more patchy than that. The hon. Gentleman made that point. Of course, some regions are worse hit than others. Everybody recognises that fact and nobody is complacent about it. But we cannot help the north, however we define it, by holding back the south. We are helping the north-east. Financial asistance by our Department, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment exceeded £1 billion in the last financial year, 1986-87.

Let me talk about Sunderland in particular. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that unemployment in his constituency fell by nearly 1,300 in the past year. In the Sunderland travel-to-work area there was a fall of over 3,400. Of course, unemployment remains too high, but we have been encouraged by that fall, and there are positive signs that it can and will continue. As has already been said, we are encouraging enterprise in Sunderland. Three local enterprise agencies operate in Sunderland.

Mr. Clay: I give the Minister one example of how the figures have gone down. An employer in Sunderland advertised work in the *Sunderland Echo*. Twenty people applied for and were given work. After a week, the employer said, "I cannot actually pay you what I told you I would pay you at the beginning of the week. From now on, you go and sign on. If you do not sign on, I shall not continue to employ you." In other words, the employer said, "If you do not fiddle, I shall sack you."

I regret that I cannot write to the Minister about the matter because, for obvious reasons, none of the 20 employees is prepared to give his or her name. That is an illustration of how the Minister is getting unemployment figures down.

Mr. Cope: That is not an illustration of how we are getting unemployment figures down; it is an illustration of how unemployment figures are staying up. The hon. Gentleman said that they stayed on the dole. The unemployment figures relating to the 20 to whom he referred have not come down. I should like to have further particulars. I cannot follow up an individual accusation of that kind unless I have particulars. I understand the hon. Gentleman's difficulty, but he must understand that it is also my difficulty.

Over 1,100 unemployed people in the south Tyne region are currently using the enterprise allowance scheme, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, to solve their unemployment problem by setting up in business and creating their own jobs. Of course we know that not all businesses succeed, but two thirds or so do succeed, and they also employ other people.

An advanced electronics company is running projects and encouraging innovation and enterprise in information technology. In another project, the innovative factory for new technology is establishing a commercial factory unit on the same lines. It has initial backing from both national and local government and, incidentally, from the European Community. Local companies, too, are expanding. Grove Coles Cranes of Sunderland is investing £5 million. Freemans, the mail order firm, is creating new jobs in Washington. English Estates recently announced record levels of inquiries for factory space in its region.

The hon. Gentleman referred to inward and outward investment. One of the encouraging signs for the country as a whole as well as for the north-east is the way in which foreign firms have seen the potential in Britain, and particularly in the north-east. No fewer than 16 Japanese companies have invested in the north-east. That is part of a large total that has been invested in this country by overseas companies. That is an excellent sign of other people's confidence in the British economy.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): I am carefully following what my hon. Friend has been saying about some growing companies. I refer to British companies rather than inward investment companies. Is he satisfied that banks are giving enough support to new businesses or existing businesses that wish to grow, possibly through the loan guarantee scheme, which could help them? If he is not satisfied, will he speak to the banks and establish whether they can give special help in difficult areas such as the north-east?

Mr. Cope: It always pays people to shop around the different banks if they are having trouble getting support from one bank. Bank managers vary in their responses to individual schemes. I regularly talk to regional and central banks to encourage them in the direction that my hon. Friend would wish them to follow.

Among the foreign companies to which I have talked, Komatsu recently announced an increase in employment at its Birtley earthmoving machinery plant. Of course, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, Nissan is the biggest employer. It recently launched a night shift, bringing its total work force in Sunderland to over 1,000. There is more good news today, which I am glad to say that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North also welcomed. Today, my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the chairman of Nissan, Mr. Ishihara, signed heads of agreement for the expansion of Nissan's Sunderland plant to produce a second model of a small passenger car. It is a £216 million investment, involving about 1,000 extra jobs at the Sunderland site, plus 400 associated jobs by 1992. It is expected to produce an extra 100,000 cars a year, 60 per cent. of which will be for export. The cars will initially have a 60 per cent. local content, rising to 80 per cent. in 18 months. That is welcome news to us and, indeed, to the hon. Gentleman.

There is much encouraging news about, but, as I said, no one can be complacent. No one owes Britain a living. The problems that we are discussing will always need constant vigilance. We have to remain competitive. The hon. Gentleman touched on that matter and recognised the importance of competitiveness in the shipbuilding industry in his constituency. He recognised that we need to compete on world markets. That brings me to the last point I wish to raise which is about the effect of wage settlements on jobs.

Excessive wage growth, by pricing our goods out of international markets, destroys jobs. It undoubtedly contributed to the high level of unemployment in recent years. When we took office, settlements of 20 per cent. were not uncommon and inflation and unit wage costs were heading towards 20 per cent. or more. Since then, the situation has been transformed. Changes in attitudes towards pay bargaining have been a key factor in that transformation. I am glad to say that bargaining has become more realistic, less confrontational and more flexible. There is a greater awareness of the link between pay and jobs. But the problem has not completely disappeared. Earnings growth is currently 7·75 per cent., almost double the inflation rate. More importantly, it is well in excess of our major competitors. We cannot depend on productivity growth, good as that has been, continuing to absorb such high increases in real earnings. There are still too many pay bargainers who do not accept that pay increases must be earned, must be justified by efficiency and market considerations of performance, and must be affordable. That is the central difficulty of the job of spreading ideas which the hon. Gentleman advanced, attractive as they are in many ways. Until pay increases are earned, growth in earnings and unit wage costs will threaten competitiveness, and that is still one of the most serious risks to jobs in Britain.

In his motion and in his speech, the hon. Member for Sunderland, North argued for greater public investment and public ownership, but lasting reductions in unemployment cannot be obtained by injecting huge extra sums of taxpayers' money into infrastructure spending or local authority make-work schemes. The Socialist policies for which the hon. Gentleman's motion calls are a recipe for economic disaster on any basis. If Opposition Members cannot see that, they should look at France, where not so long ago such a policy was tried and failed. Instead, we looked to the private, wealth-creating sector of the economy as the engine that would generate lasting jobs. We have been, and we are being, proved right in our prescription.

5.11 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on his luck in winning this opportunity to debate the serious problem of unemployment. His motion refers to the British economy as a casino economy. It is rarely understood by the public that we also have a casino House of Commons. The opportunity to raise motions, questions and private Members' Bills depends on a raffle in which most hon. Members, like people in all casinos, lose.

We are lucky that this afternoon my hon. Friend had the opportunity to introduce a very important motion and to make such a wide-ranging and important speech in which he analysed the real underlying problem of the British economy. His speech contrasts sharply with that of the Minister which concentrated on statistical boasts about the health of the British economy, which largely depended on the manipulation of unemployment statistics and statistics for the numbers of new jobs that have become available. Today, he announced a further ratchet in the pressures on those who are unemployed to be forced into low-paid jobs and compulsory work schemes. The Government claim to believe in freedom of choice, yet they are offering those who have no freedom to work compulsory make-work schemes which will not strengthen our economy or give people freedom or a decent income.

I do not intend to speak on all the issues raised by the motion, as my hon. Friend has already spoken so well. In the limited time available, I wish to put on record the serious criticism of Opposition Members and of many groups in society of the new adult training scheme that was announced by the Secretary of State on 18 November. It is our view that the scheme is unacceptable and will not work. I shall go into more detail about the range of forces in society that are opposed to the scheme, and I shall ask the Minister to think again about those proposals, which will only damage the interests of the unemployed. A new alliance in Britain is saying that we will not co-operate in the scheme, and we ask the Government to offer something better to the unemployed.

I want to put into context the seriousness of the way in which the Government are manipulating make-work schemes to cut wage levels in Britain. There is a real contrast between the way in which the Government and

Government supporters constantly crow about the health and vibrance of the British economy, and the experiences of Opposition Members who represent areas where unemployment is horrendously high and where those who can get work all too often work for incredibly low wages which mean that getting a job is hardly an escape from the poverty of unemployment.

Throughout our constituencies, we see the seediness, the decline in housing, the holes in the road and the uncollected rubbish. Our economy is becoming a slum economy with high unemployment, low wages and poor quality public services. In my lifetime it has never been so bad, and I am sincerely shocked that it is so bad, yet Conservative Members boast that our economy is healthy and prosperous.

We must ask ourselves whether Conservative Members are being dishonest, whether they see what we see and pretend that it is not happening, or whether they live in a completely different world from ours and that of our constituents. I suspect that at times they are being dishonest, but that they spend most of their lives mixing with people who have done enormously well out of the Thatcherite intervention in the British economy.

There is no doubt that the best paid 20 per cent. in the British economy have never been better off. Their taxes have been cut and their incomes have gone up. Profits have gone up and people working in the City are doing very well. Britain imports more champagne than any other developed economy. There is a group of people who have done enormously well out of Thatcherism. However, there is an enormous group of people that goes beyond the 4 or 5 million unemployed. The figure was understated by 18 or 19 fiddles in the way in which unemployment figures are collected.

In Britain there are now 9 million people who are low paid, according to the Council of Europe decency threshold, which is an income of less than £126 per week. The proportion of poor and low-paid people working in our economy has grown and continues to grow. Those people face either unemployment or the poverty trap. That is the reality of the economy for most people who live in Britain. The slum economy, with low pay, low investment and poor training, is an unjust and unequal economy, which is also incredibly inefficient. When labour is very cheap and can be hired and fired, it is not worth investing and training. By constant pressure to cut wages, Britain is seeking to compete with the poorest countries of the world, a competition which we will never win and which bodes ill for the future of our economy.

The increase in poverty and poverty wages is partly a consequence of the massive growth in unemployment deliberately engineered by the Government to cut wage levels, but the Government have also taken a series of steps to push down the wages of the lowest paid. They include the Wages Act 1986 which reduced the protection of those people protected by wages councils, the abolition of the fair wages resolution and section 11 of the Employment Protection Act 1975, and the privatisation of public services. For cleaners, dinner ladies and low-paid workers in the public services, privatisation meant simply a cut in wages and fewer people doing the work. It is a wage-cutting measure that leads not to increased efficiency, but to poorly paid people being paid even less. Employers have been subsidised on condition that they pay workers low wages, such as with the young workers scheme, and the deliberate use of special employment measures to lever down the wage expectations of the unemployed and the conditions that people can expect when they are in employment.

In regard to the youth training scheme, if the Government had continued to pay the rates that were paid before 1979, they would currently be paying more than £40 a week. We are now about to move from a position in which young people can choose to go on such a scheme, and because they have so few options and opportunities, they have massively chosen to go on the scheme, whatever its deficiencies. A minute number of people have refused a place, but still the Government are removing benefit entitlement from young people so that they are forced on to the scheme. The Government claim that people should have freedom of choice, but they are removing young people's right to shop around for a scheme which might lead them to a chance of a real job. Young people are being compelled while being paid ever less.

It is not that the Government are simply being nasty and vindictive, although they are being both; they are pursuing a strategy which entails using schemes to lever wage levels down. If they allow the supplementary benefit minimum to be the alternative for young people, they cannot cut the YTS allowance any further. That minimum is therefore to be reduced so that YTS allowances can be cut still further.

The Government tried this before when the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was Secretary of State for Employment. We had a White Paper which said that YTS was to be made compulsory and that young people would be paid £15 a week. It caused uproar in all parts of society, including employers, who were not anxious to have conscripted and underpaid young people charging around their workplaces.

The Government had to back off. They have waited, made things worse, given young people less choice, and now they think that they can get away with it. They are taking powers in the Social Security Bill and the Employment Bill, both of which are in Committee, to force young people on to schemes, however inadequate they may be, irrespective of whether they provide training. They are removing from young people who cannot get a job the one option that they now enjoy—to study up to 21 hours a week and retain benefit. When anxious parents come to me asking about the future and telling me that their child has been offered only a place on a scheme but that the overwhelming majority do not get a job at the end of it I tell them about the 21 hours' study option. It is crucial for poor parents that the student should have some income to enable him or her to gain qualifications and skills. That option is to be wiped out, however, because the Government are so determined to push down young people's wages.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I am a member of the Committee which is considering the Social Security Bill. Is my hon. Friend aware that Opposition Members made a plea from the heart that benefit should not be withdrawn from young people who have been brought up in local authority care, and have experienced trauma and do not settle easily, and that the Minister turned us down? It is well known in social services circles that such children have difficulty settling, but the Minister would not make an exception for them.

Ms. Short: I had heard about that. It is worrying. I recently watched a television programme which showed

[Ms. Short]

children under 16 and young people aged between 16 and 18 in the United States who live on the streets through prostitution or the sale of drugs. Many have grown up in care and been victims of sexual abuse. I fear that such conditions may apply here as a result of such a decision.

The Minister referred to the Secretary of State's announcement of 18 December. It outlined plans for a new compulsory work scheme for the adult unemployed. Such a scheme exists in the United States. It is called workfare. The intention is to force people to work for their benefits.

The Government have now announced the introduction of workfare to the United Kingdom. They are combining the budgets of the community programme and the job training scheme, which was introduced before the general election to try to encourage the unemployment figures to decline in the run-up to the election. It flopped because the offer was so bad. It was effectively an offer of work experience for benefit.

We are now offered a massively increased 600,000-place scheme which pays a few pounds—the exact amount has not been announced — on top of benefit. The Department of Health and Social Security tables make it clear that the cost of going to work—the bus fare, more expensive food at the workplace and different clothes—is £7 a week. It therefore costs £7 a week to be no better off.

The Government propose to pay a few pounds a week more than benefit for full-time work. The harm is not restricted to those people being denied choice; they will be used to compete with people in work and thus to drag down their wages. The Minister has announced more compulsion today. We have the Minister's new questionnaire, restart, the new availability for work test and powers which are to be taken in the Employment Bill. The latter provides that, once the scheme is running—if the Government get away with it—it will be designated as a training scheme and that anybody who refuses to apply, refuses a place or leaves because he thinks it is inadequate will have benefit cut for six months. We are now talking about compulsory schemes for the adult unemployed. The Government will then boast that long-term unemployment has declined.

I can tell the Government that they cannot have such a scheme. They could not have had the schemes that they have already established without the co-operation of the trade union movement, local authorities and voluntary organisations. Their co-operation will not be forthcoming for the proposed scheme. On 8 December, there was a meeting of representatives of a powerful new alliance, which *The Guardian* called the new triple alliance, of trade unions, voluntary organisations and local authorities. They came to the House of Commons to ask the Government to think again and to say that they would not co-operate.

I hope that the Minister is listening, because this is an important message. The trade unions represented were the Transport and General Workers Union—in the person of Ron Todd, its general secretary and a Manpower Services Commissioner—the National Union of Public Employees, the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers, the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, the Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section, the Society of Civil and Public Servants, which organises those who work for the Civil Service who will be used to compel people to take a place on the scheme, and the National and Local Government Officers Association. They have previously co-operated with authorised schemes but will now refuse to do so.

For local authorities, we had John Pearman, the leader of Wakefield council, who is the representative of local education authorities on the Manpower Services Commission, and representatives of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities, Rochdale, which runs one of the largest schemes in the country, Manchester and the Association of London Authorities.

The representatives of voluntary organisations were led by Rev. Roger Clarke, who represents voluntary organisations on the MSC's advisory group on special measures. He said:

> "It appals us that we are being cast in the role of workhouse managers herding unemployed people through training schemes . . . We shall play no part in a scheme that would take away fundamental human rights and involve us in conscription."

Those groups have rejected the Minister's new scheme and say that there are five basic principles which must be complied with if any new scheme is to receive their co-operation. First, it must be entirely voluntary. Secondly, there should be real training so that people go away at the end with skills that are relevant to their future employment prospects. Thirdly, those concerned must have employee status so that they are protected by health and safety and equal opportunities legislation. Fourthly, they must be paid the rate for the job—not benefit-plus—and, finally, projects must have trade union approval.

If the five conditions are not forthcoming in the new scheme, the Government will not have the co-operation of the coalition, which means that they will not have the scheme. The coalition stated:

> "Our aim is to protect the interests of the unemployed. It is totally unacceptable that they should be forced to work for their benefits and be used to drive down wage levels for those in work. The success of Government training schemes has depended on the co-operation of trade unions, voluntary sector and local authorities. Such co-operation will not be forthcoming for the Government's new scheme. We are asking all groups currently involved in running schemes to support the Charter."

The charter is a document that incorporates the five principles to which I have referred. The coalition's statement continued:

> "We are asking the Government to think again before the publication of the White Paper."

The Government boast of a healthy economy but we see a slum economy with increasing impoverishment and low pay. We know that conditions within the economy will become worse without some intervention. The Government have been able to obscure the destruction of our manufacturing base by using North sea oil revenues, but those revenues are now in decline and there is the prospect of a balance of payments crisis and the deflation that will inevitably follow from that. We know that the Government's privatisation programme will come to an end when they have sold off everything that can be privatised. There will then be a gap in Government revenues and pressure for even further public expenditure cuts. This will lead to further impoverishment of our society and loss of employment.

The Government's free market economy does not work. It is not a glamorous economy. The Government's policy is creating poverty and a lack of hope and choice for our people. We ask the Government to think again.

The Opposition say in all seriousness that the Government will not be able to implement the scheme that has recently been announced unless they are willing to listen to the new alliance and redesign their scheme so that it meets minimum standards.

The real answers to the problems of the British economy lie in Socialist intervention, planning and use of the massive resources of our economy. After all, we are about the 20th richest country in the world. Unfortunately, the Government are increasingly delivering poverty to our people. The Japanese economy is not run on Socialist lines but within it there is room for planning and Government intervention. The Government's obsessive and prejudiced belief in free-market economics is doing enormous damage to the British people and to the future of the British economy. We reject the Government's economic policy and we hope that they will think again about the scheme that they intend to introduce, which in its present form would lead to more poverty and more compulsion for the unemployed.

5.32 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I congratulate the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on initiating the debate. That is about the only thing on which I can congratulate him. I realise that this is a short debate, so I promise that I shall not detain the House for long. In what is a short debate the hon. Gentleman spoke for 50 minutes. His speech seemed to last a great deal longer than that for those who had to listen to it. I feel that a weekend with the hon. Gentleman must be rather like a month in the country.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North represents a north-east constituency.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) won the constituency.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I was talking about the hon. Member for Sunderland, North, not the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer).

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I shall not give way. I am talking about the hon. Member for Sunderland, North.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North could have talked for four hours if he had wished to do so.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Gentleman must make his own speech. It seems that he is anxious to speak. As I have said, the hon. Member for Sunderland, North spoke for 50 minutes.

Mr. Heffer: Get on with it.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I shall take my time. I can speak until 7 o'clock if I choose to do so.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, North represents a north-east constituency, and I was born in that area. One of the differences between us is that the hon. Gentleman went to a public school. He went to Bedford and I went to Jarrow grammar school. I make that point because we are always being told by Opposition Members that we on the Government Benches know nothing about the state education system.

As I have said, I disagreed with just about everything that the hon. Member for Sunderland, North said. I disagreed too with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short). If their speeches reflect the philosophy of the Labour party, it comes as no surprise to me that the Labour party was so thoroughly defeated in the general election.

Mr. Heffer: The trouble is that that philosophy was not put forward. If it had been offered to the people, we would have won.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Labour Members seem to have conveniently short memories. They seem to forget that it was under the previous Labour Government that we had the worst economic crisis that any of us could remember. That was the position in 1976, when the Labour Government had to go running——

Mrs. Mahon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: No, I shall not give way.

Mrs. Mahon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to know whether we are still debating unemployment. We seem to have moved on to something else. I am rather confused.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have not heard anything yet from the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) that has been out of order. I am listening carefully.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do need your protection occasionally.

In 1976, the Labour Government led us into an awful crisis and they had to be rescued by the International Monetary Fund. That is a matter of fact.

Mr. Mullin: That was the product of the capitalist system.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Member for Sunderland, North talked about unemployment, and the chances are that I know more about that than he does. As I have said, I was born in the north-east. In fact, I was born on Tyneside. When I was a child, my father, like thousands of others in that area, was out of work.

Mr. Mullin: There are thousands out of work now.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: That is so, but no one can pretend that the unemployment on Tyneside in 1932 and 1933 can be compared with the unemployment of today. There was a grinding, abject poverty in the 1930s. I never want to see those days return. My father had 21 shillings on which to keep his family. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) made a speech when he was Secretary of State for Employment in which he recalled that his father was out of work during the depression. He told us that his father got on his bike and went to look for work, and that was ridiculed by the Opposition. My father got on a bike and looked for work. There can be nothing worse for an individual than to want to work and yet be unable to find work. I hope that the days that I lived through on Tyneside when I was a child will never return. Anyone who pretends that conditions now are the same as those that applied during the 1930s is not living in the modern world.

It is rather unfortunate that the hon. Members for Sunderland, North and Ladywood should have made speeches of gloom when it is reported in the *Daily Mail* today——

Mr. Mullin: It would be the *Daily Mail*.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It is a good newspaper. If the hon. Gentleman read it occasionally, he might learn something. The *Daily Mail* reports:

"Unemployment has fallen to its lowest for more than six years as orders pour in to factories. The number of people out of work is understood to have dropped by about 60,000 last month to just about 2,500,000 on a seasonally adjusted basis. This 17th successive monthly fall means unemployment is down by around 550,000 since June last year—the biggest sustained reduction on record."

A CBI survey produces a much brighter and more optimistic picture than that which is being painted by Labour Members. Part of it states:

"New productivity figures due on Thursday will further reinforce Mrs. Thatcher's claim that sound finance and enterprise have produced a higher standard of living than this country has ever known."

That is very different from the story that the hon. Member for Ladywood was presenting us with and preaching not so long ago.

Mr. Mullin: Where is this prosperity?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I ask the hon. Gentleman to look around the country. It may not be found in Jarrow, but what about Newcastle, Manchester and Liverpool? The hon. Gentleman should look at what is happening in the shops in those areas. He should have regard to retail sales in those areas and the general standard of living, which is something of which I would not have dreamt when I was young.

Mr. Mullin: There are not many Tories in Jarrow.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: No, but the ones who are there are jolly good.

It ill behoves Labour Members to attack the Government on their employment record. Unemployment did not appear suddenly in 1979. It has been rising remorselessly in the United Kingdom since the 1960s. It rose throughout the 1960s when there was over-manning, which was hidden unemployment.

Mr. Clay: That is tripe.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It is not tripe. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not. During the 1960s there were people in employment who were not needed. As a result, firms became uncompetitive and consequently more and more jobs were lost. We had pay rises that were not earned and a bad record of strikes.

Mr. Mullin: Why was that?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to participate in the debate, I suggest that he makes his own speech.

The combination of over-manning, unearned pay rises and a bad record of strikes made Britain uncompetitive and helped to create higher unemployment. Nobody disputes that unemployment is much worse in the north than in the south. I was born in the north and I represent a constituency in the north. One has to bear in mind that in the north we have the old basic industries of coal, steel and shipbuilding. All of those industries are in decline throughout the world. They are in decline in the United States but there all the coalfields, steelworks and shipyards are not concentrated in the same area but are spotted around. In this country they are all concentrated in the north. Therefore, we see the problem much more starkly than in other countries.

Of course, we have been through difficult times and I do not think that anyone disputes that. Despite what has been said from the Opposition Benches, I believe that things are improving because of the policies pursued by the Government. For once we have a Prime Minister who has stuck to what she believed was right. Other Prime Ministers may have started off on the right road— *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend has won three successive general elections which is quite a record

Ms. Short: With 42 per cent. of the vote.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It was a substantially higher percentage than the Labour party got. The hon. Lady conveniently forgets that we now have a three-party system. It is unlikely that at a future election any party will get 50 per cent. of the vote. So, if I were her, I would not be too smart because, in the unlikely event that we ever get another Labour Government, I doubt whether they will get 42 per cent. of the vote. Certainly the Labour vote has been declining.

Ms. Short: Yes, we have a divided opposition. That is why the Government party is in power. But it is important for the Tory party to understand that the support it has had in the three general elections of 42 per cent., 43 per cent., and 42 per cent., means that a majority of the people is opposed to it. For example, in the last 13 years of Tory rule Labour in opposition got a higher vote than that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think we ought to return to the motion on the Order Paper.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I shall not continue with that, except to ask the hon. Lady to check the figures. I think that not one party that has won a general election since the war has scored more than than 50 per cent. The nearest were the Conservatives in 1955 and 1959 when they got 49 per cent. Things are improving because of the policies being pursued by the Government. We have a Prime Minister who has stuck to what she believed to be right.

Mr. Mullin: They love her in Jarrow!.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Sedentary interventions do not help the progress of the debate. We could do with fewer of them.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: We now see the benefit of the sensible policies. We have seen a sustained improvement in the economy. We also have to bear in mind that we need a level of pay which enables workers to be priced into jobs, which is the important point, instead of being priced out of jobs. We need pay rates which ensure that British industry can hold its own against major competitors.

I hope that the unemployment figures which are due out on Thursday will show the 17th successive monthly fall. That is good news. I just wish that there were a few more cheerful faces on the Opposition side. I am afraid that good news is not good news to the Opposition. They thrive on gloom and doom.

The unemployment figures for September showed that there were fewer unemployed school leavers than at any time since 1974. That was particularly welcome. There is nothing worse for any young person than to start adult life on the dole.

It is also good news that we are doing better at reducing unemployment than most of our competitors. I think I am right in saying that the rate of unemployment has fallen by 1·5 per cent. in the last year, whereas in Germany, France and Italy the rates have increased. The employed labour force for the United Kingdom rose substantially

between March 1983 and June 1987. If I am wrong, I am sure I will be corrected, but I think that we have a higher percentage of people of employable age working than any other country in the European Community.

Of course, there are still problems. The Government must never be complacent. I am particularly worried about the man who is made redundant in his late fifties. That is a terrible tragedy. I said earlier that I felt sorry for young people who started their working life on the dole. I have always believed that, as the economy improved, that problem would disappear, but the problem does not disappear for the man in his late fifties. For him and his family this is the most awful problem. I hope that the Government have not forgotten the plight of people in that category.

In the last general election campaign we were told by the leader of the Labour party that the Tories could not and would not reduce Britain's dole queue. Yet again the right hon. Gentleman has been proved wrong because the dole queue is being reduced. Long-term unemployment has shown a record fall and unemployment has fallen in every region. That is good news. The Government alone cannot do it all. We hear the cry all the time that the Government must do this or the Government must do that. The Government are not the only source of responsiblity. Certainly we have to have policies that help. We must continue to have policies which reduce taxation and reward success, and which ensure that inflation does not get out of hand again.

Above all, we have to heed the lesson that we must be competitive. We have to ensure that productivity is high and that pay increases are earned. We have to listen to what our customers say. Nobody will buy British simply because it is British. People will buy the goods we produce only if the price, the quality and the order date are right. That is why I am glad that the number of strikes has dropped drastically since the Government took office.

I want to pay tribute to the way in which the Government have tackled the economy and, through their successful policies, have reduced the number of unemployed. I hope that in the months ahead we shall see the number of unemployed further reduced.

5.46 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I want to respond briefly to the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on his claim about real jobs. In preparation for the debate I studied the jobs that have gone in manufacturing in my constituency during the last 15 months when we have had an upturn in the economy. I found that over 500 jobs had gone in very good firms that have been in Halifax since I was born. For instance, 176 jobs have gone at Rowntree Mackintosh; 75 jobs have gone in textiles; and over 100 jobs have gone in machine tool engineering. Those were real jobs that paid real wages and had real training elements.

Most Conservative Members view unemployment simply as a statistic. Its effects upon communities and individuals are ignored. I have heard nothing about its effects upon family life and upon communities. There has been much crowing about the fact that the number of strikes is down and that people are working for lower wages but nothing about the real problems facing the unemployed.

I challenge what the Minister said about inflation. If he considers the people who are trying to exist on social security benefits he will find that inflation affects them differently. The things on which they need to spend their total disposable income, such as rent, rates, mortgages, transport, bus fares, prescriptions and energy costs, have risen far more than the rate of inflation to which the Minister referred.

We are told that the unemployment figures are coming down month by month. I have an unemployment unit bulletin which shows 19 changes. I draw attention to just one. It is estimated that the Government's new test of availability for work will in 12 months get rid of 95,000 people from the dole statistics; after two years 120,000 will disappear from the statistics. Those people will still exist after they have been harassed off the dole queue. They are still living human beings. No amount of fiddling with figures will remove the misery that is brought about when benefit is withdrawn.

I do not accept that anyone believes the Government's suspect figures. The figures are a joke. If I was marking work in a classroom and was presented with the Government's figures I would include the words "Must try harder." I do not believe that Conservative Members are convinced about the unemployment figures. One statistic within the Government's figures has not changed and every time Conservative Members consider that statistic, they should be ashamed. That statistic is the number of long-term jobless young. That number has remained untouched. There are still more than 1 million young people in that category. I challenge Conservative Members to say that I am wrong. Forty per cent. of the long-term unemployed in my constituency are young people and that represents nearly 2,000 young people.

Yesterday afternoon I watched "Weekend World". I hope that the Minister watched that programme as well. It dealt specifically with the young unemployed. An ex-Tory Member of Parliament introduced the programme and referred to how this under-class was forging a new culture with values set apart from the rest of us. They no longer forge the links that will bind them to our society, such as buying a house or owning a car or beginning family life as we know it; they are totally excluded from doing so because of their jobless status. They do not have any stake in our society and therefore they see no reason to abide by rules in a society which rejects them.

In the programme young men and women spoke openly about robbing replacing buying. It was even more worrying that older people condoned that attitude. Those older people had been living on benefit and had direct experience of eking out a desperate level of existence. Their message on behalf of the young was clear: if millions of people are left jobless and in deprivation, the social fabric will be threatened. There will be no family bond because young men and women cannot afford to cohabit on benefits. The conclusion was that the Government's policies are eating into and destroying family life among that under-class.

Much has been written and spoken about the effects of unemployment on health. "The Health Divide" — an update of the Black report — was published earlier this year. The Government tried to suppress those reports. I am sure that hon. Members will remember the Black report published in 1980. The then Minister for Health published only 250 copies of the report because he did not want people to know what was happening. There was also a disgraceful episode this year when "The Health Divide" concluded that the health gap between those in work and

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

those out of work had widened. The press conference called to announce the publication of that report was cancelled. Indeed, an attempt was made to silence the people who had drawn it up. "The Health Divide" revealed the obscene difference between different classes in our society and the way in which the unemployed suffer.

Dr. David Player, the outgoing director general of the Health Education Council, stated in the foreword to "The Health Divide":

"Such iniquity is inexcusable in a democratic society which prides itself on being humane."

Unemployment is literally killing people, as the report highlights.

I know that Conservative Members will refer to the so-called upturn in the economy. As I have said, the number of young long-term unemployed has not been touched. In the main, the new jobs have been for the well qualified and the experienced. There is not much opportunity for the young long-term unemployed unless they enter the low-paid, spiv economy. I have had some experience of those jobs in Halifax and I want to draw the attention of the House to two particular cases that I researched last week.

We have been told that the future for Halifax lies in tourism. However, I must tell hon. Members that the recorded rainfall in Halifax is very high and I advise them to bring umbrellas if they come. We are told that the future lies in tourism rather than in well paid, highly skilled jobs in machine tools and textiles. I investigated one job in tourism last week, which was paying 86p an hour. Another was paying £1 an hour for an 18-year-old working shifts and weekends in the kitchen of a hotel that had been given a handout of £150,000 to encourage tourism in the area. Those cases must be investigated. Young people are not being paid properly from the grants.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): What is the local Member of Parliament doing about it?

Mrs. Mahon: The local Member is objecting very loudly.

We have also been given the sop of business in the community to compensate for the loss of manufacturing in Halifax. Business in the community has worthy aims and if there was real investment——

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: No, I will not give way.

Mr. Ian Bruce *rose*——

Mrs. Mahon: Sit down. I said no.

Business in the community has been offered as a sop for real investment in manufacturing, which the Government have deliberately starved of investment. Business in the community would be welcome as the icing on the cake, but it will not be a panacea for the loss of 10,000 jobs in manufacturing. It is mainly about enhancing tourism and, by definition, that means low-paid, low-skilled jobs.

The future looks grim for manufacturing towns such as Halifax. Poor pay and poor conditions are on offer with the low-paid jobs. It is relevant to talk about low pay when we are discussing unemployment, especially in light of what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) said about the enforcement of the new job training scheme. I want to draw attention to west Yorkshire, the region that I represent, and the way in which wages have fallen relative to the British average. The region is now bottom of the pay league and I do not like the fact that Halifax is recorded at the bottom of the league. Just under one fifth of full-time male workers in the region are low-paid and that is double the figure in 1979. Some 60 per cent. of full-time women workers are low-paid and I believe that that is also double the 1979 figure. More than 80 per cent. of part-timers fall within the low-paid category and in my constituency part-time work is on the increase at the expense of full-time jobs.

In the Yorkshire and Humberside region there was a fall of 167,000 in jobs between 1979 and 1986. There has been an increase of 55,000 in part-timers. I concede that in the year ended December 1986 the number of jobs picked up a bit throughout the region. However, during the same period, there was an increase of 17,000 in the number of part-timers.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Is the hon. Lady familiar with the fact that in her constituency a company called Sinclair—run by Clive Sinclair—set up a factory which employed 250 people under the Labour Government? It was promised all sorts of grants by the Labour Government, but it took the Department of Trade and Industry a year to make a decision. It decided to turn the company down and 250 people were made redundant.

Mrs. Mahon: I want to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that the Department of Trade and Industry has been messing about with another company seeking grants. That company has threatened to move to another town. I also draw his attention to the fact that under this Government we have lost assisted area status and we are now like the hole in the middle of the doughnut. We have also lost urban aid since the Government came to power. In return for the thousands of jobs that have been lost, we have Government schemes and low pay.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Mahon: No, I want to carry on.

There are 2,500 people on training schemes in Halifax. More than 50 per cent. of those on youth training schemes in west Yorkshire do not progress to a job and 28 per cent. go back on the dole. We are living with the effects of this Government's policies. The young long-term unemployed have good reason to reject slave labour conditions. They should seriously question whether they should work from seven in the morning until seven in the evening on such allowances. I think that there would be something wrong with young people who did not object to such exploitation, and I am glad that such objections are being made.

Conservative Members have a choice. They can begin, even at this late stage, to reject the disastrous policies that have wiped out manufacturing in many parts of the country. Manufacturing is how the nation became great: it is how we earned our living in the world markets. We are now becoming the warehouse of the world, because the Government's policies are sucking in imports while our people languish on the dole. The Government are trying to batter unemployed people into submission by reducing benefits and conscripting them into schemes that will not lead anywhere—certainly not to jobs. That will breed a desperate sense of injustice and lead to a search for alternative forms of funding, such as a further explosion in crime.

The Government should be ashamed. They are the party of law and order, and they have presided over the

biggest explosion in crime since the war. They should be tackling the economy, and investing in manuacturing to create real jobs. The National Health Service is crying out for jobs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) pointed out. The Government should put money back into the Health Service, and to ensure that there are enough nurses so that wards need not be closed, instead of trying to create another scheme that is all about controlling the young and keeping the dole figures down. They should be trying to destroy the seedbed of poverty, rather than increase it.

Conservative Members always use the argument that the taxpayer will have to pay. But the taxpayer is already paying — for more prisons and expensive punitive institutions to house the young. Society will pay dearly for ignoring a growing group who will undermine our way of life if they continue to be rejected. It is a moral affront deliberately to deny the principle of citizenship, which is to guarantee a certain minimum social position for everyone, including the under-class that we are creating.

The hardening of attitudes that I have observed since I became a Member of Parliament, and the law and order approach adopted by the Government towards the young unemployed, will simply breed a generation growing up to accept models of crime as the answer to the problem of survival. The unemployed are the victims of Thatcherite policies. The Prime Minister has no place for them, but the Government ignore them at their peril.

6.2 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): If any debate has demonstrated how out of touch, anachronistic and even other-worldly the Labour party has become, it is this one. No wonder Labour has not been able to win an election since 1974.

The motion is not a strategy for jobs; it is the economics of the dinosaur. For a start, it takes no account of the achievements of a competitive economy over the past seven years. There has been a drop of 480,000 in unemployment in the past year, and a record 24·3 million people are in work. There has been a drop in youth unemployment to less than the European average, and a record number of self-employed people and business starts. That must be evidence of a dynamic and responsive economy.

The Opposition not only ignore the results of surveys, both regional and national, which show an unparalleled optimism and enterprise in the economy. They ignore, consistently, the basic reality that applies whether a person lives in the west or the east, in an agrarian or industrial economy, or even—as Mr. Gorbachev is beginning to learn—in a Communist state. If we want to increase employment and improve standards of living, we must have profitable firms investing in products and services that are sold at a price and in a quantity that people want.

Worst of all, Labour Members' fetish with macro-economic policy has blinded us too often in the past to the micro-economic steps that are necessary to improve the supply side of the economy, which in turn will improve jobs. Surely it should be as plain as a pikestaff to anyone but the most ideologically obtuse Member that state interference, central direction, high taxation, high borrowing and the general fiscal irresponsibility that we saw before 1979 produced nothing short of a disaster. Restrictive practices meant that productivity was going up at only two thirds of the OECD average. It is now rising faster than anywhere in the world apart from Japan. Punitive taxation meant that the share of profits as a proportion of gross national product fell from 18 per cent. in 1966 to only 5 per cent. in 1979. It is now at its best level for 20 years.

Irresponsible borrowing by the Government—9 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1975—not only kept interest rates high, but ensured that the rate of return on investment in the United Kingdom was the lowest in the OECD countries. Probably most tragic of all for the unemployed, inflation not only damaged the long-term prospects of the unemployed, but ensured that unit labour costs rose nearly three times as fast as those of our competitors, and, as a result, damaged the competitiveness and job-creating potential of the economy.

Those policies were simply not sustainable. If we want to be the sick man of Europe, and if we want our economy to be run by the International Monetary Fund, we should follow precisely the interventionist policies put forward by the Labour party this afternoon. That lesson must be—and has been—learnt not only by Britain, but by the Russians, the Indians, the Mexicans and the French. We want jobs to be created and productivity, investment, profits and competitiveness to be improved, and that is what is happening now in the British economy.

I do not rely only on figures. Let us take the west midlands, which was and still is the centre of Britain's manufacturing industry. As we all admit, it as much as anywhere else suffered from the restructuring that has happened throughout the world. During the past month, unemployment in Kidderminster, in my constituency, has fallen by nearly a tenth to the best level for 15 years. In the past two months, there have been 47 applications for industrial premises of 10,000 sq ft or more. The chamber of commerce recently carried out a survey, which was updated after 19 October. The survey found that of firms surveyed—they were the largest employers—no fewer that 87 per cent. expected to increase exports; 88 per cent. expected profits to increase or to remain the same, and half of them expectd them to increase; and, most important of all, 64 per cent. expected to increase their labour force in the next six months. Only 8 per cent. expected it to fall.

Ms. Short: There is no doubt that, because of a combination of schemes, a pre-election boom and other factors, there has been some improvement in the economy. However, in the core of Birmingham, six constituencies —300,000 people—are living with unemployment of 20 per cent. That is the scale of the problem. Since 1979, the hon. Gentleman's Government have destroyed 2 million manufacturing jobs, and we are nowhere near replacing them. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is luckier in Kidderminster, but in the centre of the west midlands the position is still very bad.

Mr. Coombs: The hon. lady will be pleased to know that I shall be dealing with Birmingham next.

The survey of Birmingham and the west midlands by the chamber of commerce shows precisely the same trends. Figures produced by Birmingham city council show that unemployment in the west midlands fell last year by 60,000, which is nearly a sixth, and that the number of people in employment in the west midlands rose by 14,000 in the first half of the year. Most significant of all, although 7,000 of that increase were in service industries, 7,000 were in manufacturing industry. That optimism is

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reflected on all sides in the west midlands. The convention centre, which is funded partly by the public sector, partly by the private sector and partly by European funds, represents £110 million of investment in a so-called depressed area, and it will create 2,000 jobs.

Ms. Short: It is in my constituency.

Mr. Coombs: I am very pleased to hear it.

The economic development association of east Birmingham — a venture created by the chamber of commerce, the CBI and the city council—will produce jobs. Last week we heard that the London—Edinburgh trust will spend £250 million in the centre of Birmingham backing its judgment of the economic health of the region.

This employment growth is dependent not on pump-priming—it is not at all dependent on restrictions on the working week—or public ownership but on improved competitiveness, increasing investment, increasing profits and increasing confidence, which is deep rooted and will last. Yesterday, on television John Egan predicted that profits and output of Jaguar would increase this year, next year and in 1989. The European economic assessment predicts that growth in the United Kingdom will be 2·6 per cent. next year, which is double the European average, and this is the seventh successive year that that has happened.

That is a picture of confidence and progress in employment creation. As the Minister said, there is no room for complacency and there are three sectors in which we should be doing more. There is no doubt that through their youth and adult training programme, which costs £3,100 million per year, the Government are doing an unprecedented amount. The private sector is not investing enough in training. It invests £2,000 million per year, which represents 0·15 per cent. of turnover, compared with 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. in West Germany and Japan respectively.

I am certain that the local employment network schemes that the Government have recently set up will have a beneficial effect, but as the recent consultative document on vocational and educational training shows, some small and medium-sized firms find the labyrinth of different funding and types of scheme difficult to penetrate. We must improve access for them in that regard.

With regard to further and higher education, the Government have an excellent record in improving access to higher education as a percentage of the age group. However, it is still too difficult for people who want to retrain throughout their careers. It has been estimated by the OECD that over the next 20 or 25 years such will be the pace of technological change that people will have to change significantly the way in which they do their jobs three or four times throughout their working lives.

All firms in the west midlands are unanimous in believing that we must continue to cut taxation: first, because it is an engine of growth; secondly, because it gives an incentive for employers to give jobs through higher consumption and higher spending—national insurance contributions should be reduced to facilitate that; thirdly, because it provides an incentive to work for staff who otherwise would not have one.

I recently opened an employment centre in my constituency and a consultant there said that 50 per cent. of people would be £10 better off per week in work rather than out of it—having taken all benefits into account—yet they will not accept the jobs that are offered to them.

We should reduce taxes at the top end so that revenues increase. People in the top 5 per cent. of the population will then spend a higher proportion of the tax take than if they were taxed at very high levels.

In taking these measures, we shall continue to restore the enterprise economy for the benefit of all sections of society. Equally, as sure as God made little apples, if we accept the Labour party's strategy we shall be walking backwards into the future and we shall condemn Britain to the low living standards and high unemployment levels that appertained and will appertain in east European countries.

6.15 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Nobody is more pleased than I when men and women find work. However, there are still many reservations in the Liberal party about the figures that the Minister has presented. They will continue until the Government stop economising with the truth and include the estimated 826,000 economically active job seekers who are ineligible for benefit. The Government should include those who have been switched to invalidity and sickness benefits, or the older unemployed who receive the long-term rate of supplementary benefit, but who would still like to work.

Since 1982 the unemployment figures have become less representative of those who are unemployed. Thanks to the restart scheme there has been a dramatic increase in the number of claimants who have switched to sickness, invalidity and long-term rate benefits. It is interesting that the Minister has today announced a new development of restart—a questionnaire to check availability for work. We all know about the effects of that infamous availability for work test. It has reduced the number of claimants entering the register, not always because they are not looking for work but because they cannot understand the forms, cannot fill them in or because of the confusion that has arisen from them. The people who are likely to be excluded are those who find it most difficult to find work but who are most in need of help.

When all those points are taken into account, the restart and availability test has resulted, according to the unemployment unit, in approximately 10,150 unemployed people per month disappearing from the figures.

But there is no value in simply bandying unemployment figures. The debate is taking place at the end of 1987, as our thoughts are turning towards 1988. There could not be a better moment to reassess the economy and the unemployment position, not least because the Chancellor is beginning to consider his next Budget.

The *Sunday Times* yesterday suggested that there is tremendous tension in the Treasury over what to do. One view is in favour of massive tax cuts and reform, but, according to the *Sunday Times*, senior Treasury officials believe that tax reduction must be accompanied by substantial cuts in Government borrowing if they are not to lead to stronger inflationary pressures and a bigger balance of payments deficit. In other words, the Chancellor is feeding imports and risking inflation in a consumer boom that is still doing too little to tackle the basic needs of the economy for the next century.

Nor is our continuing growth certain, despite the Minister describing unemployment as being on an

established downward trend. The Chancellor predicts 2·5 per cent., growth for next year, but that is open to doubt, given the continuing stock market instability, a still limp United States policy on its budget-trade deficit—witness the most recent figures — and a continuing lack of international co-operation.

Even if growth reaches 2·5 per cent. it is most uncertain that current reductions in unemployment figures will be maintained. The National Institute of Economic and Social Research predicts that unemployment will decline only fractionally by the end of 1988, assuming a 2·5 per cent. growth rate. According to the *National Institute Economic Review*, which predicted a growth in output of 2·4 per cent. for next year, that rate of growth will slow to 1·5 per cent. in the last three months, with the same sluggish pace maintained in 1989.

Given that prediction, not only will the fall in unemployment slow next year, but, without new initiatives, the number of jobless will begin to rise again.

We know that tax cuts and unemployment affect some rather differently than others.

The Minister mentioned employment figures and excessive wage growth. Perhaps hon. Members will forgive me for talking about my part of the country. Cornwall is always included with Devon when the unemployment figures are produced. Therefore, Cornwall is seen as an area of prosperity. A closer look shows how unrepresentative that can be. For example, the gross domestic product per person in Cornwall is only half of that in London and 60 per cent. of that in Devon. We are thankful that employment in Cornwall is looking better but it still comes high in the poverty league. In a recent report of the Low Pay Unit one of its wages rights advisers said:

"I was stunned at how low paid people in Cornwall are. We knew they were not well paid down there, particularly young workers. But we have had reports from a number of people working in garages for really low money, and from one woman who was getting just 50 pence an hour. The situation in Cornwall stands out quite a way."

Indeed it does. The fact is that 40 per cent. of workers in Cornwall are low-paid compared to 25 per cent. elsewhere in Britain.

Too many of the jobs created in Cornwall remain seasonal or part-time. They are not bread-winning jobs but follow the national trend of an increase in part-time work. For example, Tesco's in Truro closed down one site to move to another and the jobs changed overnight. They changed through sackings and then re-employment from full-time bread-winning jobs to part-time low-wage shop work. It often employed young people working part-time for a short period to earn pin money. That is a tragedy. It is reflected in the national figures. Employment in agriculture is down, as is employment in energy and water supply. Employment in manufacturing reduced by a full 130,000 between March 1986 and 1987. Employment in construction is up slightly but the real boom is in service industries with a 351,000 increase. The jobs created are not bread-winning jobs. Even in my county where pay is 17 per cent. below the national average the jobs do not match up to that.

Too little account is taken of particular needs. A good example is the fishing industry, where Government policy of conservation too often penalises local fishermen. They cannot sail away as the others do who arrive, fish out the quota and then leave.

There are possible solutions to that. We should be investing in long-term prospects for full-time, well-paid employment and concentrating on the role of the Government in areas such as infrastructure. We should enable local government to take more local initiatives and encourage manufacturers and service industries to move into their areas and we should help local small businesses to set up and grow. That is why the development agencies are so important and why they must continue and their role be enhanced. New agencies should be financed in more of the English regions. Not all poverty — the Government should be reminded of this on every possible occasion — takes place in the inner cities where the schemes are being expanded. Many people in my area feel that once again they have been forgotten by Government initiatives and policy.

It is possible to create long-term jobs by reducing costs caused by poor infrastructure. We should increase skills and increase value-added, particularly through local manufacturing and an increase in quality. It is possible to reduce those costs by concentrating Government effort on infrastructure in roads, rail, housing and advanced digital communication, none of which need add to the import boom. By concentrating on these things we can avoid the problems suffered by customers as well as businesses in such areas.

We need to cut back on the red tape and the bureaucracy where appropriate, particularly for small businesses. That can be done by decreasing the national insurance contribution by 25 per cent. for employers in assisted areas and areas of high unemployment. I hope — this is even more important — to see an industrial version of the agricultural advisory service for small businesses, particularly in areas affecting information, legal problems and accounting.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman said about cutting red tape. It is very easy for Opposition Members to say such things. Will he give us an example of some of the red tape and forms he would like to see cut out? My hon. Friend the Minister and his predecessor have made great efforts to reduce the burden of form-filling for small businesses. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us to which forms he is referring?

Mr. Taylor: One thing that could be done immediately would be to increase the VAT threshold. That would remove a great deal of red tape from many small businesses just starting up.

None of the initiatives I have mentioned will work unless we increase skills. It is common knowledge that the United Kingdom has fewer graduates than its many competitors and we do not have the know-how in industrial skills. The youth training scheme will be a success only if we are able to enhance it in terms of quality and choice. Forcing young people on to courses they do not want does not help them and it will not help the other people who are willing participants and want to make the best possible use of the course. That can be seen in schools with the problem of 16-year-olds who do not want to be on certain courses but are forced to be there and who disrupt the course for others. That should not be inflicted on YTS trainees. But at least the youth training scheme is, at last, being improved in terms of quality and job training.

We need training investment schemes. Companies who invest properly in training should be helped. To provide variety we should encourage companies to make that vital

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investment in our young people. It is sad that as the number of unemployed people decreases through statistical juggling a real effort to decrease unemployment through expanding further and higher education is not being made as it should. Instead, we are seeing a division between the privileged and the rest. We must see an increase in the numbers in further and higher education if we are to invest in the future. We should double the number by the year 2000 and beyond.

As the infrastructure is put in place and the skills increased, we can concentrate on increasing value added and quality. It makes no sense in Cornwall to export our raw fish and vegetables to Brittany for processing. We should be doing that ourselves and keeping the benefits of doing so. Indeed, Brittany's example is valuable. We recently held a conference, "Cornwall — The Way Ahead", in which we were told about the success of Brittany. I am delighted that English China Clays, local authorities and many other bodies are co-operating to take that initiative forward.

The conference looked at ways of increasing our prosperity and at developing more and better jobs. The experience of Britanny was our model for discussion. It had a free rein from the French Government to develop local initiative. Local power was decentralised. It was given the basic infrastructure investment on which to build. At that conference all views from across the political spectrum were represented and there was a common theme. First, there is the need to develop infrastructure, particularly the A30 through Cornwall. That applies to so many other areas in the country. Secondly, we discussed skills with science parks proposed for St. Austell drawing on the china clay industry and for Camborne drawing on the school of mines. It is that development of skills and the jobs that come with them that is vital across the country, particularly in areas so often written off as peripheral and which suffer high unemployment. Above all, there was an emphasis on the ability to take local initiatives and develop quality and value added.

All sides of the conference agreed on the need to draw together clear ideas and opportunities to a single development agency, large enough to attract support but small enough and decentralised enough to respond to local needs. That is why I believe that the model of development agencies throughout Britain is vital to our economic development. Simply singling out inner cities as flavour of the month will not do.

The speaker from Brittany who addressed us recommended that we draw up a short list of our needs, a few brief points out of the many hundreds we could think of that Cornwall should aim to achieve. I believe that the Government would do well to take on board a similar principle, especially the Chancellor as he looks towards his next Budget. First, we should tackle infrastructure as the main priority of central Government. It is the basis of a competitive economy and is a more adequate response to balance of payments fears than tax cuts will ever be. Secondly, we should expand education and quality of training alongside that so that we are not neglecting the next generation and the generation after that who will have to pay the bill for the Government's neglect. The Government are spending the revenues from North sea oil and privatisation. Those revenues will not be there for future generations to use. They should be used to rebuild a fractured infrastructure and a decimated manufacturing base. Thirdly, we should free local people to take more local initiatives through decentralised government and independent development agencies.

That will give a sustainable increase in employment in all the regions which tax cuts and a consumer boom will not. They will be a far better use of the revenues which we have now but may not have in the future. The Chancellor should grasp the opportunity before we slide, once again, into the decline which is already staring at us on the near horizon.

6.30 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): My speech will be much shorter than normal because of the length of some of the speeches through which I have had to sit and which have prevented many Conservative Members from speaking. Although it will not come as a surprise to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) that I disagree with his motion, I should like to congratulate him, as would most Conservative Members, on having taken the trouble and the time of the House to underline the "devastating effect" of unemployment. I do not disagree with him on that point. The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) said that to Conservative Members unemployment was just a statistic. That was offensive and it is not the case.

I am not, as some Labour Members would say, some southern banker who has not seen unemployment. I know Sunderland, North rather well because I operated as a CBI director there. I well remember at least 20 managing directors in the constituency who said in conversation to me, "If only my work force would try to moderate their pay claims, I would be able to preserve jobs in my company." *[Interruption.]* I got that from the horse's mouth, and the Opposition did not. If that is what 20 managing directors say, perhaps the unemployment about which the hon. Member for Sunderland, North complained would have been lower.

I direct the attention of the hon. Member for Sunderland, North to Consett. I saw what happened when the ironworks closed and, of course, that was devastating for Consett's economy. Labour Members who pontificate on this subject should visit Consett. I should be the last person to say that it was perfect, but the enterprise now being developed there would never have been believed in 1978. It is outstanding. I know the west midlands at first hand. The absence of regional policy devastated that region and created unemployment. So there are two sides to the coin. I heard about neither from the Opposition.

Another point was noticeable by its absence in Labour Members' comments. If I were trying to adduce one reason for the unemployment in the northern region and in Sunderland, North, it would be the contribution of the work force and the trade unions. I saw the 20, 30 and even —I know that the Opposition do not like to hear this, but they will — 40 per cent. wage claims submitted to companies in the northern region and in Sunderland, North. As we have been told, they were non-competitive companies and could not afford to meet such claims. But would the Opposition listen to them? No, they would not; nor did the work force. That is why unemployment increased until soon after the Conservative Government took power.

I do not blame the work force for what happened. My view is — *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) would listen, he might, for once,

learn something. Perhaps he would like to make a point in his own time? No. Weak management contributed more to the downfall of some companies than the work forces.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cran: I shall not. I gave the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) the opportunity to intervene, but he did not take it.

There were far too many managers—*[Interruption.]* I am hitting home on a few points, which is why the Opposition are getting excited. Far too many managers in the northern region and in Sunderland, North adopted the "Easy live and quick die" philosophy of Sir Walter Scott. They said, "We shall not fight the excessive pay increases this year because there are too many other things to do. We shall fight them next year." But next year never came, until the Conservatives were elected in 1979. That is when a Chancellor, a Prime Minister and a Government made the industrial community and the work force address the economic facts of life.

It is clear that the Opposition have not done their homework. If they had, they would see that unit labour costs in the United Kingdom were sky-high, out of all proportion to those of any of our major competitors. Against such a background, can one wonder why unemployment occurred? I have given the reasons.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have heard all the talk from the Opposition about unemployment, but is it not a fact that no Labour Government have ever seen unemployment fall? They were all elected on a ticket of reducing unemployment, yet all left office with higher unemployment than when they entered it.

Mr. Cran: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The record shows that unemployment has increased under every Labour Government.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cran: I have given way already. I want to continue my speech, and other hon. Members want to contribute in the debate. Perhaps I shall give way once in Standing Committee on the Employment Bill.

Our international competitive position was disastrous, and the Labour Government's actions had a great deal to do with that. As has been made clear, the position now has been reversed. The environment is totally different. I see moderate trade unions, for which I and the industrial community are grateful. I see a hard-working and reasonable work force.

Mrs. Mahon: That is insulting.

Mr. Cran: It is not insulting; it is a fact. If the hon. Lady cannot recognise facts, that is her problem.

I see also far tougher management than I have seen before in my life. Those factors and Government policy have resulted in what the Opposition do not like to see —an economic miracle, the like of which I have never before seen in my lifetime — *[Interruption.]* The Opposition will not put me off my stride. Northern Members of Parliament are numbered not just among the Opposition. I too am a northern Member and I find that in the past year unemployment in every constituency on Humberside has fallen, in some dramatically. If I had time, I should take another time phase to show what is happening. If the Opposition would like to meet me outside, I shall show them the statistics.

The Opposition should remember that Humberside, where I operate, is also in the north of England, and industry there is extremely bullish. If only the Opposition, like the Government, would leave industry alone to get on with its job, I guarantee that it would continue to create the resources which all of us would like to distribute. Leave industry alone and it will do the work. That is what the Government are doing.

There are four ways in which we could help to continue to alleviate unemployment. First, I believe passionately that regional policy has failed the regions of the United Kingdom. Essentially, all that it has done is to provide a temporary jobs lifeboat. Over the past 20 or 30 years, no real enterprise culture has grown up in the regions. When a recession comes along, all the branch factories close down and unemployment is created. I hope that the Government are intent on doing what I understand them to say that they will do, which is to take a radical view of regional policy.

Secondly, we need to accelerate the deregulation of small businesses. I feel strongly that small businesses would employ far more people if they did not have to put up with the burden of endless regulations, relating not only to people but, I regret to say, to the statistics for which the Government continue to ask.

Thirdly, I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) about employers taking a bigger role in training. I would go so far as to say that, given present levels of corporate profitability, it is quite obscene that so few companies are prepared to put their hands in their pockets and pay for their own training. Too many companies are willing to poach from some company up the road. That must end, and I hope that a strong message will go out from the House of Commons to that effect.

Finally, I see dangerous signs for unit labour costs in the United Kingdom. Unless we contain our unit labour costs, unemployment will increase again to the levels that we have experienced—as sure as night follows day and spring follows winter. I hope that the Government will send out a strong message to the CBI, the chambers of commerce and the TUC to contain, and to continue to contain, unit labour costs.

6.41 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on tabling this motion. Incidentally, I regret that a motion of this kind was not tabled by our Front Bench; it should have been. The motion clearly sums up the character of unemployment and the way in which we should deal with it. During our debates on unemployment, I hear much argument about the so-called nitty-gritty—about immediate questions such as whether we should have schemes to take youngsters off the dole —but I rarely hear about the nature of the system that creates unemployment. My hon. Friend has drawn attention to that very subject in his motion.

I do not argue with hon. Members who say that unemployment is bound to go down for a period. Of course it will go down—just as it will rise again later as long as this system is in existence. The very nature of the economic system under which we live leads to booms and slumps; after a slump there is inevitably another boom. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce) would keep his mouth shut for a few moments, he

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

might learn something — as the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) said to my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) a few moments ago.

As a young working man studying economics in the evenings, I read Adam Smith and Ricardo — all the bourgeois economists — as well as Marx and others. Having studied the various economic systems, I concluded that the capitalist system was bound to lead to unemployment and poverty for masses of workers and that it was bound to lead to some people getting extremely rich. In this society, the rich have got richer and the poor are getting poorer. There is no question about that at all. No matter how Conservative Members argue, that is what is happening, and for once the statistics prove it beyond doubt.

I have heard today the argument that all that is wrong is that the workers have demanded high wages. I heard that when I was an apprentice joiner at 14 years of age. I remember hearing that the slump of those days was the fault of the workers who had demanded higher wages and better conditions of employment and that if they had accepted low wages, everything would have been all right and we would have had full employment. That was in the 1930s, and matters improved only relatively. It was the war, and nothing else but the war, that got rid of unemployment. I will tell hon. Members a story that amazed me at the time. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members had better remember that during the war years some of us fought for a different type of society and for full employment. That was what we demanded when we came back and we began to get it under the Labour Government. When I came back——

Mr. Ian Bruce: The hon. Gentleman came back to a Labour Government and unemployment.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman had better behave himself. I should like to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I have never seen so much hooliganism in the House as has come from young Conservative Members since the last election. It is absolutely disgraceful. The reason for that is that they are now ideologically so sectarian that they cannot understand that there is a better society worth working for—rather than the society being bolstered by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

Mr. Jack: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heffer: No, I will not give way. I know that the hon. Gentleman does not like it, but, if the cap fits, he must wear it.

Let me explain something that I learnt when I came back from the war. I was a building worker, so I know about unemployment and work. I discovered that a labourer, who had been unemployed for nine years, never stopped working. He would work through his break and his lunch hour. He worked the whole time. When I said to him, "You don't have to work like a madman", he said, "I was out of work for nine years. I walked up and down this country seeking employment and could not get a job. Now that I am back out of the forces and I have a job, I intend to keep it." Conservative Members do not seem to understand that that is the nature of our capitalist society.

I am not going to make a long speech. In all the arguments that we hear about the immediate action that the Government can take, we are playing with the real issue — whether we are going to allow this type of society to remain and continue with an economic system that will create unemployment, even though there will be booms at times. That is the issue. If Conservative Members are serious about unemployment and are as worried about it as we are, they must bear that in mind.

I do not deny that some Conservative Members are worried about unemployment in their constituencies. The great Macmillan, who wrote "The Middle Way", accepted the concepts of Keynes because he was so concerned about unemployment and realised that there had to be Government intervention in economic affairs. Conservative Members today have even forgotten what Macmillan said. His ideas have been thrown out the window and described as creeping Socialism. In fact, they were an attempt to bring decent conditions of employment and a decent society to this country. If Conservative Members are seriously concerned about unemployment, let them give the matter a little more deep thought than they have so far.

The growth of technology clearly means that fewer workers will be employed. If increased wealth is then produced, the question that immediately arises is how to redistribute that wealth and ensure that more people are employed. That can be achieved only by reorganising society in an intelligent manner, not by putting profit before the interests of the mass of the people. [HON. MEMBERS: "Like Russia."] I have never been an ardent supporter of the internal system in the Soviet Union, but we could learn an important lesson from the Russians. There has not been a rise in the standard of living for all the people there, because in my opinion they have not had sufficient democracy; but democracy, combined with their planning, could have led to a decent society. What is wrong in the Soviet Union is not the planning, but the lack of democracy. Our democracy, with the right kind of democratic planning, could bring about full employment. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may laugh, but, unless we take the action proposed in my hon. Friend's motion, unemployment will be even worse that it is now. There is one single reason for that. The stock market has begun to crash. That is a sign of the nature of the crisis in the system—a crisis that will not be overcome as simply as some people suppose.

The answer is what my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North has proposed: a genuine, democratic, Socialist answer. That is what I believe in and that is what my forefathers in the movement believed in. That is the answer to unemployment, poverty and misery. It is far better to fight for that solution than for the selfishness represented by the Conservative party.

6.52 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I in no way wish to impugn the sincerity and passion of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), but I disagree fundamentally with a great deal of what he has said. His prescription is that Socialism has never been tried in this country and that no Government have ever tried the system that he believes would work.

The trouble with the hon. Gentleman's solution, as with the motion proposed by his hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), is that it is a Utopian dream of human nature which simply does not exist. The Opposition have made many indictments of the

Government's actions, as though unemployment and all the evils of society were the fault of the Government, but what they are really indicting is human nature. Their Utopian system reminds me of the words of Colin Francis:

"I am going where there are rivers of wine
The mountains bread and honey
Where kings and queens do mind the swine
And the poor have all the money."

The hon. Member for Walton will never see a society like that however long he lives because no one, least of all a Conservative Government, will implement the prescription that he proposes. Moreover, no Labour Government will have the chance to do so because since 1974 the electorate has consistently rejected any such notion and will continue to do so for as long as the prescription set out in the motion is on offer.

I wish to contribute something more positive than the litany of woe that we have heard from the Opposition, who have concentrated on industrial decline and the loss of certain markets and certain types of job. The ceaseless talk about the slum economy, as described by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and others, means that new opportunities for economic expansion and employment are likely to be missed.

My own constituency has experience of this. Many jobs in Portsmouth disappeared when the dockyard became Her Majesty's naval base. Instead of throwing up their hands in horror like the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) in an attitude of doom and gloom, the people of Portsmouth thought about what could be done to attract new jobs and to encourage people to retrain in new skills. Thousands of people who thought that they might never work again have found new employment in and around the area.

Mr. Ian Bruce: I hope that my hon. Friend will make it clear that the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is in no way typical of the people of Halifax. They are hard-working, industrious people and have reduced unemployment in the area to under 12 per cent. What she says in the House——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member is making a speech, not an intervention. Mr. Martin.

Mr. Martin: I shall not follow my hon. Friend down that path, as I wish the enterprise and initiative of the people of Portsmouth to have a hearing in the House as well.

The Opposition spoke of the evils of international business, but this country did not begin the trend to internationalisation of business or the change in the ratio between manufacturing and service jobs. We could not possibly stand against the international realities that gave rise to those features. The hon. Member for Sunderland, North produced the bogies of international financiers and businesses which provide jobs and then suddenly withdraw. The number of jobs provided in this country by those who have been encouraged to come here by increasingly free markets and free trade is legion. The habits and conditions of employment that they have brought have created many jobs in my constituency and in the constituencies of Labour as well as Conservative Members.

It is true that the proportion of jobs in manufacturing industry has fallen while the proportion of jobs in the service industries has risen, but the same has been true in Germany, where the proportion has fallen from 17 per cent. to 13 per cent.——

Mr. McLoughlin *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly:—

The House divided: Ayes 173, Noes 308.

Division No. 109] **[6.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Cohen and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'ts)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*

Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

7.11 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Three different points of view are set out in the first group of amendments. The Government's position is set out in Government new clause 5, the official Opposition's position is set out in new clause 6 and I and a number of my hon. Friends have set out our view in new clause 9. The official Opposition's position is a Left-wing position, the Government's position is a compromise position, and those who are more absolutely inclined will be attracted by new clause 9.

I respectfully suggest that the House would find it easier if we had the opportunity to vote on each of those three propositions. I should be grateful if the Chair would give some guidance so that we may know how the debate will end.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman's speech is very persuasive. I can tell him that Mr. Speaker has determined that there can be a Division on new clause 6, but that a Division is not possible on new clause 9. I refer the hon. Gentleman to new clause 5 because that assumes the continued existence of section 71, whereas the new clause that stands in his name seeks to repeal section 71. Therefore, should new clause 5 fall, Mr. Speaker would certainly allow a Division on new clause 9.

Mr. Budgen: Are you, Madam Deputy Speaker, advising those hon. Members who support new clause 9 to vote against new clause 5?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Far be it from me to give guidance to hon. Members on such matters.

New Clause 5

RACE RELATIONS MATTERS

'—(1) Except to the extent permitted by subsection (2) below, section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 (local authorities to have regard to need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity, and good relations, between persons of different racial groups) shall not require or authorise a local authority to exercise any function regulated by section 17 above by reference to a non-commercial matter.

(2) Subject to subsection (3) below, nothing in section 17 above shall preclude a local authority from—

(a) asking approved questions seeking information or undertakings related to workforce matters and considering the responses to them, or

(b) including in a draft contract or draft tender for a contract terms or provisions relating to workforce matters and considering the responses to them,

if, as the case may be, consideration of the information, the giving of the undertaking or the inclusion of the term is reasonably necessary to secure compliance with the said section 71.

(3) Subsection (2) above does not apply to the function of terminating a subsisting contract and, in relation to functions as respects approved lists or proposed contracts, does not authorise questions in other than written form.

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

(4) Where it is permissible under subsection (2) above to ask a question it is also permissible to make, if it is in writing, an approved request for evidence in support of an answer to the question.

(5) The Secretary of State may specify—

(a) questions which are to be approved questions for the purposes of this section; and

(b) descriptions of evidence which, in relation to approved questions, are to be approved descriptions of evidence for those purposes;

and the powers conferred by this subsection shall be exercised in writing.

(6) Any specification under subsection (5) above may include such consequential or transitional provisions as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient.

(7) In this section—

"approved question" means a question for the time being specified by the Secretary of State under subsection (5) above;

"approved request for evidence" means a request for evidence of a description for the time being specified by the Secretary of State under that subsection in relation to an approved question;

"workforce matters" means matters falling within paragraph *(a)*, but no other paragraph, of subsection (5) of section 17 above;

and any expression used in this section and section 17 above has the same meaning in this section as in that section.'.—*[Mr. Ridley.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following: New clause 6 — *Contracts compliance in relation to public supply or works contracts*—

'(1) It is the duty of every public authority to which this section applies, in exercising in relation to its public supply or works contracts, any proposed or any subsisting such contract, as the case may be, any function regulated by section 17 to exercise that function with reference to the enforcement of the law by any appropriate agency and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment.

(2) The public authorities to which this section applies are those specified in Schedule 2 to this Act.

(3) The contracts which are public supply or work contracts for the purposes of this section are contracts for the supply of goods or materials, for the supply of services or for the execution of works.

(4) A local authority may in pursuance of the functions regulated by this section, have regard to any of the following:

(a) the terms and conditions of employment by contractors of their workers, the arrangements for the training of their workforces, or the employment (in the case of an inner city area or region of high unemployment) of a reasonable percentage of their workforce from among the local unemployed which shall be determined by the authority;

(b) the actual or potential membership of contractors of industrial, trade or professional associations, technical guarantee schemes or any other associations or schemes pertaining to their competence to perform the contract;

(c) in co-operation with the relevant local employment office, the employment by contractors of disabled people in accordance with the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

(5) In this section, any term defined in section 17(8) below shall having the meaning thereby ascribed to it.

(6) In this section, 'inner city area' and 'region of high unemployment' shall have the meanings set out by the Secretary of State in regulations.

(7) The provisions of sections 17 to 21 shall have effect subject to the provisions of this section.

(8) This section shall have effect from the date of Royal Assent.'.

New clause 7 — *Contracts compliance in relation to public supply or works contracts (Race relations provisions)*—

'(1) It is the duty of every public authority to which this section applies, in exercising in relation to its public supply or works contracts, any proposed or any subsisting such contract, as the case may be, any function regulated by section 17 to exercise that function with reference to the enforcement of the law by any appropriate agency and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment.

(2) The public authorities to which this section applies are those specified in Schedule 2 to this Act.

(3) The contracts which are public supply or work contracts for the purposes of this section are contracts for the supply of goods or materials, for the supply of services or for the execution of works.

(4) A local authority may in pursuance of the functions regulated by this section, have regard to any of the following:

(a) the country or territory of origin of supplies to, or the location in any country or territory of the business activities or interests of, contractors or associated bodies where it may be reasonably necessary to the pursuance of its duties under the Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976;

(b) observance of the Race Relations Act 1976, and in particular, the carrying out by the authority of its duties under Section 71 of that Act.

(5) In this section, any term defined in section 17(8) below shall have the meaning thereby ascribed to it.

(6) In this section, 'inner city area' and 'region of high unemployment' shall have the meanings set out by the Secretary of State in regulations.

(7) The provisions of sections 17 to 21 shall have effect subject to the provisions of this section.

(8) This section shall have effect from the date of Royal Assent.'

New clause 9—*Race Relations Matters. (No. 2)*—

'Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 is hereby repealed.'.

Amendment No. 9, in page 14, line 3, leave out clause 17.

Government amendment No. 10.

Amendment No. 11, clause 18, in page 17, line 1, leave out subsections (1) to (3).

Government amendment No. 14.

Amendment No. 15, in page 17, line 43, leave out subsection (9).

Amendment No. 16, in page 17, line 43, after '(10)', insert 'and (10A)'.

Amendment No. 17, in page 18, line 1, leave out subsection (10).

Amendment No. 18, in page 18, line 7, at end insert—

'(10A) Nothing in Section 17 above shall preclude a Local authority from doing by reference to a non-commercial matter any act in the exercise of a function regulated by Section 17 above if the matter falls within paragraph *(a)* (but no other paragraph) of subsection (5) of that Section and the doing of the act is reasonably necessary to secure that the function is carried out with due regard *(a)* to the need to comply with the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.'.

Government amendment No. 20.

Amendment No. 21, in page 18, line 12, after '(10)', insert 'and (10A)'.

Government amendment No. 22.

Amendment No. 23, in page 18, line 17, after '(10)', insert 'and (10')'.

Amendment No. 24, in page 19, line 22, leave out Clause 20.

Government amendment No. 25.

Amendment No. 31, schedule 6, in page 47, line 8, at end insert—

'1976 c. 74 Race Relations Act 1976 Section 71'.

Mr. Ridley: In view of the interchange which we have just heard, it would be wise for me to leave it to hon. Members on both sides of the House to advance their arguments for the amendments and new clauses. I shall seek to reply to the debate at the end, but, in the meantime, I shall simply move the new clause.

This new clause and the consequential amendments fulfil an undertaking given by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government during the Standing Committee's consideration of the provisions in part II of the Bill, which deals with the supply and works contracts of public authorities.

As at present drafted, the Bill contains an exemption —in clause 18(10)—which allows authorities to carry out their contractual function with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination. This is in recognition of the statutory duty placed on local authorities by section 71*(a)* of the Race Relations Act 1976. However, local authorities also have a statutory duty under section 71*(b)* of that Act to secure that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. We have received many representations to the effect that authorities should be allowed to carry out their duty under both section 71*(a)* and section 71*(b)*.

As my hon. and learned Friend recognised in Committee, there is force in the argument that nothing in the Bill should prevent authorities from carrying out their existing statutory duties. Limiting the exemption in clause 18(10) to authorities, section 71*(a)* duty fails to meet that principle.

In order to remedy this, we have tabled this new clause dealing with the way in which local authorities should carry out their section 71 duties within the contractual process. The Race Relations Act requires local authorities to have regard to race relations matters when exercising their various functions. In accordance with undertakings given by Ministers to the effect that nothing in the Bill will prevent authorities carrying out existing statutory duties, I believe that we should now seek to recognise the duty placed on local authorities by both parts of section 71.

However, we have to consider very carefully how the Bill could be amended in a way that does not permit abuses of the section 71 duty, such as that suggested in the Opposition's new clause, nor must it impose excessive burdens on contractors.

Hon. Members will see that the new clause proposes that authorities should be allowed to ask written questions about race relations practices relating to the non-commercial matters in clause 17(5)*(a)*.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is my right hon. Friend saying that, in this day and age, the Government really believe that local authorities should have a duty to

"promote equality of opportunity, and good relations, between persons of different racial groups"

in contracting companies used by local authorities; in other words, not within their own labour force but within other people's labour forces? If my right hon. Friend believes that, will he tell us how we should avoid a massive ding-dong and contention between local government and the people it seeks to employ?

Mr. Ridley: I like to respond to any speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). However, we are proposing this course, which will allow local authorities to perform their statutory duties, yet, at the same time, prevent them from exploiting or abusing those opportunities because of the procedure which I am describing to my hon. Friend. If he will bear with me, he will see that there is logic in what I say.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): That is precisely why I am pursuing this point. The Secretary of State has said that there is nothing in the Bill which will prevent local authorities from carrying out their statutory duties. I entirely agree with him. But will he tell the House how the Bill would prevent local authorities from carrying out their statutory duties when they would be at liberty to do so?

Mr. Ridley: I hope that I may call my hon. Friend "my hon. Friend". He did not extend that courtesy to me. The purpose of the Bill is to prevent local authorities from abusing the contractual process, but we do not seek to contradict or override any statutory duty under any other Act of Parliament. In other words, we approach the Bill without using it as a way of amending any other piece of legislation or affecting any other responsibility that has previously been placed on local authorities. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that, if he seeks to make such changes, the right place is not in this Bill.

Mr. Marlow: Why not?

Mr. Ridley: It is simply designed to fit local authorities' tendering procedures to the law as it stands in relation to other matters.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ridley: I have already given way to my hon. Friend. We seem to be having a microcosm of a debate during my formal speech presenting the Government's amendments.

Mr. Budgen: Since my right hon. Friend has to admit that new clause 9 is in order and that, indeed, other provisions in other Acts are repealed by the Bill, it is not good enough simply to say that it would not be appropriate. Will my right hon. Friend please explain why he believes that it is desirable to retain section 71? He clearly has the opportunity, if he wishes to do so, to repeal it today.

Mr. Ridley: I am not for one moment questioning your decision, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the clause is in order. That is not part of my case, and I have never said that it is. My hon. Friend has put his argument, and I shall respond to him at a later stage. I merely want to explain what the Government are proposing so that my hon. Friend may consider whether it meets what he wants.

If it is reasonably necessary for local authorities to ask written questions about race relations practices in pursuance of their duty under section 71*(a)* and *(b)* of the Race Relations Act 1976—but only if such questions are in a form that is specified by the Secretary of State—we shall cut out the abuse of section 71. I am sure that that point is in the minds of many of my hon. Friends. Authorities would be allowed to take account of the answers to questions in exercising their contractual functions prior to entering into a contract, but they would not be able to terminate a contract on race relations grounds. By specifying the questions to be asked, we shall

[Mr. Ridley]

enable authorities to fulfil their duties without imposing too excessive a burden on contractors, who, until now, have been faced with different questionnaires from different authorities. Some questionnaires have been extremely long and gone into quite unreasonable detail.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ridley: I have said that I shall not give way any more. I am looking forward to hearing my hon. Friend's speech. I have given way three times already. However, I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend has said that the burden would not be too excessive. How long is the process likely to take? How burdensome is the burden going to be? On a specific point, my right hon. Friend is going to bring forward a list of questions that can be asked. Will he discuss the questions with the Commission for Racial Equality before they are brought forward?

Mr. Ridley: I shall certainly discuss the questions with the Commission for Racial Equality, local authority associations and anybody else who has an interest in such consultation. At the moment, I envisage about four or five questions. My hon. Friend will agree that that is fewer than I have here. I have the Sheffield city council department of employment and economic development questionnaire. Its pages are not numbered, but it is getting on for 100 pages to be filled in. It would take several months' work to supply the amount of information that is required. It is standard issue from Sheffield city council, and in future it will not be allowed. Indeed, the council will be allowed to ask only the questions that I have set out. The consultations will take place as soon as possible so that authorities can take account of the approved questions once the Bill is enacted.

The drafting of the new clause achieves a sensible balance between the two points of view that have been expressed on both sides of the House. There will be those who claim that local authorities will not be able to exercise their section 71 duty in ways that they would like, and there will be those who claim that section 71 has no place at all in the contractual process. The clause fulfils our undertaking in Committee to amend the Bill in a manner that does not permit abuse of duty and does not impose excessive burdens on contractors. I commend it to the House.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): First, the good news, which is that, by this clause, the Secretary of State is not only embracing but, in effect, nationally codifying a major aspect of Labour policy. I am talking about contract compliance. I have absolutely no problem about congratulating the Government on having the good sense and open-mindedness to adopt what is, after all, a radical interventionist policy. Many Labour councils that have been busy implementing contract compliance as a means of furthering equal opportunities employment are paid a great compliment by the Secretary of State, because—make no mistake about it—contract compliance as a policy for advancing equal opportunities was first introduced in this country by the Labour-controlled Greater London council. It has since been exclusively pursued and developed by Labour councils.

However, the Government's policy on contract compliance is confused and contradictory. Clauses in the Local Government Bill to outlaw non-commercial considerations appear to have been introduced for two reasons: first, in response to pressure from a narrow group of employers' associations, who wish to keep the employment practices of some of their members from public scrutiny, and, secondly, as a reaction to an ill-informed tabloid press campaign about local authorities imposing "political conditions" on contractors.

The debate on part II of the Bill in Committee revealed that contract compliance is a serious policy that has been widely followed in the United States of America.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does that make it good?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman may intervene if he wishes to do so. He asked, "Does that make it good?" In the home of free enterprise and market forces, contract compliance and equal opportunities are a normal part of commercial activity. Any major organisation in the public or private sectors of the United States of America would almost certainly have an equal opportunities manager. The hon. Gentleman asked whether that is a good thing. It is a good thing. It has made major advances in the United States of America for employment opportunities for women, for people from black and ethnic communities and for people with disabilities. We on the Opposition side regard that as important social progress.

Mr. Forth: Does the hon. Gentleman say that the Labour party is looking to the United States for examples of contract law, labour law and other laws? Does he wish us to emulate the United States right across the range of these matters or is he just being highly selective?

Dr. Cunningham: No. The hon. Gentleman cannot crawl out of the black pit that he is in by way of an intervention such as that. The reality is that it is a civilised way in which to provide equal opportunities for people. That is what the United States has found. We are saying that we in this country, particularly those in inner-city areas, can learn lessons from that. I understand that it is the Government's intention, and even that of the hon. Gentleman, to try to aid inner-city areas during the next few years of their tenure of office. However, in case the hon. Gentlman is in any doubt, we need not even look to the United States of America. We need only to look to the Northern Ireland Office of this Government and to the right hon. Gentleman the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who has followed exactly that course in announcing that it is the Government's intention to legislate on equal opportunities in Northern Ireland. That is exactly what the Government intend to do. I can go further and tell them that the Institute of Personnel Management's independently commissioned study entitled "Contract Compliance—the U.K. Experience" finds that contract compliance is not only useful as a means of fair employment practices with respect to recruitment, selection and training, but also makes good economic sense.

The Government's own policy document on Northern Ireland reiterates the commonly held belief. It states:

> "Equality of opportunity in employment is a vital concern in Northern Ireland."

The document goes on:

> "It is essential for economic prosperity and fundamental to a democratic society."

That was said by another Cabinet Minister — the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Will Conservative

Members support it in the case of Northern Ireland, or will they oppose it? Hon. Members say that it is wrong. It seems that in the new year there will be all sorts of revolts, objections and divisions in the Conservative party on those issues.

7.30 pm

That point seems to have been lost on the Minister for Local Government who said in Committee:

"Equal opportunities policies are normally regarded as social matters. Commercial matters are matters directly relevant to the contractual process — for example, competence, capacity and cost — while other matters, irrelevant to that process, are properly described as non-commercial."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 17 November 1987; c. 780.]

I ask the Minister, who is right: he or his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who said that those matters are

"essential for economic prosperity and fundamental to a democratic society."

That illustrates the absolute confusion of the Government on those important matters.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member is looking for evidence of consistency between the Front Bench and my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and myself. He should remember that in Committee my hon. Friend the Minister of State said that

"Local authorities should not be in the business of setting themselves up as extra-statutory enforcement agencies on matters that are already the subject of existing statute and which already have, where appropriate, their own enforcement processes."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 17 November 1987; c. 793.]

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that section 4 of the Race Relations Act 1976 deals with all those matters and there is no need for local government to be involved at all.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) for that intervention —I do not often say that to him. What he said is true, and it will be interesting to see whether the Minister of State votes for new clause 5. He will have to decide whether the Committee is right or whether what his right hon. Friend has just said is right.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said:

"Equality of opportunity in employment is a vital concern in Northern Ireland. It is central to personal dignity, to the best use of individual talent and to business efficiency."

I applaud the right hon. Gentleman for saying that. He is absolutely right and Opposition Members can only regret the utter confusion, mentioned by the hon. Member for Northampton, North, between the Front Bench and the Back Bench and inside the Cabinet on these matters.

The Government have tried to hide their embarrassment by terminological wrangling. When faced with the incompatibility of their two policies, the Minister with responsibilities for industry in Northern Ireland, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), said: "We don't accept contract compliance. What we're saying is that if a company wishes to win an order from Government it must first have obtained the Certificate of Practice which says and confirms that it operates fair practices within its company. We regard 'tender acceptance', together with 'grant denial' as the way ahead, and for technical reasons, as I've explained, we don't accept contract compliance."

I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that local authorities, particularly Labour local authorities, would be happy to call their policies "tender acceptance". Of course new clause 5 does not go far enough, because although it tries to deal somewhat narrowly with the race relations aspects of this matter, it totally ignores sexual discrimination, and the position of women and equal opportunities. It flies in the face of the view of the Equal Opportunities Commission. The hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) noticed that, because she tabled some positive amendments on that issue. I look forward to hearing what she has to say. The Equal Opportunities Commission has made that clear on more than one occasion.

I am sorry that the Secretary of State is not interested in the development of careers for women—the majority of the population in Britain. That is quite obvious because he has totally ignored them in new clause 5. The Equal Opportunities Commission said to the Secretary of State and the Home Secretary that the right of women should be included in exactly the same way as they are dealt with in section 17 of the Race Relations Act and that a similar duty as exists within the Sex Discrimination Act should be provided by the Government.

Perhaps worst of all is the Government's attitude in excluding people with disabilities from their amendment. The Government rejected the amendments designed to ensure that contractors uphold their duties under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944. One of the saddest aspects of the matter is that it will hit hardest a section of the population who are already at a considerable disadvantage in the job market—people with disabilities.

That can easily be illustrated with reference to the experience of Labour-controlled Lambeth council, an authority whose attempts to put into effect equal opportunities for people with disabilities has been successful. In May 1986, the London borough of Lambeth decided not to seek exemption from its quota of 3 per cent. registered disabled people under the 1944 Act. The council was successful in recruiting more than 200 people with disabilities who were fully able to do the jobs on offer. Compulsory competitive tendering puts such progress and achievement in jeopardy. The Government know that, yet they turn their face against the reality and pretend that no such problems or risks exist. Failure to amend the Bill will almost certainly result in the job prospects of people with disabilities being severely diminished.

The Commission for Racial Equality, while it welcomes the Government's new clause, regrets that the Secretary of State has reserved to himself the power to set the questions and to define the evidence that may be sought. The commission considers it desirable that there should be regard to local variations. It says:

"In the Commission's view the wording in clause 18(10) as originally drawn provided sufficient safeguards by entrusting the Courts with redress and protection against unreasonable demands. As a fail-safe device the Commission could ultimately have invoked its code-making powers in the employment sphere (S. 47 Race Relations Act 1976) which provides for extensive consultation followed by ministerial and parliamentary approval."

The Minister has chosen to ignore all that, because he wants to do as little as possible commensurate with meeting his statutory obligations. I cannot say that we are particularly enamoured with what the Secretary of State proposes to do. We are not opposed to it, but it does not go half far enough. I can hardly do better than quote what Baroness Platt, the chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission, said in a letter of 24 September which was sent to various organisations. She wrote:

[Dr. Cunningham]

"The Equal Opportunities Commission is very concerned at the effect this measure will have on achieving equal opportunities for women. In practice employers will be likely to give priority to measures which will influence whether or not they obtain contracts, thus dimishing, to a considerable degree, the importance they give to sexual discrimination. Equally seriously, the Government will have appeared to endorse these priorities."

We share Baroness Platt's view.

I hesitate to suggest that the Minister for Local Government was misleading the Committee when he said that the Government would not allow sex discrimination into the Bill because, unlike race, there was no existing statutory duty which applied significantly to local authorities. He said that if the Equal Opportunities Commission was to ask for such a power, it would be considered. It has asked for exactly that power and, apparently, having considered it, the Government have decided not to grant it. That is the inescapable conclusion to be drawn from what the Secretary of State said. I am not surprised that the right hon. Gentleman moved new clause 5 because his junior colleague is so confused—and so are the Government—that he would be hard pressed to make a speech which did not contradict what he has already said in Committee.

As if that were not enough, we should consider what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said when he appeared on "Weekend World" in an interview with Mr. Matthew Parris. He dealt with the ministerial excuse about the limitations being necessary because of Community law. Mr. Parris asked:

"Reading between the lines, are you saying that the EEC problems can be confined to one narrow area of contract law"?

The Chancellor replied:

"I think I am more or less saying that. I think the so called EEC problem is a very narrow legal point. I don't think there's any inhibition in finding other ways of providing local training, local jobs out of all other activities, the building activities, the opening of new business, encouraging of new business that the government is going in for."

So there we have yet another Cabinet Minister expressing yet another view.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when we explored this in Committee and in correspondence afterwards, it has been made clear that there is no express prohibition of the type of contract compliance facility we are arguing for and that European law is there to be moulded if the Government take the initiative? Does he agree that there is nothing to stop the Government? There is no case law and no decision which expressly prohibits anything for which we are arguing.

Dr. Cunningham: I broadly agree with the hon. Gentleman. The truth is that the Government do not want to act in respect of equal opportunities for women or for people with disabilities and they are doing the minimum required to keep on side with the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Ridley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that European law, or, for that matter, any other law, is there to be moulded? That would seem to be a thought too liberal for him or me to accept.

Dr. Cunningham: I said that I broadly agreed with the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The substantive point, regardless of the words that the hon. Gentleman used, is that we have an opportunity in the Commission to take advantage of opportunities such as these. The hon. Gentleman said that we should set the standards in Europe, and I share that view. It is disgraceful that, on matters of human rights and dignity, once again, Britain is lagging behind the rest of Europe and the United States.

Will the Secretary of State stand by what he said? What is his real conflict with the Home Secretary in these matters? What will the Department of Employment's role be? How will the confusion end? Different Ministers are swanning around the country making promises to all sorts of people about more employment in inner cities and equal opportunities in Northern Ireland, yet this Secretary of State is legislating against what they are doing. There can be no greater confusion and no greater hypocrisy.

The limitations envisaged in new clause 5 are quite unnecessary. It would be far more sensible for the Government to accept new clause 6. The Government could then go wider when dealing with these matters, which are important to many millions of our fellow citizens. That is the Labour party's stance and why we tabled new clause 6. That is what we shall be voting on.

7.45 pm

Mr. Budgen: The Labour party is in a fortunate and, tonight, united position. It believes in interventionist laws and that, by using the law, sometimes the criminal law, the views of ordinary people can be changed. It has long been consistent on this issue. It voted for the Race Relations Act 1965, the Race Relations Act 1968 and the Race Relations Act 1976. It has been a consistent supporter of what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) calls the human rights issue, as exemplified by the various Race Relations Acts.

It is hardly surprising that, while many of my hon. Friends and even some of my right hon. Friends will have little difficulty voting against the Opposition's new clause 6, they may conclude that the Government's stance is somewhat confused. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is in a peculiarly embarrassing position. No doubt he voted in 1965 and 1968 against the Labour party's legislation, just as the remainder of the Tory party did, but he was one of only six Tories who, on 4 March 1976, voted against the Race Relations Bill receiving a Second Reading.

Those of us who felt strongly enough to say that we wanted no part of that nonsense did so because we believed that the Bill would grant special rights to a minority community.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): What rights?

Mr. Budgen: The protection of the Race Relations Act. The hon. Gentleman should know that the position of that minority has not been improved by the existence of the Race Relations Act. Indeed, it has made the presence of that minority more resented than it would otherwise have been, because many people believe that the Act confers special rights and privileges on a minority who are identified mainly by the colour of their skin. That must have been the view of my right hon. Friend when he voted with me and others on 4 March 1976.

The Tory party has to come to terms with nonsense. It will often carefully and pragmatically nurture nonsense to its breast to give a happy attitude to what some Opposition Members would call the march of progress.

Those who wish to say that they would like to accept a bit of nonsense and wish not to be seen as rejecting too much, showing themselves to be practical, and capable of understanding the exigencies of everyday politics, should understand that if we repeal section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 there will still be left in place all the activities of the Race Relations Commission.

I invite those who have a spare moment to obtain a copy of the 1976 Act. It is apparent from part VII that the Commission for Racial Equality has a considerable role to play. Indeed, I must concede that in recent years it has seen which way the wind is blowing and has not been as assertive or aggressive in the pursuit of its powers as it was immediately after 1976. Therefore, it may be that the commission can be described as a tolerable nuisance. I assert that intolerable are the activities of local authorities in pursuit of section 71.

Many Labour Members regard the black community as a captive interest group——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Rubbish.

Mr. Budgen: Yes, there are those who take that approach. They believe that by speaking constantly in terms of idealism that is based upon a concept that is enshrined in the American constitution and in American legislation they will be able to continue to claim the adherence of the black community to the Labour party. I believe that they do the black community a great disservice. I believe also that they are deeply patronising to the many members of the black community who are making or who have made their way in our society without the benefit of any special privilege.

In Wolverhampton — *[Interruption.]* — we have experience of what the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbot) and other Labour Members would describe as an active and progressive race relations industry. It campaigns most vigorously on behalf of the Labour party.

Mr. Marlow: I would just like to point out to my hon. Friend, in case he did not hear the seated interjections, that the hon. Members for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbot) and for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) both take the view that the job of a local council community relations organisation is to get rid of Members of Parliament that it does not like. This is an interesting development.

Mr. Budgen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because the council for community relations in Wolverhampton has emerged publicly in a dramatic way on three occasions during the period that I have had the honour to represent Wolverhampton, South-West. There have been two serious incidents of civil disturbance, and in each the officials of the council for community relations have, far from trying to calm things down, exacerbated the tension and made public statements to the effect that the activities of the police are not to be trusted.

As I have said, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North for drawing attention to the remarks of Labour Members about getting rid of Tory Members.

Ms. Abbott: Racist Members, not Tory Members.

Mr. Budgen: Racist, yes—exactly.

During the previous Parliament, I was a supporter of the Government's proposals to restrict immigration. During the general election, the council for community relations issued a pamphlet, which was financed by the ratepayer, to the effect that the Government's immigration policy was racist and that any candidate who supported those racist policies should not be supported. That is a reasonable point of view for the Labour party to put forward. As it happened, the Labour party had become so much associated with the activities of the council—that had done it a considerable amount of harm with a large section of the white community — that it tried to dissociate itself from the council's activities.

That did not stop the council for community relations. I say to those of my hon. Friends who are prepared to stomach a bit of nonsense, but not all of it, that if we want to have a race relations industry it is probable that the Commission for Racial Equality is rather more impartial and capable of understanding in a sensitive way the case for obtrusive legislation, as I would describe it, than the various organisations of local government.

I hope that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will vote against the Government's new clause, which I consider to be dangerous. Everyone knows that there is a fundamental battle within the Government over contract compliance. I had forgotten that when I had a recent interview with my right hon. and learned Friend the Government Chief Whip, but it was said in Committee that, when he had ministerial responsibilities for immigration, he appeared on television and said that he was in favour of contract compliance.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I referred to that in Committee.

Mr. Budgen: The hon. Gentleman is right. Perhaps it was his words that I read in the report of the consideration of the Bill in Committee. The Home Office is in favour of contract compliance and it may be that the Department of Employment is. It may also be that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has attempted to limit the effects of section 71*(b)* as much as possible. I dare say that he believes that the new clause, especially subsection (5), will limit the effects of section 71.

The issues that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has the right to define can be changed by him without them being brought before the House. Even a Minister of this Government who took a different view of contract compliance could make considerable changes, and a Minister of a different party and Government could change them substantially. I say to my hon. Friends, who may be confused by the welter of advice that is an inevitable consequence of the views that have rocked our party over the past 20 years, that if they vote against the new clauses that are before us, we can do that which we desire, which is to repeal a bit of the nonsense with which we are now confronted.

I say to those who are men of principle but of not too much—men of principle who want to demonstrate their soundness by being prepared to accept a bit of nonsense — that we are not attacking all the race relations nonsense — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] My hon. Friends ask, "Why not?" I merely suggest that we can take a useful bite at it by getting rid of section 71.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I do not propose to mention race relations, nor do I intend to speak half as long as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) because there are many hon. Members present, all of whom wish to contribute to the debate.

On the problem of disability, I want the Government to go further than new clause 5 and to accept new clause 6 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). Disabled people face serious discrimination. Figures have already been mentioned by my hon. Friend but the actual figures are even worse than the official figures. Many disabled people simply give up and cease looking for jobs because of prejudice and discrimination. The number of people who face prejudice from employers is far greater than is commonly supposed. That is one major reason why we should have contract compliance.

8 pm

It is not just the figures that show the extent of discrimination but the personal experience of disabled people. I have received letters from people who have applied for jobs. It is a very disheartening experience. Some people have told me that they have made over 100 written applications for a job. Because they have been honest and mentioned that they have a disability, they either get no reply or they get a reply simply saying, "thank you". When disabled people change tack and decide not to mention their disability when they apply for jobs, if they get an interview, the moment the employer sees that they have a disability they are rejected.

Disabled people are in a no-win position. They cannot win if they are honest when they apply for jobs and they cannot win if they do not mention the disability, because at interview they are seen to be disabled. It is the outright prejudice against the disabled which is unforgiveable. Not all employers, but far too many, refuse to consider applications for jobs by disabled people. That is why we need contract compliance.

Why do employers take such a view about the disabled? The main reason is ignorance. They are ignorant of the abilities of many disabled people. They do not appreciate that if the disabled are put in the right jobs they can do just as good a job as a non-disabled person. Even if they are put in jobs to which they are not suited, the fact that they are disabled means they are anxious to please and they work harder and more assiduously than many people who are not disabled. Therefore, disabled people are a good bargain for employers if only the employers realised it.

It is not just ignorance but downright prejudice that prevents disabled people from getting jobs. Some employers simply do not want to know. They are not interested and they do not want to cope with the problems of accommodating disabled people, but that is covered by legislation. The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 was passed specifically to help the registered disabled. That is the most neglected Act on the statute book. It is disregarded more than any other Act of Parliament. The Government help with its evasion and connive in its neglect. They connive in law-breaking by refusing to prosecute employers who break the law. Employers do not break the law by not fulfilling the quota of 3 per cent. That is just neglect. They break the law if they have not got a permit from the Department of Employment for not fulfilling the quota and then take on a fit person. Thousands of employers are breaking the law today by doing that.

If we park our cars on a double yellow line or if we have a few drinks and drive our cars we are rightly prosecuted for breaking the law. I am in favour of that. But when employers break the law by flouting the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act they are not prosecuted. That is disgraceful.

What can we do? What weapons are there in the pitifully inadequate armoury of the disabled? The best weapon is contract compliance. The fit for work scheme is helpful and the persuasion which the Government try is splendid, but neither of those is adequate. We need contract compliance. That is a vital weapon in the armoury of the disabled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland mentioned Lambeth. That local authority has fulfilled its employment quota of 3 per cent. disabled. I went to Lambeth for the celebration. That is a marvellous achievement. Lambeth is the only local authority which has 3 per cent. disabled people on its books. It has done that by contract compliance.

If the Government are not prepared to accept new clause 6 the disabled will suffer even more discrimination and loss of jobs. New clause 5 will be helpful but it does not do enough. We must have new clause 6. I hope that the Secretary of State will think again, accept new clause 6 and give a better chance and more opportunities to the disabled to get the jobs that they badly need.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I welcome the new clause proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I believe that it will be welcomed by a number of groups. As has been indicated on both sides of the House, it will be welcomed by the Commission for Racial Equality not just because it is a quango that has specialised in this sphere but because it understands the problems and the work done by local authorities. The new clause will be widely welcomed by many black and Asian people who also understand the work done by local authorities. It will be welcomed by many supporters of the Conservative party and by many Conservative councillors who do much work to ensure that local authorities make a contribution.

We are not talking just about contract compliance, although that is the major thrust of the debate. The promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups is important in many towns and cities. Conservative as well as Labour councillors recognise that need and work hard towards that end.

Mr. Marlow: Can my hon. Friend explain to the House how it is that local authorities intervening in the internal affairs of companies under contract to them will help to bring about racial harmony?

Mr. Hughes: If it was not that my hon. Friend asked that question I would say that I had never heard such a silly suggestion. As it is, I will not say that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Budgen: My hon. Friend has made the joke; he should now answer the question.

Mr. Hughes: I am happy to answer the other points that are made from a sedentary position. If hon. Members are seriously suggesting that in a mixed racial community or indeed in an area where there are a majority of Asian

people — *[Interruption.]* — the racial mix was not reflected in the work force in the area, and that that would not have some impact on good race relations, I would consider that hon. Members had not understood what we are debating today.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), said that there was logic in my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's action. However, he went on to attempt to extend that logic to sex discrimination and discrimination against disabled people. The logic was described exactly by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government in the Standing Committee. There is a legal framework for what is suggested within new clause 5. By accepting new clause 5, we are protecting the status quo. Indeed, we are improving it with regard to the powers that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take.

I agree with much of what was said by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). We need to consider the problems of disabled people. We must take a much wider look at the severe problems of people who are intelligent and who can make a vital contribution to society, but who are denied that opportunity simply because they are disabled.

It is right for Opposition Members to claim that Lambeth has a good record in connection with the disabled. The council may not be able to run a housing department, and it may be dreadful at everything else that it does, but I accept—as I have witnessed its work—that it has brought hope to many disabled people. The council should be commended on its work in that area. The Government should attempt to expand much more widely the experience of councils such as Lambeth. Although this may not come under the remit of the Local Government Bill, all employers should treat the disabled in that way and, if necessary, should be forced to do so.

I welcome new clause 5 because it matches the assurances given during the general election campaign, when we made it clear that we would honour our assurances. New clause 5 matches assurances that were given during the campaign. Indeed, it matches an assurance given by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Young, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, in another place on 21 July 1987, when he said in response to a question:

"I assure the noble Lord that there will be nothing in it"—"it" being the Bill—

"to prevent the operation of the Race Relations Act."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 21 November 1987; Vol. 448, c. 1338.]

I am delighted that that assurance will be kept. In addition, an assurance was given in Committee by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government and new clause 5 matches that assurance.

I said earlier that we are improving the present position. I believe that the powers that the Secretary of State will take are very wise. It is right that we should lay down precisely the framework that local authorities can use to carry out this important work. I welcome the assurance given from the Dispatch Box that the Commission for Racial Equality and the local authority associations will be consulted before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State comes forward with his views. Local authorities have a good record in this area, irrespective of party. Some have misused their powers, but that is no reason why we should throw everything away.

I listened carefully to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) about his local community relations council. I do not disagree with anything that he said about the council. However, we are not talking about that. We are concerned with what local authorities can do, what they have done and the importance of their being able to act in future. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West referred to new clause 9. If new clause 9 was passed without consultation or public and open debate about the merits or demerits of the new clause, that would be dangerous.

Mr. Marlow: Surely there has been no public consultation about new clause 5.

Mr. Hughes: Removing the status quo by passing new clause 9 would be dangerous. In response to my hon. Friend's sedentary intervention, surely we are protecting the status quo. We do not need public consultation to protect the status quo. I thoroughly welcome the Government's action and I applaud them for their bravery in bringing forward new clause 5, which is most welcome.

Mr. Bernie Grant: If I had walked into the debate during the contribution from the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) I would have thought that we were debating the Race Relations Act 1976, not the Local Government Bill. I believe that the hon. Gentleman's speech was a thorough disgrace. His was one of those speeches which tries to justify racism, and the House should thoroughly reject it. He referred to voting in 1976, but his contribution reminded me of 1876, when there were no black people within these shores. Perhaps he wants to return to that position. I made a pledge long ago that I would not debate with racists and I will not answer points made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West or any of his hon. Friends on that issue.

8.15 pm

We are debating the Local Government Bill, which is aimed at centralising local government. Under the Bill the Secretary of State will take additional powers from local government. That is a very dangerous trend. The theme running through the Bill is that the Secretary of State sitting in Marsham street in his bullet-proof, bomb-proof, people-proof office is more aware of the needs of particular areas and how best to meet those needs than the locally elected councillors. That is the basis of the Bill.

It is built on the false premise that some Labour-controlled local authorities have stepped out of line and done a few naughty things and as a result the Government had to introduce the Bill to bring them back to the path of righteousness and reason. During the debate, we consistently asked the Minister and his colleagues for evidence of that abuse of local government powers, but we were not given chapter and verse for those so-called abuses. We must conclude that the abuses lie in the mind of the Secretary of State and his Ministers.

The Bill should really be called the "Local Government (Strangulation) Bill". It is aimed at strangling local government by giving powers to the Secretary of State which historically belong to local authorities.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Gentleman referred to the historical nature of the powers of local government. Does he agree with the argument that

[Mr. Irvine Patnick]

I subscribe to, that all local government powers come from this place? They have not dropped as tablets of stone from heaven.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that we are debating specific amendments. This is not the time to make speeches which might be more appropriate on another occasion, such as on Second Reading.

Mr. Grant: It is necessary for us to set the debate within the context of the present situation. I thought that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, were very lenient to allow the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West to stray so far from the subject under debate. However, I accept your point and I will bring my thoughts back to the Local Government Bill.

It will take a virtual army of civil servants to monitor the workings of the Bill. I want to consider contract compliance and the relevant clauses in the Bill.

I want to concentrate on the Bill's effect on black people and other ethnic minorities who are under enormous pressure, especially in inner-city areas. Since 1979, the Government have done nothing to alleviate the plight of the many hundreds of thousands from ethnic-minority communities. Black people are four times as likely to be unemployed as their white counterparts, and those who are employed are in the most low-paid and menial jobs. They suffer the worst housing, education and health care, and they have the worst chances in life of any group in society.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Grant: No. I will not give way.

All that is due to racism. What have the Government done——

Mr. Marlow: I wonder, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether it is part of Standing Orders that if anyone in this House disagrees with the hon. Gentleman he is by definition a racist. That is what the hon. Gentleman seems to be saying.

Mr. Grant: The Government have done nothing since their election in 1979 to eliminate racism and the need for the fight against it. That is despite warnings in the reports by Lord Scarman and Lord Gifford, the report "Faith in The City" by the Church of England and similar reports by the Roman Catholic Church and other bodies. In the absence of any Government initiative, local authorities have been forced to compensate for the lack of it by introducing measures to combat the racism that is inherent in our present society.

Local authorities have listened to the ethnic minority communities in their areas, and have realised that the only way out of the vicious circle of deprivation is to give those people fair access to employment. Over the past few years, they have painstakingly developed ways of providing access to jobs. Contract compliance measures and local labour clauses in particular have been a key instrument to achieve that end. Through contract compliance measures, local authorities have been able to monitor the performance of contractors and the number of people from ethnic minorities in their work forces. That policy has succeeded in increasing the employment prospects of a substantial number of such people, not least because the authorities must themselves set an example by employing a multiracial work force.

Initially, the Bill proposed to divest local authorities of any power that they had to influence contractors' willingness to employ people from ethnic minorities. So outraged, however, were organisations such as the Greater London Association for Racial Equality, the Commission for Racial Equality and churches of all denominations that the Minister, in an embarrassing climbdown, had to amend the clause. As a result, we have new clause 5 before us.

I shall not be as generous as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) in welcoming new clause 5, because, basically, it will give more power to the Secretary of State. The new clause will allow him to specify what questions an authority may ask of contractors, bearing in mind that the authority's own money is involved. Contractors are taken on by local authorities with local ratepayers' money, and they have an absolute right to ensure that that money is not used to prop up racism.

The clause allows the Secretary of State what evidence an authority may require of a contractor. It gives him powers to make other unspecified provisions, as he may think necessary or expedient. Given the performance of this Government, and particularly that of the Department of the Environment, on equal opportunities, I venture to suggest that we can expect those powers to be abused in ways that will inhibit, rather than facilitate, the advancement of black employment opportunities.

The clause is another example of the Secretary of State taking more and more powers to himself and away from local authorities. I remind the House of the bureaucracy that will have to be set up to monitor all the goings-on in local authorities. Perhaps that was what the Secretary of State meant when he talked of "thought police" before the last election.

Another matter of great concern to me is the Government's outlawing of local labour clauses. Through such clauses, local authorities have tried to ensure that those who pay rates benefit in employment terms from the way in which they are spent. Too often, especially in the inner cities, local authorities spend millions of pounds on capital projects, the benefit of which goes to people living outside the area. There is the obscene situation of contractors bringing workers from affluent areas in the morning into an inner-city area of deprivation, perhaps to set up buildings there, only for everyone to pack up at 5 o'clock and go home to their luxury houses in the suburbs. That is deplorable.

In areas such as mine in Tottenham, we take such matters very seriously, because we believe that local labour clauses should be used first and foremost to try to ensure that disadvantaged young people — particularly young black people—have an opportunity of employment. We have found that, when such people have the opportunity to build some of the places in which they will live and work, there is little or no vandalism. That applies to the Broadwater Farm estate, and to other areas in Tottenham.

The London borough of Haringey has commented on the problem. We learned that Birmingham city council had introduced and initiated the local labour issue by requiring some contractors to employ some 30 per cent. of their employees from their particular catchment area. We said that we would employ one in six of our labour force from

the catchment area, a figure that is slightly below the local unemployment figure. Since we have done that, we have had no problems with the contractors. Since July of this year, when the clause was introduced, 17 tenders have been returned, valued at some £14 million. Four contractors have asked for extra money for employing local labour. The total extra cost was about £8,000, or 0·06 per cent. of the total contract value to date.

On the Broadwater Farm estate, we took that a bit further, and carried out a skills audit. We therefore knew precisely what skills the residents had to offer the contractors. We told the contractors that they were required to take on people from the estate to between 30 and 50 per cent. of their work force. Our action was justified: as a result, some 150 young people have now gained employment on the estate, many employed by the local direct labour organisation. The result is that we have seen young people on the estate walking around with some expectation of work. There has been a tremendous response to the positive effort of the local authority to ensure that young people had an opportunity of work that they did not have previously.

The Bill tries to outlaw that welcome development. In Committee, the Minister hid behind EEC regulations on this matter. If the Government were serious about employing local people—in inner cities in particular—and serious about tackling unemployment, particularly among young black people, should they not support the local labour clause and argue the toss with their partners in the European Parliament and the European courts? That would be the honourable course of action for the Government, but yet again an initiative taken by local authorities to alleviate deprivation in their areas is being smashed by the Government.

8.30 pm

One of the most pernicious aspects of the Bill is the clause that deals with local authorities' ability to refuse to buy South African goods and to refuse to give contracts to companies that have links with South Africa. The Bill talks about contract compliance and privatisation, but it is such a mish-mash that it is difficult to say what the worst clause is, but this one takes the biscuit.

For some years, some local authorities that are morally opposed to the regime in South Africa have said that they will not buy South African goods or have dealings with companies that live off the blood and sweat of black people in South Africa. That principled position was taken by some local authorities as long as 20 years ago. This reactionary Government are trying to stop local authorities from determining whether their ratepayers' money should be used to prop up apartheid in South Africa. It is a disgraceful clause in the Bill.

Local authorities spend millions of pounds every year on goods and services. Local authorities have a right to decide in which companies ratepayers' money should be invested, the origin of goods that they purchase and who should receive contracts from them. My borough, along with others, has been pleased to make clear its opposition to apartheid. Some years ago we passed a resolution, in line with those from other authorities, deploring the apartheid regime in South Africa, which kills and maims black people. We said that we should have nothing to do with it or its products. That policy has been supported by black people in South Africa and we receive regular bulletins from people who are struggling against apartheid in South Africa urging us to take sanctions against South Africa. Yet when local authorities try to do so, the Government step in and stop them.

In my constituency, a large proportion of people come from the black and ethnic minority communities. It is alleged to be over 50 per cent., but we are unable to say accurately what the figure is. However, it is certainly over 40 per cent. of the population; and they find apartheid repugnant and deeply offensive. They think that they should try to do the best they can in their own way by asking the local authority not to buy goods from South Africa. They have every right to do so, and the local authority has every right to respect those views. They do not want the local authority to force their children to eat apples or grapes from South Africa. If the Bill is passed unamended, people who have a conscientious objection to eating South African goods will be forced to do so because, by ruling out so-called non-commercial considerations, apartheid would not be a matter that an authority could take into account.

I want the Secretary of State to say what his position is on this matter.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is hypocritical.

Mr. Grant: It is a hypocritical position. The Government say that they are opposed to apartheid, yet a clause in the Bill is directly aimed at assisting the racists in Pretoria. It brings Pretoria in from the cold internationally by forcing local authorities and others to trade with it. I want the Secretary of State to answer that point specifically when he winds up.

Section 71*(b)* of the Race Relations Act 1976 says that local authorities have a duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups. If local authorities with large black and ethnic minority communities are forced to buy from South Africa, good relations between people from those minority groups and the white community will be strained because people from those minority communities will rightly say that the Government are not taking on board their position or considerations in this important matter.

The Bill and this clause, dealing with equal opportunities, local labour and the non-rights of women, are very dangerous. I urge the House to vote for our amendment, which seeks to maintain a reasonable relationship between local authorities and central Government.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I welcome this excellent new clause, but has the Minister considered the effect on companies' employment policies of local authorities asking questions about race but not about disabled people? It is a section of the community that is cruelly disadvantaged and needs help in seeking the employment to which it is entitled and can so effectively carry out.

This new clause, in seeking to ask local authorities, with contract compliance in mind, to ask about the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, does not change any legislation, but gives proper recognition to the admittedly weak legal onus on companies to honour employment laws affecting disabled people. It is not too much to ask.

I appreciate that the laws covering disabled people—those covering equality for women also—are weaker with regard to contract compliance than the race relations

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

legislation. I believe most strongly, as do all Conservative Members, in as free a market as is compatible with fair treatment for all. Careful employment opportunities offered to the disabled enhance, not reduce, profitability.

My own experience in computers — the sunrise industry, the industry of the future — shows that employing the disabled in this key sector—Britain leads in many parts of the computer industry worldwide—helps profitability and companies immensely. I suggest that acceptance of a modest amendment would not damage the growing profitability of our society under this Government, but would underwrite the Conservative party's commitment to tolerance and fairness.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that the Government Front Bench listened to the point made quietly and reasonably by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). There is a fundamental inconsistency between proposing the new clause to give effect to the Race Relations Act 1976 and to ensure that within the context of racial equality there is a degree of contract compliance and not accepting it in other ways. It has been accepted in the United States—the best model—that in relation to correcting disadvantages to the black and ethnic communities the contract compliance tradition—now 40 years old—has been most advantageous. However, it is applied across the board in areas of disability and women's employment.

The new clause moved by the Secretary of State, honouring an undertaking given in Committee, is welcome. I and my colleagues will support the new clauses and amendments tabled by the Labour party and oppose the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and his colleagues. I can deal easily with the rather disingenuous speech made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West about, as he called it, this little bit of nonsense. He ignores the fact that in the country where there has been a tradition of working through legislative intervention in the public and private sectors to correct disadvantage—the United States—it has been accepted as appropriate not only by politicians on both sides of the political divide in America—it has been accepted by eight consecutive Presidents—but by the vast majority of employers, unions and public bodies as being a series of employment initiatives which have clearly been of great benefit to substantial numbers of people.

Mr. Marlow: Before the hon. Gentleman elevates contract compliance and the benefits of it in the United States into the realms of mythology, would he care to take account of the fact that in the United States forces—a country that has contract compliance—there is a mass of racial problems? However, in the British forces, where we do not have contract compliance to the same extent, there is not a problem.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is often deaf, but he seems to be blind as well. His point is invalid in general. The issue of how many problems we have of a racial nature in the forces has nothing to do with contract compliance because it does not apply there. However, the reality is that in Britain there have been recent examples of discrimination in the armed forces. I believe that it was the Prince of Wales who pointed out that we do not have any black guardsmen. It is clear that in the armed forces, and the police to a lesser extent—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) would listen to the argument, we might have a better debate rather than if he continues to speak when an answer is being given. The hon. Gentleman will be able to make his speech, as he knows, in a moment. There has been a growing feeling among the black and ethnic minority communities in this country that to get into the armed forces and do well in them, particularly the more elite sections, is extremely difficult.

We are talking in this context about general employment. The hon. Member for Northampton, North will know that perfectly neutral non-political bodies in Britain have confirmed the success of a policy tried and tested in the United States. It is now backed by civil rights legislation dating back 10, 20 or 30 years, and it has been accepted by impartial experts in this country. The best example of acceptance—it was cited in Committee—is the Institute of Personnel Management. The institute wrote to hon. Members making it clear that it is vital that we continue with contract compliance. The paradox of the Government's position is that they have accepted that point. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made the very good point, which was made in Committee, that the Government see the logic of the argument for contract compliance. I did not hear the hon. Member for Copeland quote the two specific sentences that are the best evidence of the Government's view. In September 1986, the Government made the case for contract compliance in a consultative paper on equality of opportunity in Northern Ireland. The report, endorsed by the Prime Minister as well as by the Secretary of State, said:

"equality of opportunity in employment means more than simply avoiding discrimination. An active commitment to sound personnel policies is required rather than the passive compliance with anti-discrimination legislation."

8·45 pm

It is right for Opposition Members to be suspicious of the Secretary of State and some of his colleagues because of their traditional view on subjects such as this.

However, we have to act to answer the second point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, because we are talking about work that is done on behalf of the community. The work is tendered out, but it is done through the agency of government. It may be local government but it is government all the same. The Government have a duty to all the people. They have a duty, particularly at local level, to respect, advantage and assist all the communities in an area, whether it be disabled people, women or ethnic minorities. They have even more responsibility in areas with a large ethnic community. There is a strong argument that if the policies are not pursued in areas with large ethnic minority communities, it positively contributes to bad race relations and bad community relations. The economic well-being, and even the commercial well-being, to use the Government's criterion—they say we must not have non-commercial considerations—is disadvantaged. For example, if in the area around the Elephant and Castle in my constituency youngsters who are Bangladeshi by background do not have the opportunity of employment in south London, the economic well-being of south London will be disadvantaged because fewer of the local, trained young work force will be employed. They may go somewhere else but that will not help south London. In Birmingham and other

cities with large ethnic communities the same will apply. The commercial considerations are just as important as the social and other considerations.

The Government have accepted contract compliance in the context of the Race Relations Act and in the context of Northern Ireland. In time I believe that they will have to accept it across the board in relation to disabled people and women. The sooner they do so with good grace, the better.

Although all inquiries that I have made on the subject have been treated courteously and properly, I believe that we in the House are not a good example. We do not employ as many disabled people or members of ethnic communities as we should. When I asked whether it was possible for us to employ a blind woman who had applied to me for a job here, I was told that it was unlikely that she could be employed. I give that simply as an example. We ought to look at our own practices. I hope that the result of this debate will be to ensure that the authorities in the House, which are self-regulating—we are those authorities—do not seek from others what we are unwilling to apply to ourselves.

We had a long debate in Committee, which has been referred to already, about the principles of European law. The Government are extremely reticent in arguing the case for local labour, which is the context in which European law becomes relevant. If they wanted to argue that case, they could do so, probably to good advantage. The Government have not shown us their advice. They may say that there is nothing unusual about that—which is true—but they have received advice from the Association of London Authorities and had counsel's opinion. Page 434 of "Erskine May" states:

"The opinions of the law officers of the Crown"—

this would apply to opinions by counsel—

"being confidential, are not usually laid before Parliament or cited in debate, and their production has frequently been refused; but if a Minister deems it expedient that such opinions should be made known for the information of the House, he is entitled to cite them".

I ask the Secretary of State specifically to cite what advice makes it contrary to European law that we have local labour clauses in the legislation.

Mr. Ridley: Has the hon. Gentleman received a letter which was sent to him by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government? The hon. Gentleman is talking as though he has not.

Mr. Hughes: I have received the letter — it was generalised—and I understand the points. I have it here. The Minister for Local Government knows the issue very well. If the Government think that they are right, why do they not do as they are entitled and seek a declaratory judgment from the European Court? If the Government think that we are right, why do they not do the same? They cannot lose. They could include in the Bill a new clause saying, "Nothing in the Bill shall be in breach of European law." The Government need not do that, because they cannot legislate in breach of European law anyway. It is ludicrous to put in the Bill a measure that says we cannnot have local labour clauses because it is in breach of European law. If it is in breach, the Government cannot have such measures. The issue could be tested. We should not have this pussyfooting.

Page 2 of the letter of 10 December to the hon. Member for Copeland about the discussion in Brussels states:

"There seemed a possibility that the Community as a whole might accept a scheme enabling suppliers in disadvantaged areas to obtain at least some part of the contract but it remains to be seen what the Commission will propose and how it will bear on works contracts."

Instead of the Government just accepting that something might happen, why do they not argue the case? In July this year, on Second Reading, the Secretary of State said that he would like to be able to have local labour clauses. If he would like them, let us see a bit of effort to get them implemented. Let us not have half-cocked advice persuading the right hon. Gentleman that it is not worth the candle. Let us not suddenly realise that the policy for the inner cities will be averted at the first whiff of potential bureaucratic opposition. It is not a great commitment to the inner cities from the Secretary of State if the remote possibility that we cannot have local labour clauses is enough to deter him and his colleagues. If the Government are committed to the inner cities, let them test that commitment—if necessary, before the courts.

The sad truth is that this part of the Bill reveals two central Government attitudes. First, they do not respect the autonomy of local government. They wish their morality, their commercial standards, to be those of everyone else. Secondly, they wish to prevent others, who have been democratically elected, from being able to make moral decisions or decisions that are accepted in progressive societies as necessary to ensure basic equality, not to produce inequality.

We still have an extremely unequivocal society. Some people have a particular disadvantage. Some groups find life especially difficult. In the cities we are creating, as "Weekend World" put it yesterday, an increasingly large under class. The Government are meant to be committed to the inner cities. They cannot pretend that they are committed if, when the opportunity comes to do something about it, they go in the other direction.

The Secretary of State has made one small, faltering step in the right direction with the new clause. The Government will not do right by this country and by the disabled, ethnic minorities, women, and all of us, unless they embrace contract compliance wholeheartedly. I hope that the Government resoundingly reject the new clause of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, with its gross overtones and undertones of racism and little Englander mentality. I hope that the Government wholeheartedly embrace, sooner rather than later, the amendments proposed by the Opposition and by the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West, because they make it clear that we have a duty to all our citizens to ensure that they have equal opportunities in work, employment and prosperity.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I support the general principle and thrust of what I understand the Government are doing in this part of the Bill, which is broadly to separate the two issues of commerce and politics and, where that is impossible, to regulate them. But I should appreciate some clarification from the Treasury Front Bench on some matters, especially since we are considering a Government new clause.

What is the evolution of the Government's thinking on section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976? It is familiar to those who have been in the House longer than me that, however good the parliamentary draftsmen or their instructors, from time to time sections are overlooked when Bills are formulated. I understand that, if that had

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

happened in this legislation, section 71, with its duty to avoid discrimination and to promote good race relations, would have continued untroubled and would have been in force. The Government do not seek to restrict any of those statutory responsibilities in this legislation.

But the Government took it on themselves in their original proposals to propose that the anti-discrimination part of the section should be enacted with certain restrictions. This would imply that the draftsmen had taken note of the section. If they had taken note of the first part of the section, why — this point arouses some suspicions among some of my hon. Friends—did they not take note of the second? As I understand it, they want it to go forward in a regulated form in the new clause.

I am concerned about the details as set out in subsection (5) and should like some comment on them. The new clause has not been considered in Committee—I did not have the benefit and privilege of serving on the Standing Committee — and there are certain points of doubt. First, we do not have the questions yet; we have not seen them. They are to go out to consultation with a large number of people. When they come back, will they be reported to the House in draft to provide us with the opportunity to comment on them before they are finalised?

Secondly, there is, in any case, a reference to the Secretary of State specifying a series of questions. I am not clear from the Bill whether he lays on egg, as it were, and that is the end of the matter or whether, in the light of experience, he or his successors—who may be of widely different political philosophies—may wish to amend or rescind the questions. Perhaps they can only add to them. Having set out in this direction, it is most important that we do not impose a set of onerous questions on private sector business men. Having decided what the questions are, it is most important that they be secure. There is always the danger that they will be torn up and changed in accordance with the whim of the moment.

I note that the Secretary of State has taken an order-making power in clause 19. There is no equivalent proposal under debate tonight; he could not take such powers in this case. That power would have been an appropriate vehicle for the questions that he wishes to specify. If I may dare to presume to say so, that would also have been a more normal parliamentary procedure.

9 pm

My third point goes somewhat wider than my first or second, relating to the efficacy and enforceability of the questions when they are in place. I say with respect to Opposition Members that race relations are highly sensitive. When one asks, "What are your non-working days in the week?", one is led into the question whether Jewish or Muslim employment is involved. Simple and apparently innocent questions can be construed in different ways.

Conservative Members worry that, even if the questions are specified in simple terms by the Secretary of State, they may be abused and perverted by certain local authorities — I hope that none will do this — to a completely different purpose. As I understand it, under clause 19 all that a local authority has to do is to give a chit to unsuccessful business men to say, "Sorry, chum, this is why we turned you down," and that appears to be the end of the matter. I should like some comments on that.

To those of my hon. Friends who were hoping for a little support for new clause 9, let me say that the debate has been valuable. I do not share Opposition Members' perception of my hon. Friends. However, I shall not be supporting them. I take a fairly relaxed view of declaratory legislation such as section 71 of the Race Relations Act. That section should be promoting among local authorities the decency that we as citizens — and some of us as employers — apply to our own labour practices and personal lives. I do not want that section to be rescinded completely, which would be the effect of the new clause. It might have been different had my hon. Friends decided to table a new clause disapplying the Race Relations Act to these clauses of the Local Government Bill. They chose not to do that and I shall not follow them into the Lobby.

Having said that, it is right that I should voice my concern and ask the Government to answer my questions and ensure that the way in which they have restricted the application of section 71 of the Race Relations Act and imposed questions on local authorities works in a way that will not lead to abuse or to the negative race relations that such practices have often led to in the past.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): The country should note the fact that, although the Bill is already extremely objectionable in many respects, it does not go far enough for some Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) most clearly expressed that dissatisfaction and his proposal is so Right-wing that most people in Britain would find it completely abhorrent. Any comment made in my area about Glasgow district council or Strathclyde regional council and their efforts to improve the lot of ethnic minorities is likely to be a criticism that they are not doing enough; they are not criticised for going too far.

It is interesting that, when the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) was attempting to appeal to the Government's better nature on disabled people, she felt that she had to appeal to their pockets by pointing to the enhanced profitability arising from the employment of disabled people. What a comment it is on the Government's attitude that they could not take such action out of kindness or humanity.

I move quickly to sex discrimination, which has not had much of an airing yet. Earlier in the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) referred to the Equal Opportunities Commission's comments on the Bill and the fact that it would like the Sex Discrimination Act to come into line with a section of the Race Relations Act. The Minister has still not replied on the action that he intends to take on the Equal Opportunities Commission's representations. As my hon. Friend pointed out, we are still waiting for an answer. The Minister shows no signs of replying now, but perhaps he will later on.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said that he would like contract compliance throughout industry. Hon. Members may recall his making that comment. He said that he felt that it was right to object to it in local government, because local government was taking on itself powers that it did not rightfully have. Unlike most of his hon. Friends, the hon. Gentleman suggested that he would like to see contract

compliance in industry. I asked whether he intended to present a Bill to that effect, because I would gladly support it. That was four weeks ago, but I still live in hope.

The possibility of the Government doing anything about equal rights for women cannot be taken seriously in view of their record. Since 1979, they have done nothing to advance women's rights—and have, indeed, retarded them in many serious respects. They have abolished maternity grants and have made the conditions for maternity leave harsher. They have attacked the wages councils, which protected low-paid women. Part-time women workers still have worse pay and conditions than full-time workers.

The chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission—Lady Platt, who is a Conservative—has said:

"It would be an extremely worrying development if the Bill were to go ahead, given the very serious problem of discrimination against women that still needs to be tackled".

Even the Government's own supporters are complaining, but the Government pay no attention whatever. The EOC, as an agent of the Government, has encouraged local authorities to develop equal opportunities policies and has successfully advised local authorities for several years, but the Government seem to dismiss the EOC's objections to the Bill out of hand.

Some Conservative Members seem puzzled about why local authorities should need to take these matters on board. I will give the House some figures. In general, women earn only 74 per cent. of male earnings, despite the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act, which were supposed to ensure equal treatment. For manual work, the figure is 71 per cent. and for non-manual work 62 per cent. Sadly, the position is even worse in Scotland. In 1986, female average weekly earnings in Scotland were 64 per cent. of male average earnings. That represents a very small increase since 1976, the year after the Act was passed. Moreover, 32·7 per cent. of Scottish women's average gross weekly earnings are less than £100, whereas for men the figure is 6·7 per cent. More than 12 per cent. of working women in Scotland gross under £75 per week, so the situation is well documented—women are paid far less than men.

It is common knowledge that men predominate in the higher paid and more highly skilled jobs. The most obvious example is the House of Commons, where only 41 out of 650 Members—just over 6 per cent. of the total—are women.

Far from recognising the importance of advancing women to positions of higher pay and greater authority, the Government are doing their best to reverse the efforts of those who are trying to deal with the problem. I am not surprised at the Government's complacency. It suits them very well that women are not competing successfully with men. There is clear evidence that women predominate in jobs with lower pay and lower status, particularly cleaning jobs, shop work and assembly and machinist work. They are even excluded from manual clerk jobs and they are rare indeed in the higher reaches of management, whether in industry and commerce or on the Conservative Benches. As for the Prime Minister, she has not done much for the advancement of women.

The discrimination that was attacked in the Sex Discrimination Act still continues, but the Government do not wish to enforce that Act vigorously. For example, application forms still contain questions about women's marital status, ages of dependants and child care arrangements. I wonder what male applicants would think if they were asked how many children they had and who would look after them—questions which some people still regard as acceptable for women candidates. At company interviews people are still asked questions of that sort and the Government have done nothing about that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland said, the Government have accepted the logic of contract compliance in Northern Ireland over the matter of religious discrimination. I asked the Secretary of State why the Government accepted it in Northern Ireland and not in mainland Britain. He answered that there were "significant differences" between this country and there. It seems that women will have to riot in the streets in order to get the equality that we seek.

All along we have seen incredible bossiness and authoritarianism from the Government. They have been trying to tell local authorities how to conduct their affairs and seem totally unconcerned about the fact that local authorities are elected by the local electorate on the basis of what the electorate wants. If the electorate does not like the local authority's policies on ethnic minorities, disabled people or women, it can exercise its vote to say so. I am pleased to come from an area where there are no Tory Members of Parliament and where only five out of 66 district councils are Tory-controlled. The views that the Tories express are certainly not popular in some parts of the country. Indeed, their views are neither understood nor known throughout the country—especially by the 52 per cent. of the population who are women.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) has heard the expression about the pot calling the kettle black. May I through you put it to him, Mr. Speaker, that if he continues to accuse everybody who disagrees with his views of being racist, people will start to look upon him as being a black racist?

I have seen my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment embarrassed before. I have seen all my right hon. Friends embarrassed before—there is nothing particularly special about that—but my right hon. Friend has been embarrassed before because he had a hard time in debate. When he had a hard time in debate he actually believed in what he was putting forward. Today my right hon. Friend is not only having a hard time in debate, but it is very hard to believe that he believes in the measures that he is putting before the House. I am fully committed to my right hon. Friend's intentions; there is no problem on that score at all. He will have heard from the Opposition Front Bench that what he has been putting to the House this evening is Socialist policy, and he has also had the blessing of the Liberal party. No wonder he is embarrassed.

The Bill when it first started was three paces forward and one pace backwards. The new clause that we are debating makes it three paces forward and two paces backwards. Obviously, this is a contentious issue. It is on a Monday. Nobody really arrives until Monday afternoon and nobody knows what the business is until Monday afternoon. It started at 7 o'clock in the evening when the press had disappeared, so we debate what we want here and the wider world will have no knowledge of what we are doing. As my right hon. Friend knows, the vast majority of Members of his own party disapprove of what he is doing and are all elsewhere instead of being here for the debate.

[Mr. Marlow]

The history of immigration and race relations in this country has been democratically deeply disturbing. I make no comment on the immigrant community as a whole which is as industrious or as idle, as virtuous or as evil, as decent or as indecent as the population at large—there is no difference whatever. The country never willed large-scale immigration. It always opposed large-scale immigration and Governments have always been unwilling and powerless to staunch the flow. It has always been too little and too late. As with immigration policy so with policy on race relations.

The absurd, unloved Race Relations Act 1976, the nonsense that was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), was introduced, put upon this country, by a Labour Government. I am proud to say that the Conservative party abstained and my right hon. Friend to his lasting credit, until this evening, actually voted against the measure. If it did not exist, I asked my right hon. Friend whether he would introduce it. Should it exist? If we were right to oppose it then, surely we are right today to increase its influence over the original Bill. Alack and alas, our heroic Government have been got at by the moral blackmail of the race relations industry, through its absurd and life-supporting myth that those who dare to oppose its own institutional vested interests are racists. When anybody says anything sensible on this subject, he is accused of being racist. I am sorry that it has had its impact on my right hon. Friend. I know that he is a brave man.

9.15 pm

I imagine that we are all in favour of social harmony. We are all in favour of good race relations. Why does the giggling, cackling crowd on the Benches opposite find it impossible to recognise that there are many means of approaching the same end? Perhaps there is an alternative that would be far more effective than the muddled theories currently being applied. My right hon. Friend is an imaginative man. I wish that he would use his imagination and, with one leap, break free from the mental dictatorship of this self-regarding and damaging lobby. He would get immense support in the country, on earth and probably in Heaven too.

The Government's intention in introducing this Bill was to prevent corporatist, mischievous local authorities from abusing their position by introducing political constraints into what should be purely value-for-money contracts. I believe that the Government share my view that local authorities are there to decide democratically the level of services to be provided, how the money will be raised to pay for those services and how to regulate the provision of those services. Local government has no role in bringing about a new political millennium. If that is to be decided, it is to be decided here, at the national level. The intention of the Bill was consistent with that principle, albeit with a small concession.

Then there were those who were waiting in the wings to pounce on my right hon. Friend. It was not good enough. There were squeals of outrage. Grubby hands have since been grappling with the entrails of Government to bring about changes in the Bill. Once again, I am afraid that the foul deed has been done and that the lobby has overruled democracy. The vested interests have decided and Parliament has been brought into the debate at far too late a stage to influence it. The Government have been rolled over.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) was telling us about the Commission for Racial Equality. I do not share his view. The commission is very germane to this debate as it is the progenitor of the new clause which my right hon. Friend has put before the House. It is an aggressive, assertive conglomeration of lobbies which suit the purpose of selected minorities within selective minorities. By being antipathetic to the majority of the population, it harms race relations rather than heals. Five eighths of the staff are coloured. In all probability, a large proportion of that staff are political activists, unrepresentative of the communities from which they purport to come. One wonders to what extent the credibility of some of the people who work in the race relations industry is dependent on the growth of racial harassment, rather than on racial harmony. Their attitude is deeply patronising and insulting to ethnic minorities and provocative to the majority.

If you are looking for evidence, Mr. Speaker, I have here the annual report of the Commission for Racial Equality. It spends at least £10 million a year. How does it spend it? It spends £29,000, for example, on something called Black Rights UK. There would be a problem if there were an organisation called White Rights UK that was funded by Government. It spends £32,000 on a federation of black housing organisations. I suppose apartheid is wrong unless it is practised by blacks. It spends £8,000 a year on something called an anti-racism worker, who works for Third World First. Is that how we should spend public money? It spends £26,000 a year on the West Indian standing conference. If there is, and should be, a West Indian standing conference, would it not be more dignified and more effective if it raised the money on its own? Is that how public money should be spent? How many broken babies could our hospitals operate on for £10 million? That sort of attitude encourages the supplicate and mendicant postures from self-styled leaders of ethnic minorities, some of whom are on the Opposition Benches.

I ask my right hon. Friend whether it is right that a Conservative Government should share that patronising and damaging approach. Sadly, pressures have been applied to see that, at this stage, they do. The Government have yielded and have brought forward a new clause about which, in his embarrassment, my right hon. Friend did not tell the House a great deal. I shall point to a few facts within it. New clause 5 states:

"Except to the extent permitted by subsection (2) below, section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 . . . shall not require or authorise a local authority to exercise any function . . . by reference to a non-commercial matter."

We now come on to exceptions. With the exceptions, the authorities are able to ask approved questions seeking information or undertakings relating to work force matters and consider the responses to them. They will be able to ask companies about what is happening to the labour force and they will be able to consider them when they have got the reply back from the company. Clause 5(2)*(b)* states:

"including in a draft contract or draft tender for a contract terms or provisions relating to workforce matters and considering the responses to them".

So they will be able to tell companies how to organise and manage their own work forces. All this, you will be pleased to hear, Mr. Speaker, has to be put down in

writing. If authorities do not like what they get from applicant companies — the companies that want to contract with them — they will be able to write for supporting evidence. How many letters will go backwards and forwards? How long will it take a local authority to answer a letter? What questions will it ask? What will it do with the information that it gets in the answers? If it does not like the answers, what will it be able to do? What recourse will industrialists — the commercial companies — have in a court of law against arbitrary exclusion after the exchange of letters?

Of course, there is one other important point, and that is that, for the purpose of this section, the questions will be set out by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State has kindly told the House that, before he puts his questions forward, he will have discussions with the Commission for Racial Equality and local authorities. How aware is the House that, in September of this year, the Commission for Racial Equality introduced a code of practice — principles of practice—for contract compliance? When my right hon. Friend goes along to speak to the Commission for Racial Equality, this is what the Commission for Racial Equality will show my right hon. Friend. What is he going to do with it? He has taken orders from the Commission for Racial Equality with regard to bringing the new clause forward. Is he going to take orders or will he be disagreeable when he sees the contract of compliance code of practice?

While we pay court to the Commission for Racial Equality, the likelihood is that the Government will feel morally bound to accept, at least in part, what the Commission for Racial Equality requires them to do. What will the Commission for Racial Equality require the Government to do? Among the general principles that have been enumerated by the Commission for Racial Equality, one of them—this is referring to the letter that comes back from the contractor—states:

"Where such information in the opinion of the purchaser"—

that is, the local authority—

"shows an absence of reasonably necessary steps to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to provide equal employment opportunities, the contractor or potential contractor should be informed and given an opportunity to make whatever changes are agreed to be appropriate within a specified reasonable period of time."

What if the contractors do not respond in the way in which the local authorities want? If we look at the local authorities that are commanded by the Labour party—Camden, Bermondsey, Liverpool and the rabble in the country outside — what will they do with that information? It will be manna from heaven for them. It is a messy and provocative business. It will be a paradise for the barrack-room lawyer, the mischief-maker, the prevaricator and the litigant. The Government intend to prevent discrimination — there is no argument among Conservative Members about that. If, however, the Government believe that the best way of dealing with discrimination is by legislation, there may be some argument on the Government side of the House.

However, section 4 of the Race Relations Act 1976 says:

"4.—(1) It is unlawful for a person, in relation to employment by him at an establishment in Great Britain, to discriminate against another—

(a) in the arrangements he makes for the purpose of determining who should be offered that employment; or

(b) in the terms on which he offers him that employment; or

(c) by refusing or deliberately omitting to offer him that employment.

(2) It is unlawful for a person, in the case of a person employed by him at an establishment in Great Britain, to discriminate against that employee—

(a) in the terms of employment which he affords him; or

(b) in the way he affords him access to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training, or to any other benefits, facilities or services, or by refusing or deliberately omitting to afford him access to them; or

(c) by dismissing him, or subjecting him to any other detriment."

It is all there. That is law for contract compliance. That is what will ensure that there is no racial discrimination in employment. There is no need for local government to be breathing and heaving over independent commercial companies looking into their employment situation to see how they run their systems. The law is there. We do not need sneaks and narks from Left-wing Labour party local government districts and counties rubbing their noses against private employers who are trying to do decent work and have better things to do than to have people snooping over their shoulders all the time. Why are we opening this Pandora's Box when the Minister has said that:

"Local authorities should not be in the business of setting themselves up as extra-statutory enforcement agencies on matters that are already the subject of existing statute and which already have where appropriate, their own enforcement processes."?

He said later on 17 November,

"However, we aim to prevent authorities from asking endless questions and from seeking the most detailed information about the extent to which contractors obey the law." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 17 November 1987; c. 793-4.]

New clause 5 was put before the House to do just that. I believe what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State said on 17 November, and I am sure that he will be consistent. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have seen the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend. Bearing that in mind, I beseech my hon. Friend, if he wants to go the way he said on 17 November, to join me and my hon. Friends in the Lobby later this evening.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): While listening to the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), I certainly sorrow for England in disbelief that such a speech could be made in the House. Such prejudice is best returned whence it comes and the lid firmly slammed shut on it. I am glad that the Minister is on the Front Bench and not his hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North.

New clause 5 is welcome. It is an admission that the Government have made a mistake in drafting their legislation too tightly. By opening the gate just a little in regard to local authorities positively promoting social goals such as better racial harmony and equality of opportunity among all sections of the community and by allowing local authorities to exert influence in positively promoting good industrial practices and industrial relations, the Government have moved towards understanding the debt we all owe to local authorities throughout the country for promoting those desirable

[Mr. Andrew Welsh]

goals for many years. Local authorities — which are usually attacked by the Government — have a good record of promoting policies and practices that benefit society in general. I have seen this in practice in Scotland. New clause 5 shows that the Government are beginning to recognise that fact slightly. It is also a tacit recognition that the Bill goes too far in giving the Government control over democratically elected local authorities.

Contract compliance is a necessary and desirable local safeguard. Why should councillors not set conditions under which legally made contracts should work? They pay money on behalf of local people and they must retain the right to state the terms on which contracts are made. Local authorities should have such freedom of action. If local people do not like what councils do, the matter should not be left to the central Government. Rather, local electors should decide whether they like how their councillors have behaved and vote accordingly. The Government are inflicting their prejudices on local government.

9.30 pm

New clause 5 addresses an English problem. It has little to do with Scotland. It seems that, time and again, English local government sins — if that is what they be — are being visited on Scottish local authorities in the Government's desire to curb what they regard as excess. Scotland should not be tagged on to what is basically an English Bill. The more I study the Bill, the more I am confirmed in my belief that it is nonsense for Scotland. It bears no relation to the workings of Scottish local government and Scottish geography or demography. The Bill is irrelevant to my country.

The Government expect certain standards of conduct from local authorities. Why should local authorities be unable to expect certain standards of conduct from those whom they employ to carry out contracts? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask both sides of the House to listen rather than conduct private conversations.

Mr. Welsh: He who employs the piper is not being allowed to call the tune. The Government have recognised that in new clause 5.

Will the Minister draw in local authority-produced questions, or does he have it in mind to produce standard questions for distribution to local authorities? Do the Government have any questions in mind now? Do any questionnaires or forms exist and, if so, when will local authorities see them? What time scale does the Minister have in mind to introduce the standard questions? It would be useful if local authorities knew what will hit them.

What consultations will take place with local authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities when and if the questions are drawn up? The problem with new clause 5(5) is that it does not go far enough to relieve the Government's stranglehold over local authority decision-making. It restores strict Government control and almost wipes out what is conceded in subsections (1) and (2). Local authorities have a right to express their views and to insist on higher standards of conduct among contractors. New clause 5 recognises that, but immediately imposes another straitjacket. The Government have admitted their mistake but have done little to correct it.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): It is probably common knowledge that I was the first Conservative candidate for 100 years to be elected to represent Huddersfield, West. I now represent another constituency. When I was campaigning in Huddersfield it became clear to me—it seemed that this had not been apparent in the past, which is probably why the Tories had not won elections in Huddersfield, West — that I had to deliver the coloured vote to the Conservative party. That vote amounted to 12 per cent. of the local population. I did not get the coloured vote by pandering to the coloureds—*[Interruption.]* I went to the Sikh temples and I went—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Every hon. Member must frame his own speech, and we all use different terms. Perhaps the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) will take care.

Mr. Dickens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was saying, before I was interrupted, that I went to Sikh temples, mosques and Caribbean groups. I visited them all. I said to them all—Opposition Members might be astounded to hear this—"Many of you, and certainly many of your parents, would not be here if it had been left to me." As a result, they trusted me. They knew that I was truthful. Opposition Members cannot take this — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear things said in the Chamber with which we do not agree.

Mr. Dickens: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is silly to pander to minority groups. Indeed, to do so makes relationships worse. There was a case, for example, of a fat girl who was refused employment by a bank. That was held to be discrimination. That approach would be of trouble to me, of course. Whenever a minority group is pandered to, relationships will be inflamed.

I have not yet decided which way to vote on the new clause. I want to hear the reply of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. If local government employs contractors with ratepayers' and taxpayers' money, I want them to be employed because they will do a good job at a competitive price. I do not want a contractor to be selected because he employs a number of people from certain groups. The only criterion is whether a worker is up to the job.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) talks a great deal about the role of women. The Conservative party produced the first woman Prime Minister in Britain's history, so why should we be lectured by Opposition Members about putting ladies first? The Conservative party has put women first and foremost.

I shall listen intently to the reply of my right hon. Friend. If he can give an assurance that the selection of contractors will be sensible and fair and not based on criteria that have been adopted by the Kremlin republic of Sheffield and elsewhere, I shall be content.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I do not intend to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens). I shall refer, however, to the speeches of the hon. Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), which highlighted the extreme Right-wing position of many within the Conservative party. Whatever

criticism we may make of the Government, I believe that even they are embarrassed and ashamed by some of the comments that were made by those two hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Northampton, North said that he hoped to have the opportunity to vote for new clause 9, in his name and the names of some of his hon. Friends. I hope that they will not be able to do that because, as Madam Deputy Speaker indicated at the beginning of the debate, that will not be possible if new clause 6 is carried. Should new clause 6 fall, I should like to see how many Conservative Members are prepared to go through the Lobby in support of the appalling new clause 9.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) felt that he could not welcome Government new clause 5. I disagree. Having been in the House for four or five years, I recognise that to get any concession from the Government is rare. Therefore, the fact that they are prepared to make some amendment to the Bill in response to the debate in Committee is at least welcome. I welcome that small step in the right direction, but obviously we wish to go further.

If I do not speak on racial equality, the need for women's equality or the position of the disabled — matters that have been referred to in the debate—it does not mean that I think they are not important. They are extremely important, but I want to deal briefly with one or two other points.

The first part of new clause 6 refers to the terms and conditions of employment offered by contractors to their workers, and it goes on to the training of the work force. Training is important. When a local authority is putting out contracts to the private sector as a result of this legislation it should be able to ensure that adequate training is provided. If in 1987 we make legislation which allows workers to be offered worse conditions, worse pay, worse holiday pay and worse sick pay, we are moving in the wrong direction. We need the provisions in new clause 6.

In replying to a debate in Committee, the Minister of State indicated that it would be a restrictive practice for local authorities to pay double time to people to work on a Sunday. Anyone who works on a Sunday, or other unsocial hours, is entitled to additional pay. Because of the unemployment that the Government have created, it will be possible, as the Minister said in Committee, to get someone in the private sector who is desperate for work to do the work at a low rate of pay. People who have won contracts in places such as Merton and Wandsworth pay appalling low rates. The same applies to the Health Service. The Government have said that they want to ensure fair competition. We can do that only if the Bill ensures that employees in the private sector enjoy an overall employment package at least equal to that of employees within local government.

Some of my hon. Friends have already referred to the need to employ local labour in the most deprived sections of our cities and towns. Despite the Secretary of State's comments on this matter on Second Reading and on a number of other occasions, it is surprising that he has found it impossible to include something in the Bill to ensure that there is a safeguard so that we can at least give a fair opportunity to local people for work that is put out to tender. At the end of the day, those people pay the rates and the bills. They should be able to tackle the problem of urban deprivation in some of our most difficult areas by providing for local employment opportunities.

There are many other important items within new clause 6, but I shall keep my remarks to the absolute minimum. I hope that Conservative Members will be prepared to recognise the wisdom of new clause 6. If not, I hope that they will accept the Government's new clause 5 and reject new clause 9.

9.45 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): I urge the House to vote for new clause 6 and new clause 7 standing in my name and the names of my hon. Friends. Although new clause 5 takes a step forward, it does not go far enough. However, I reluctantly urge hon. Members to vote for Government new clause 5 if there is a Division.

New clause 5 was tabled by the Government on Report as a result of a commitment given in Committee by the Minister and the Secretary of State to ensure that the legislation does not contravene section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976. We have heard major attacks on the Government's new clause 5. Indeed, we have heard attacks from Conservative Members on the Race Relations Act 1976. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said that the Race Relations Act 1976 granted special rights to a minority. When asked what those special rights were, he said, the protection of the Race Relations Act. The hon. Gentleman was attacking the protection under law not to be discriminated against because of the colour of one's skin or one's racial or ethnic origin.

I am proud to state that the Labour party has a proud record on human rights in supporting successive Race Relations Acts. We were accused of having that record, and we plead guilty to that. We support the Government's intention to ensure that local authorities do not contravene section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976, because we want to ensure that people are not discriminated against.

We are concerned to some extent about the details of new clause 5. We see no real reason why the Secretary of State should take all the powers under the clause, as he has under other clauses, especially without any reference back to Parliament. The Secretary of State is given the powers to prescribe the questions which a council may ask of its suppliers and the evidence which the council may consider when examining the answers that it receives if he so chooses by allowing only the wrong or irrelevant questions to be asked. We shall carefully watch the consultation process promised by the Secretary of State and see what arises to ensure that the intentions behind new clause 5 are not subverted as a result of how the Secretary of State uses his powers.

I also agree with the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). We do not see why all the contract compliance activity should be carried out in writing. What is wrong with telephone calls or meetings? What is wrong with a discussion? We believe that local government will be saddled with a lot of bureaucracy — the Minister flourished a large and weighty document from Sheffield and criticised its bureaucracy — by limiting the process to being conducted in writing, and local contractors will also suffer as a result of that bureaucracy.

It has been asked what right local authorities have to interfere in the internal running of companies. The question strikes at the key issue that we are debating. We are talking not merely about race discrimination, but about the whole issue of contract compliance and tendering. It seems to be suggested that a local authority

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

making certain specifications when letting a contract to a private company is somehow interfering with its internal running. What about the rights of the local authority? What about my rights as an individual citizen? I can determine what contractor, in what circumstances, comes to repair my house or to lay carpets. Local government should have that freedom as well.

If the outlawing of contract compliance is coupled with the competitive tendering clauses in the Bill, direct labour departments will be put at a disadvantage, and one private company will be at a disadvantage compared with another Let me give an example. If a direct labour department or a private company employs the right percentage of disabled workers, it will, to an extent, be at a disadvantage compared with a company that employs no disabled people and is not prepared to support those members of our community.

Mr. Dickens *rose* —

Mr. Roberts: I shall not give way—certainly not to the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens), who has only just come into the Chamber, and has said that he has not decided how to vote because he wants to listen to the debate.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman kindly withdraw what he said about the disabled? Disabled people are just as good workers as anyone else. How dare he say that they will put their companies at a disadvantage?

Mr. Roberts: As a senior social worker and a principal officer in a social services department before I came to the House, I am well aware of the capacities of disabled people. I am also aware that certain people with certain disabilities are employed, because of their disabilities, on a different basis from the able-bodied. Many private companies will not employ such people, and those who do employ them should not be discriminated against. Neither should local authority direct labour departments.

The same applies to training. Training is very important to the future of British industry, and the future of our young people. Why should not a local authority be able to say, "If you do not employ a reasonable number of apprentices—if there are no training opportunities—we should prefer to employ the company that trains youngsters, and provides those opportunities"? Why should local government not have those rights, for the sake of our young people and for the sake of the future?

We have written a provision about countries of origin into new clause 7. Conservative Members say that their only interest is in whether the companies can do the job for the best possible price: it is purely a matter of money. My hon. Friends and I made it clear in Committee that we accept that, if local authorities, the Government or anyone else will not deal with companies that trade in South Africa, there is a price to be paid, and we are prepared to pay that price as a matter of principle. We are opposed to the apartheid regime, and we think that the taxpayers and the electors of local government should have the right to elect local authorities that are also opposed to it. If they do that, local authorities have the right to such contract compliance provisions.

Local government is not isolated or non-accountable; it is far more accountable than any of the local companies with whose internal workings Conservative Members claim we are trying to interfere. Local authorities should have the same rights as Conservative Members to specify what issues they consider important in terms of whom they employ to do work on their behalf and on behalf of their electors and ratepayers.

I do not believe that, every time a Conservative Member says something on immigration or race relations with which I disagree, he is necessarily racist. However, I should say to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West that those who claim that they are not racists but who are prepared to use racial prejudice and the fear of it in the community to get grubby, filthy votes are worse than any racists because they are also hypocritical. The speeches from and attitudes of some Conservative Members that we heard today were designed to get racist votes, even though they denied that they are racists. They played on prejudices, which is unworthy of any great political party and unworthy of the Conservative party, with its traditions, and I wish that the Cabinet and the Secretary of State would repudiate those remarks and clearly say that they oppose them.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) whose speech was thoughtful, well measured and sensible. It was no surprise that he received barracking from Tory Back Benchers, which is not unusual when a Conservative Member makes a speech that is liberal and progressive and does not pander to prejudices. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman; he should stick to his guns.

Contract compliance is about local government democracy and the freedom of local government to determine its own affairs. It is about more than that—it is about good training for young people, the employment of disabled people and health and safety at work—but it is not about pandering to prejudice. It is about allowing local government to lay down criteria that will make Britain a juster, fairer and freer society. That is why we tabled new clause 6 and new clause 7 and why we shall prevent Tory Back Benchers, who are to the Right of even the Secretary of State for the Environment, from defeating new clause 5.

Mr. Ridley: We have had a wide-ranging debate on a rather narrow point, but I make no complaint about that. The debate has been wide and varied and has prompted some pretty strong stuff, although I am glad to say that there was minimal use of the word "racist". The most crucial and telling phrase came from my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who talked about grubby hands grappling with the entrails of the Government. I would not say that the debate had gone as far as that, and my entrails are certainly feeling quite well, despite what we have heard this evening.

I should like to answer briefly the specific points that hon. Members have raised. I shall formulate four, five or six approved questions on race relations and put them out for consultation—including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities if that is what the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) wants—and anybody wishing to comment will be able to do so. They will be standard questions that cannot be varied, and the powers will be exercised, as the new clause says, in writing by me without an opportunity for the House to pray against them, but they will be placed in the Library.

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), I should say that I do not believe that there can be an abuse of these questions. They will have to be standard questions, and a local authority can, on receipt of the answers, decide not to let the contract to the lowest tender. In that case, it will have to satisfy the auditor, and perhaps the wider electorate, that it had good reason for so doing.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Can my right hon. Friend give the House any guidance as to how easy it would be for a Labour Secretary of State, should the Labour party ever get into power, to change the questions? How long would it take to change them?

Mr. Ridley: The Labour party could change a great deal. It would not stop at changing the nature of the questions. We cannot for ever insulate the great British public from the possibility of having a Labour Government. However, we have not done badly recently.

Mr. Marlow: When my right hon. Friend sets out his approved questions, will they be the last word, or will the Commission for Racial Equality or other organisations be able to take his questions to court and say that they conflict with the Race Relations Act 1976 and that he must bring forward some other questions?

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Local Government Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Ridley: The questions will be set out by me. They will not be decided by the CRE. The CRE will be consulted but the decision will be for the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry asked why we included only section 71*(a)* of the Race Relations Act in the Bill. The answer is to be found in section 71*(b)* which states:

"to promote equality of opportunity, and good relations, between persons of different racial groups."

That is obviously a worthy objective, but it is hard to see how it can be secured, particularly in the matter of contract compliance. It could be wildly abused if it were an unrestrained duty on local authorities, who could use it as a loophole to escape the provisions of the Bill in relation to contract compliance. Having listened to the debate, we still think it would be better only to include section 71*(a)* for reasons that I will develop later. It is already a duty on local authorities, and we want to limit the scope of those questions in the way that I have described because of the way in which the loophole could have been enlarged to include everything in relation to South Africa and other matters that have caused concern.

My hon. Friends the Members for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and for Northampton, North and others want to go as far as to repeal section 71 of the Race Relations Act. They were kind enough to say that I had voted against the Race Relations Bill. I certainly did. I have voted against a large number of Bills in my 28 years in the House, and I regret that many of them are still on the statute book. However, like my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West, one has come to accept that times change and the logic of matters alters, so one is happy to live with some of those Acts. I was glad to hear that he shares with me the view that he is now prepared to accept the Race Relations Act, even though he called it a little bit of nonsense. He said he simply wanted to remove section 71 by his new clause.

I believe that the changed opinion is partly because the Commission for Racial Equality has been demonstrating a much more balanced and reasonable approach, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West said. Indeed, in a newspaper today it condemns reversed discrimination, which must be an encouraging sign. Whatever we feel about the Race Relations Act or the CRE, we should make amendments to that aspect of policy only by the vehicle of a Race Relations Bill. I assure the House that the Government have no proposal to put forward such a Bill at present.

The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) adjured us to stick to the subject of the debate. If I may say so, he spent most of his speech debating race relations. I do not believe that it is right to try to amend the race relations legislation in the Local Government Bill; nor is it right to amend legislation in relation to the disabled, to terms and conditions of employment or to equal opportunities by an amendment to this legislation. The fundamental point is that section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 places two duties on local authorities. It is possible, and likely, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will propose legislation which imposes a similar duty in Northern Ireland. Here I reply to the point raised by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). If it is expressly laid down by Parliament that local authorities have a duty to do this, that or the other, it cannot be right for the Local Government Bill to be in conflict with that duty. People, like my hon. Friends, may wish to change the statute. A list has been given tonight of possible changes to a number of statutes. That takes the matter far beyond my departmental responsibilities and raises issues which should be considered as a whole within the context of the governing legislation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman clearly confirm the implication of his statement, that the Government stand entirely by the Race Relations Act, and section 71, and have no intention of repealing any or all of it, either now or for the period of this Administration?

Mr. Ridley: I thought that I had said that we have no such plans. It is not for me to make binding declarations for all time on behalf of a colleague who is not present, although the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office is here. I do not think that I can be smoked out on an amendment such as this on something that is irrelevant to the Bill. I have been pretty fair in giving the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) the assurance that he seeks.

Dr. Cunningham: The Secretary of State is really saying that the Government choose not to act to amend the Bill to enable equal opportunities for women and better employment opportunities for disabled people to take place through local government action, so what answer does he give Baroness Platt of the Equal Opportunities Commission, who has written to the Government asking them to do just that?

Mr. Ridley: A reply has been given to Baroness Platt. The answer is that there are no proposals to change the equal opportunities legislation. If it were changed in the way that she seeks, clearly this legislation would have to be changed as a consequence. The Local Government Bill does not promote equal opportunities, racial equality or help for the disabled; it fits contract compliance into the existing statutes on all these matters. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the equal opportunities legislation and the Race Relations Act are different in the way that they place burdens on local authorities for enforcement. That is the central point.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) and for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) and the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) talked about the need to improve the lot of the disabled. The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 established a voluntary register of disabled people. It obliges employers who are below the relevant quota—3 per cent. of their total work force to be registered disabled — to take steps to rectify that matter. But—this is crucial—it is not an offence to be below quota; nor is it the job of local authorities to check, monitor and enforce that quota. The employment service has a highly skilled team of people whose job it is to do that and who know whether firms are coming up to their quota requirements. They know the situation of disabled people looking for work in a particular area and how best to place such disabled people as there are vacancies for. That sophisticated job is done by the Department of Employment. There is no requirement on local authorities to do it. If the hon. Member for Copeland wants to change those arrangements, he should do it by persuading my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to improve the working of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act.

Finally, the hon. Members for Copeland, for Tottenham and for Burnley (Mr. Pike) asked me about the use of local labour conditions. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey——

Mr. Ashley: The legal requirement on all employers with more than 20 workers is being blatantly disregarded by most employers. Many are breaking the law by not fulfilling the quota requirement and not having a permit not to take on the full number of workers. Most local authorities do not fulfil their moral obligations and the Secretary of State is doing nothing about that. Contract compliance is the only answer.

Mr. Ridley: It is not an offence to be below quota. If an employer is below quota, he must not engage anyone other than a registered disabled person or discharge one from his work force without a permit from the employment service. That is the law. The employment service is the enforcement agent. One cannot just take out the employment service and replace it with the local authorities. That is my sole point.

The use of local labour conditions would, in our legal opinion, contravene European Community rules. We have looked closely at the legal opinion obtained by the Opposition. My hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government has already written to the hon. Member for Copeland, and copied the letter to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, to say that nothing in that opinion causes us to change our view. The Opposition in their new clause seek to restrict such conditions to inner-city areas or regions of high unemployment and to try to limit local workers to a reasonable percentage of the work force who are unemployed. In the Government's view, and according to our advice, such devices do not offer any way round the relevant EEC directives. As I explained in full on Second Reading, the way to achieve employment of inner-city residents is to ensure that our inner-city initiatives are designed to encourage firms to recruit local labour and to ensure that that labour is better trained and motivated to grasp the opportunities thus created.

I say to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey that there are already cases before the European Court, and we must see how that court interprets the directives. We do not have any right to go to the court or to the Commission for an opinion. The action that the hon. Gentleman attempted to urge on me to get round this little local difficulty in Brussels is not a realistic possibility.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I think that on reflection the Secretary of State will accept that it is open to the Government — to the Attorney-General or to anybody else — to go to the Divisional Court here for a declaration. That could be referred to the European Court for a ruling. That could be done within a year and the Government would then have clarity. They would know whether they could do what the Secretary of State said he wishes to do.

Mr. Ridley: There is a case before the European Court. I suggest that we wait for the result of that case. That is the easiest and quickest way of proceeding and that is exactly what we are doing.

I commend new clause 5 to the House and suggest that it should reject the other new clauses.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 491, Noes 10.

Division No. 110] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Bendall, Vivian
Adley, Robert	Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Allason, Rupert	Benyon, W.
Allen, Graham	Bermingham, Gerald
Alton, David	Bevan, David Gilroy
Amess, David	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Amos, Alan	Blair, Tony
Anderson, Donald	Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Arbuthnot, James	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Boswell, Tim
Armstrong, Ms Hilary	Bottomley, Peter
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Ashby, David	Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Ashdown, Paddy	Bowis, John
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Boyes, Roland
Ashton, Joe	Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Aspinwall, Jack	Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Atkins, Robert	Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Atkinson, David	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Brazier, Julian
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bright, Graham
Baldry, Tony	Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Brooke, Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Batiste, Spencer	Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Battle, John	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Beckett, Margaret	Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*

Buchan, Norman
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Gale, Roger
Galloway, George
Gardiner, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
John, Brynmor
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parry, Robert
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Reid, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Riddick, Graham

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerald
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Ms Joan
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Body, Sir Richard
Budgen, Nicholas
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Stanbrook, Ivor
Wells, Bowen
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Marlow and
Mr. Tim Janman.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 2

PART I: EXEMPTIONS

'The Secretary of State shall provide that a defined authority may if it so decides treat 5% (or such higher figure as the Secretary of State may determine upon special application of the authority) of any defined activity as exempt from the provisions of competitive tendering laid down in Part I; and shall provide that a defined authority may if it so decides postpone 10% of the phased implementation of any defined activity as outlined in the Government's Consultation Paper.'.—*[Mr. Rooker.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Rooker: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause gives a brief exemption to the competitive tendering part of the Bill. It in no way contests the Bill's main thrust for compulsory competitive tendering, but it has some regard to the practicalities—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please leave the Chamber quietly?

Mr. Rooker: It is quite clear that hon. Members are overwhelmed by the massive support for the right of local authorities to be able to ask questions of their contractors in respect of race relations. That should delight all concerned.

New clause 2 has some regard to the practicalities of implementation of the Bill in respect of competitive tendering. We take the view that local authorities having to put services out to competitive tender unless that activity costs less than £100,000 is not practical. That threshold is so low that few authorities will be able to take advantage of the provision. The vast majority of authorities would therefore have to put out 100 per cent. of their activity covered by the Bill.

We think that there are good reasons why local authorities should be given some small discretion to keep a part of their activity in house. In our consultations, we established that the Government might be amenable to allowing local authorities flexibility and allowing them to retain 5 per cent. of their activity in house to cater for special circumstances. They clearly decided not to do that. We think that they should reconsider.

I shall not give the many available examples that show why authorities might wish to say—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. It would be helpful if hon. Members could conduct their private conversations quietly.

Mr. Rooker: There are small parts of the activities of some local authorities that can legitimately be considered special, to warrant special provision and to justify retention as in-house services. For example, I understand that the Turkish baths in Harrogate are run by the city council and that it may not wish to put them out to compulsory competitive tender.

Some authorities run colleges of agriculture as part of local authority education provision, and one authority has the ornamental grounds of such a college tended by four full-time, non-teaching but demonstrator members of staff. It will be absurd if that college teaches horticulture yet is not allowed to tend its own grounds. There is the counter-argument that the in-house organisation could win the contract, but that is not good enough. It is clear that cheapness will be an overriding factor in the Government's view. I appreciate that the Secretary of State has said that there will be no requirement to accept the cheapest tender, but we believe that cheapness will be the paramount consideration when minuscule local authority activities are under examination.

There are authorities —Leeds city council is one— that have national plant collections and sites of special scientific interest. I understand that Leeds has seven sites of special scientific interest. The employment of an outside contractor, with the practical and commercial constraints to which he will be necessarily subject, will preclude the continuous exercise of skills and flexibility of labour to ensure the preservation of important national collections. It would be ludicrous to force out to competitive tender works of that sort. That is why the new clause sets an exemption figure of 5 per cent.

There are other examples, but time precludes me going into substantial detail. Meals-on-wheels provision is currently tied to kitchens in homes or day centres that are exempt under paragraph 3 of schedule 14. That makes catering cost-effective, but, as things stand, authorities will be forced to separate two types of catering where economies of scale and integration operate. The 5 per cent. flexibility provision would allow authorities to continue to organise catering in the present manner and to produce meals on wheels from exempt kitchens.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I hope that the Minister will respond sympathetically to the arguments of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker): The new clause is compatible with the Minister's arguments in Committee. When the Government's consultation exercise on sport and leisure was outlined in Committee, it was to be noted that the Minister for Local Government emphasised that the proposals were subject to parliamentary consideration and review. Emphasis was laid on flexibility.

The proposal that is embodied in the new clause was suggested to Opposition parties by the Association of County Councils. The association contemplates with difficulty the concept of 100 per cent. contracting out, and, as the hon. Member for Perry Barr says, it had specific reasons for not wanting to contract out every service. The example that I thought the hon. Member for Perry Barr would cite is Headingley cricket ground.

Mr. Rooker: If the hon. Gentleman quotes that, he is wrong. That is the reason I did not quote it.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman has scored one there. None of the test grounds may be owned by local authorities. Certainly sports grounds of national importance are owned by local authorities and they are exactly the sort of facilities that, for civic reasons, local authorities may decide to hold on to.

I hope the Minister will accept that the intention of the Bill and the way its implemention is proposed do not preclude accepting flexibility and responsiveness to local need and preference. If the Minister does not accept the exact wording proposed, I hope that he will accept the intention of the new clause as a response to requests by local authorities.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): In supporting my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr.

[Mr. John Battle]

Rooker), I underline that the purpose of the new clause is to bring flexibility into the Bill. As it stands, at the core of the Bill are rigid proposals for competitive tendering which propose 100 per cent. of the specified activities. The Secretary of State opened the Second Reading debate with the following statement:

"The free operation of the market is the best way . . . The Government have increased competition since 1979 . . . with dramatic results."

In the same debate the Minister for Local Government said that the Bill was based on the simple proposition that local government

"services, in common with services in other areas of economic life, will be provided more efficiently if they are subjected to competition."—[*Official Report*, 6 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 80-145.]

These simple propositions need evidence to back them up. I was interested to glance at those other services. In the *Financial Times* this morning, under the headline:

"Laundries find NHS tendering 'a failure'"

we read:

"Competitive tendering in the National Health Service has been a failure for laundry contractors, according to the industry's main employers' group. The Association of British Laundry, Cleaning and Rental Services has said unless the Government changes the competition regime, 'very shortly private contractors are likely to cease tendering for any NHS contracts.'"

Under these proposals, rigid as they are, I suggest that that will happen in local government as well.

The point was made repeatedly in Committee when we invited the Government to try to imagine their Bill being carried into practice. We invited them to have regard to the detail of implementing its provisions in a variety of different circumstances and special conditions. For example, the de minimis provision is so long that very few local authorities would be able to taken advantage of it. In Committee the Government rejected our amendments which had been tabled to enable local authorities to respond to exceptional circumstances, emergencies, disasters and situations of urgent need within the limits of their in-house resources, depleted though they have been by the Government.

Local authorities need flexibility. They need elbow room to do the job of providing local services for local needs. All the new clause proposes is that

"a defined authority may if it so decides"—

I emphasise that phrase, "if it so decides"—

"treat 5 per cent. . . . of any defined activity as exempt".

There is no reference in the Bill to the circumstances of local authorities, which vary greatly in different areas. It is unlikely that in the city that I represent, Leeds, there would be coastal flooding, but there may be in other areas. Those authorities may need the back-up of emergency services. On Second Reading we had a substantial discussion on the problems of storm damage in London.

Let us consider another example. A school meals supplier might break the contract conditions or there might be a dispute about the provision of school meals. In those circumstances, a local authority should surely have the power to make temporary arrangements to provide the meal services to schoolchildren or to elderly people in sheltered homes. Surely common sense tells us that a rupture in the provision of the service would be to the detriment of the people who need that service. Why cannot the meals-on-wheels provision currently tied to local kitchens in homes and day-centres be covered by a clause introducing 5 per cent. flexibility? Surely local authorities need back-up in the face of contract failure? That is a basic necessity. If an authority contracts out all the refuse provision, how on earth can the Secretary of State explain how a local authority can step in and clear away rubbish in the street if the contract fails? Local authorities will not be able to plug gaps with in-house services if they have no in-house services. New clause 2 provides for such services.

On Second Reading the Secretary of State said:

"As anyone who has contracted-out services knows, it is easy to develop sophisticated systems to ensure that the specification is delivered. Occasionally, contracts go wrong. . . . But in the vast majority of cases these problems are quickly sorted out".—[*Official Report*, 6 July 1987; Vol. 119, c. 82.]

The evidence in the *Financial Times* about the Health Service proves the opposite. The Secretary of State's comment demonstrates a complacent over-confidence in the face of all the evidence just as the clause as it stands will massively underestimate the practical problems of implementation of the proposals that will be faced by local authorities and the contractors.

10.45 pm

I want to refer to two analogies referred to in the Standing Committee. Conservative Members often referred to Marks and Spencer as a model estate on which local government should be restructured. They forgot to mention that Marks and Spencer has its own in-house services because its operations cannot be totally at the mercy of contracted-out work. With reference to contract failure, it was interesting that the Minister for Local Government drew attention in Committee to the analogy of a car breakdown. He said that one has only to think of car breakdown recovery services which provide a 24-hour emergency service most efficiently. He suggested that the idea of 24-hour emergency car services would apply in local government circumstances. However, that analogy is fatally flawed. There is no Department of the Environment 24-hour cover and there is no RAC or AA to back up local authorities that have contracted-out all their cleansing and meal services. The point is that not everyone in Britain has a car, but everyone needs some of the basic services provided by local authorities for the public. Authorities are being forced to contract those services out at the expense of people not receiving that service.

It is also true that two or three large monopolies provide the services for car repairs in the event of breakdowns. They have developed national cover. However, it is one thing to wait on a motorway for a couple of hours before receiving attention, but it could be a criminal gap in provision if elderly people miss out on the main meal of the day as a result of contract failure. Gaps could be absolutely crucial in the provision of services to local people. Contract failure without back-up could mean that people have to live in unendurable circumstances until work gets done.

I forgot to mention one car recovery service by name, the National Breakdown Service. That may well prove to be an apt description of the practical impact of the Bill in terms of local services provision. If the Bill is passed in its present rigid form, there will be a national breakdown in the provision of vital services. As it stands, the Bill is rigid and repressive. If it is not changed by the new clause, the Bill will prove to be brittle and built on the iron will of Tory ideology. If unamended, in practice it will crack on the first testing.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): As one who has served in local government for seven and a half years, I think that I can say with some authority that the vast majority of people associated with it view the Bill as insensitive and unresponsive to the needs of local communities. It is riddled with prejudice and devoid of practicality.

New clause 2 attempts to write a modicum of common sense into what many see as a wholly bad Bill. There are three reasons why local authorities should be allowed to exempt a minimum base of services subject to competitive tendering, as set out in the new clause. First, as my hon. Friends have said, they need a back-up to respond to emergencies. Secondly, they need to be able to deal with private monopolies. Thirdly, they need to be able to respond to contractor failure, to protect the health and welfare of the communities served by them.

Clearly, emergencies can and will occur. The night of Thursday 15 October is a classic case in point. The subject was much debated in Committee, when the Minister for Local Government stated:

"Perhaps it is worth putting on record that the London borough of Wandsworth was able to call on the services of several contractors, who turned out at very short notice, despite there being no prior arrangement."

But what happens in remote rural communities, such as those in the highlands and islands of Scotland, where there is not a multiplicity of alternative contractors? The Minister did not answer that question properly in Committee; I hope that we shall hear a proper answer tonight.

The same argument applies to private monopolies, which clearly exist in remote rural areas. There may well be only one contractor. If the contractor wins a contract against a local authority and the authority is compelled to wind up its activity, how will it measure the worth of the contractor if it has no minimum base of in-house services to set against it?

We must also remember that the Bill deals with sensitive issues involving public health. If a contractor providing refuse collection goes bust, having won 100 per cent. of the contract from a local authority in a remote rural area, and there is no available alternative, how does that authority provide an immediate response to the pile-up of rubbish, with all its attendant health problems?

In Committee, the Minister for Local Government said:

"under the Bill as drafted, the worst that can happen in the unlikely event of contractor failure is that the authority may have to wait a few weeks out without grass being cut, for example, while a fresh competition is arranged."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 27 October 1987; c. 248-49.]

If that were the only problem, I am sure that many people would not get too excited about it. However, it will not be the only problem. When public health is at issue, there must be an immediate response to a contractor going bust.

I have quoted two answers from the Minister to two very sensitive points, to which he did not respond properly in Committee. That is why I am arguing that new clause 2 should be fully supported, and I shall welcome any response from the Minister to what I have said.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Bill, which is a prolonged and gratuitous insult to the mass of local authorities, is based on the sins of a handful of local authorities of many parties and the mythology that has resulted which has been believed by the Government. Throughout the 90 hours that the Bill spent in Committee, the Minister from the Welsh Office did not utter one word, and *Hansard* will record that fact. At one point he went to sleep, and *Hansard* will record that. During the four hours that we have been discussing the Bill on Report today, a representative of the Welsh Office has not been present.

The Bill is alien and malicious. The myth that the Government are perpetuating, that they are pursuing the idea of unfettered competition red in claw and fang, is untrue. The Government pursue competition in a limited way. The Minister was challenged to allow local authorities, if they are deprived of services and sectors in which their DLOs and other direct services are operating, in a similar unfettered way to go into sectors where private contractors work, but that was firmly turned down by him. The Minister gave the strange excuse that local authorities should not be allowed to take any risks with ratepayers' money. By the same token, those ratepayers are being denied an opportunity to gain.

When the Bill was in Committee a group of Welsh local authorities in my county started a successful enterprise —private industry is not delivering—manufacturing, for their own use, double-glazed windows. That is one of the good reasons why DLOs were set up.

Gwent and Newport have had prodigious success, to the benefit of the community, in leisure, sport and recreation. Uniquely, Gwent has highly cost-effective leisure centres attached to schools. They are used by schools by day and by the rest of the community during the evening. It has obtained good value for the population. However, there is no way in which that omelette can be unscrambled; there is no way in which it can be done competitively.

My constituency has a magnificent leisure centre. It was built by the local authority and it is an excellent example of municipal enterprise. It was the scene in June of a successful political meeting, at which the Prime Minister was present. It was successful in that it resulted in a Labour party gain in the constituency. However, that splendid building was erected not to make money, but as a far-sighted cushion against unemployment and the enforced leisure that the community would have to face. The purpose of creating leisure facilities is not financial, but sporting, social and recreational. None of those aims will be served by the Bill; they will be frustrated by it.

The Bill will be seen by local authorities throughout Wales as something that is alien, malicious and deeply misconceived.

Mrs. Fyfe: At least I can say that a representative of the Scottish Office is present, even if he has been silent until now.

Does the Minister intend to protect Scottish local authorities that have collections from the effects of the Bill, or are the Government still determined to allow famous collections, such as Glasgow's botanic gardens, to be put at risk by the tendering process that is set out in the Bill?

11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I hope that the House will reject the new clause because any competition-free allowance, even the 5 per cent. suggested in the new clause, is highly suspect when it is clear that authorities that have contracted out services voluntarily have

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

generally contracted them out in their entirety. The fact is that there is no reason to take the view that contractors are not perfectly capable of doing the whole job, whatever that job is. A 5 per cent. allowance would be an arbitrary and meaningless concession, serving no useful purpose. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) failed to say how meaningful it would be if a local authority decided that it would retain 5 per cent. of its refuse collection service in-house. Of course that would be manifestly absurd, but that is what the new clause proposes.

I must point out to the House that the details of the implementation of competition are still subject to——

Mr. Ingram: If the Minister read the new clause he would see that it goes further than that. A statement within it in parenthesis says:

"or such higher figure as the Secretary of State may determine upon special application of the authority."

Therefore, the Secretary of State could deal with the problem himself.

Mr. Chope: The Secretary of State is dealing with the problem by saying that the whole of the refuse collection service should be put out to competitive tender. If the House needs any reminder of what economies can result from putting refuse collection services out to tender, it need look no further——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): What about Wandsworth?

Mr. Chope: Yes, perhaps Wandsworth. It is interesting that, during the Committee proceedings, a crucial by-election was taking place in the London borough of Wandsworth. Before the voting, Labour Members suggested that it would be a defeat for the Conservative party and an endorsement of their line on competitive tendering. What happened was that the local electorate voted enthusiastically for the policies of Wandsworth council.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister mentioned 5 per cent. of refuse disposal, and it was pointed out that that was a base level. Surely the Minister would accept, for example, that if a local authority has a particular expertise in the disposal of hazardous waste, clearly that would not necessarily be appropriate for contracting out to a general waste disposal contractor.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman was not a member of the Committee and I can understand why he has not appreciated that the Bill at present deals only with the collection of refuse rather than the disposal of it. As has been said, they are two different activities.

As I was saying, no final decisions have yet been taken on implementation of the competition provisions for the new activities, and it is not possible to say in advance of consideration of responses to the consultation paper whether an adequate case will be made out for some competition-free allowances such as have been argued for by Labour Members.

The fact that it is worth while for local authorities to contract out their services or to go out to competitive tender is emphasised by a report in last Friday's *South London Press* where we read that Greenwich council, which has up to now kept all its services in-house, has suddenly found that it needs to save some money. Overnight, it is suggesting that it should change from three-person to two-person teams for household rubbish collection and that it intends to reduce drivers' overtime, thereby saving about £160,000. If that council had submitted its refuse collection service to competitive tender a long time ago it would have found that those savings, and probably many more besides, would have been realised to the benefit of the ratepayers in that borough.

As to the suggestion that authorities be permitted to delay implementation of competition, the wording of the new clause seems to allow postponement to be indefinite, in which case the effect would be the same as a permanent competition-free allowance. Even if some lesser delay is proposed, I fail to see any merit in it. The quicker all of those services are exposed to competitive pressures the better. A concession of this sort would confuse matters and tend to make contracts less attractive to potential competitors.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Instead of telling us about Wandsworth and Greenwich, will the hon. Gentleman concentrate on the problem in Scotland? What happens on a Scottish island or in a remote rural area when services are privatised and the new firm goes bankrupt? Can essential daily services continue? I do not particularly wish to hear about Wandsworth, but I should like to hear about the Shetlands and the remoter areas of Scotland. Will the Minister answer that question?

Mr. Chope: I shall happily deal with that point. I thought that we had covered it extensively in Committee. If a local authority has an emergency, it is exempt from the Bill's provisions. If a local authority has contracted out its services and the contractor goes bankrupt or in some other way defaults, it will be possible for the local authority to submit the services to re-tender. If no contractors come forward in that process, it obviously follows that the direct labour organisation will probably win the contract. We do not see any problem with that. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not understood the process that will be involved when the legislation is on the statute book.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 212, Noes 310.

Division No. 111] **[11.05 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Allen, Graham	Buchan, Norman
Alton, David	Caborn, Richard
Anderson, Donald	Callaghan, Jim
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Armstrong, Ms Hilary	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Ashdown, Paddy	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Ashton, Joe	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clay, Bob
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Clelland, David
Barron, Kevin	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Battle, John	Cohen, Harry
Beckett, Margaret	Coleman, Donald
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Corbett, Robin
Blair, Tony	Corbyn, Jeremy
Boateng, Paul	Cousins, Jim
Boyes, Roland	Cox, Tom
Bradley, Keith	Cryer, Bob
Bray, Dr Jeremy	Cummings, J.
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*	Cunliffe, Lawrence

Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allan *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy

Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

Dog Licence

'(1) The duty charged under the Dog Licences Act 1959 on Licences for dogs shall from the date set out in subsection (5) and subject to subsection (2), be determined by a London borough, or district council, as appropriate at a level of not less than £10 per annum and not more than £20 per annum in any financial year and shall be allocated by the authority to the funding of a dog warden service in its area.

(2) No duty shall be charged in respect of any dog which is:—

(a) a trained guide dog kept for the purpose of assisting a blind or partially-sighted person;

(b) a dog kept for the purpose of work in connection with the maintenance of livestock or gamekeeping;

(c) a dog whose owner has attained the age of statutory retirement.

(3) in Section 1 of the Protection of Animals (Cruelty to Dogs) Act 1933 (disqualification for keeping a dog of any person convicted of cruelty to dogs), at the end there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(5) For the purposes of this section a person shall be presumed, until the contrary is shown, to keep a dog—

(a) if it is found or seen in that person's custody, charge or possession, or in his house or premises;

(b) in the case of hounds, if he is their owner or master."

(4) In section 1 of the Protection of Animals (Cruelty to Dogs) (Scotland) Act 1934 (disqualification for keeping a dog of any person convicted of cruelty to dogs), at the end there shall be inserted the following subsection

"(5) For the purposes of this section a person shall be presumed, until the contrary is shown, to keep a dog—

(a) if it is found or seen in that person's custody, charge or possession, or in his house or premises;

(b) in the case of hounds, if he is their owner or master."

(5) This section shall come into force at the end of the period of 2 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.".—*[Mr. Rooker.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Rooker: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we shall take the following: New clause 10—*Dangerous dogs*—

'( ) A local authority shall be empowered to draw up a register of dangerous dogs and will be entitled to inspect premises to ensure adequate care and security where such dogs are kept.'.

Amendment No. 29, in page 30, line 1, leave out clause 33.

Mr. Rooker: There are some important aspects to this debate. Dog licences were discussed in Committee during only one sitting out of 29, so it cannot be said that we made a full meal of it. We thought it right to discuss the matter further on Report for the simple reason that the Government made it difficult to amend the clause as they sought to abolish dog licences. The Opposition proposed an amendment as an alternative to abolishing dog licences which was not taken as it was out of order. We gave notice then that we would table an amendment on Report, which we have done in the form of the new clause.

I shall not repeat the speech that I made upstairs, nor do I expect my hon. Friends to repeat their speeches. We

emphasise that local authorities are not opposed to dog ownership. They are not anti-dog, but they are opposed to irresponsible dog ownership. I think that all hon. Members would share that opposition. The vast majority of dog owners are responsible people, although only half of them seem to pay the dog licence. One hon. Member, who shall be nameless, boasted in the Committee about his illegality in not paying for licences for his two dogs. He was not a law-breaking Labour Member but a law-breaking Conservative Member.

The present situation is ludicrous and cannot be allowed to continue. We spend £3·5 million to collect £1 million and the public must think that Parliament has taken leave of its senses in not having tackled this issue before. The way in which we tackle it is where we are divided. The Government have taken the easy way out by deciding to abolish the licence. That was not always their intention. It is much better to propose a system for which we think there is a consensus: a well-funded and adequate dog licence scheme.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does my hon. Friend accept that although the Government have shown remarkable cowardice in not dealing with the situation in England, Scotland and Wales, they have dealt with it in Northern Ireland? As far as one can make out, they have dealt with it very successfully there, and there has not been massive civil disobedience as a result of Northern Ireland people deciding not to pay the new dog licence fee. The problem of sheep worrying and other problems caused by dogs have been largely solved in Northern Ireland. For once, would it not be worthwhile taking a leaf out of the Northern Ireland statute book and having such legislation here? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Mr. Rooker: I notice "Hear, hears" from Conservative Back Benchers. This is not the first time today that the Government's policy in Northern Ireland has been contradicted by Department of Environment Ministers. In our debate in which contract compliance was raised, the policy that the Government operate and for which they legislated in Northern Ireland is not the same as the legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. Quite clearly, there is also a difference between Great Britain and Northern Ireland in respect of dog licences.

The problems caused by dogs can be summarised by and large as the problem of strays, fouling of public places, traffic accidents, worrying of livestock, transmission of disease, and noise. Those problems will not be eradicated, by a higher dog licence or, indeed, by a dog licence in the first place. They could be eradicated, or at least seriously tackled to the benefit of the wider community, if we had funded dog wardens. We object to having such a system funded by the poll tax. If the dog licence system does not fund the dog wardens, they will have to be paid for by the poll tax. We are not prepared to accept that because our constituents will not accept it. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Because apart from all the other ramifications of the poll tax, tackling dog nuisance and funding dog wardens should not be paid for by the wider community by way of the poll tax. It is in the interests of responsible dog owners to have properly funded dog wardens. Indeed, that is in everbody's interest and there is no reason why such a scheme cannot be funded by dog owners through dog licences.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman on this occasion. Does he not accept that if we have a substantial dog licence fee, the people who will pay it will be responsible dog owners? They will have to suffer because of the irresponsible minority.

Mr. Rooker: That is true, but dog wardens will tackle the problems caused by irresponsible dog owners. At the moment nobody is tackling that problem. It is occasionally left to the police and in the city of Birmingham, with 1 million people and perhaps 100,000 dogs, to one dog warden. For a population of perhaps one million people, there is one dog warden. He just cannot cope with the problem.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I am keen to make progress.

Mr. Hughes: I shall not stop the hon. Gentleman making progress. The point is exactly parallel to that regarding four-wheeled vehicles on the roads. The responsible people who pay their vehicle excise licence fees subsidise all those who do not pay. The same point applies to all other licences. We shall not get everybody to pay. It is not a perfect world. The argument is flawed unless it is accepted across the board, and it never has been accepted on the Government side.

Mr. Rooker: Of course the same applies to any licence. For example, I refer to the television licence.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I shall not give way.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman at the Dispatch Box giving way?

Mr. Rooker: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I support what he said. I just want to sustain the point he is making by saying that if we do have a dog warden system, the anti-social dog owner who is currently not paying for a licence will be found out and will be required to pay a licence. So all dog owners will pay for the licence.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. I was right to give way, but I thought three times about it. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

If shall not recite many of the statistics that are involved, but there are a couple that I must put on record. I have not checked the figures since the matter was considered in Committee. I apologise. Since 1978, figures have not been collected about the number of livestock that have been killed or injured because of dog worrying. I am not sure whether the collection of figures stopped because of the election of the Conservative Government or whether we decided to cease collecting them. The figures for 1978 show that 5,700 livestock were killed and 3,140 were injured. In 1985, 1,200 road accidents involved dogs. In those accidents three people were killed and 1,400 were injured.

On the argument about transmission of disease, no fewer than between 50 and 100 people—half of them children — a year suffer from blindness from being affected by dog mess or, as is the case in respect of local

[Mr. Rooker]

authority workers, cutting grass kerbs which serve, for irresponsible dog owners, as dog lavatories—not outside their houses, of course, but outside somebody else's house. The range is fairly wide because of the non-reporting of the matter. One must pick up the figures from institutions for special diseases and hospital reports. It is unacceptable that between 50 and 100 people a year go blind strictly as a result of irresponsible dog owners who could be controlled by a dog warden scheme that is funded by a proper dog licence system. In the end, the matter goes back to the dog licence issue.

Many countries apart from Northern Ireland have dog licences. Since 1984, at a cost of £5, Ireland has had a dog licence and dog warden scheme. The situation in Germany varies. Dog licences cost between £19 and £76. It actually varies according to the type of dog involved. Believe it or not, in Holland the price of a dog licence varies between £14 and £43, based not on the number of dogs but the rateable value of the dog owner's home. No doubt, we shall return to that point in Committee when we consider the poll tax legislation.

One other aspect relates to the effect on one section of our population — postmen and postwomen. To them, dog ownership and irresponsible ownership are important. A delegation from the Union of Communication Workers came to see me and my hon. Friends a few days ago. I had not thought the matter through as I should have done, and asked, "Why only the postmen? Why do I not get representations from bakers and milkmen?" They rightly put the point to me, "We are usually the first people in the day to put our hands through the letterboxes of the homes of irresponsible dog owners." The baker and the milkman do not have to do that. In 1986, no fewer than 5,560 postal workers were attacked by dogs. The *Daily Telegraph* of 20 August 1986 carried a report about a postwoman in Gloucester having been attacked by three alsatians, who tore off one of her ears. It is a damned serious business when one of our fellow citizens is put at risk — *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members find something funny about a postwoman being attacked by three alsatian dogs in Gloucester and having her ear ripped off. To laugh at that is a thundering disgrace.

11.30 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): What difference would a dog licence have made?

Mr. Rooker: I am not defending a dog licence of only 37p that is paid for by only half the dog owners, because it could not fund a dog warden scheme. I am not attacking the quality of a dog warden scheme in Gloucester that allows three alsatians to attack a postwoman.

Mr. Harris: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: No, I shall not give way.

That is where we part company with the Government. Whether dogs are licensed is irrelevant. Our argument is that that kind of incident would be less likely to happen if there were adequately funded dog warden schemes.

Mr. Harris *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: That cannot be denied. I shall now give way to the hon. Gentleman, just so that he can contain himself.

Mr. Harris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Will the hon. Gentleman explain exactly what difference a dog warden scheme would have made in that case? Dog wardens would be unable to go round to each house to establish whether alsatians were likely to rip the ears off postwomen. If those dogs were licensed, what difference would it make?

Mr. Rooker: That is exactly what has happened in Northern Ireland since the law was changed. We do not expect every door to be knocked on, but our point is that, with an adequately funded dog warden scheme, it is less likely that there will be roaming packs of dogs.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: In Carrick district council — a Liberal council — Mr. Hugh Baldry proposed successfully that a dog warden should be appointed. Carrick council is now funding a dog warden and it has proved to be a success. But does it not make far more sense that dog owners should pay for such a service and that it should not be a burden on the local community as a whole?

Mr. Rooker: Another point that has been put to me by postal workers is that there ought to be compulsory insurance for dog owners. That still leaves the problem of identification, but there ought to be compulsory insurance. If a postal worker is attacked by a dog the incident is reported to the head postmaster, who writes a letter to whoever lives at the address where the incident happened. The letter has to be delivered by the postal worker who reported the incident in the first place. That is ludicrous. The amendment does not deal with the proposal, but there is a case for considering the introduction of compulsory insurance for dog owners.

The Government ought to consider this proposal. We do not believe that there is a simple solution. There are many problems to be overcome, but we do not believe that a solution can be found simply by abolishing the dog licence. No serious attempt has be made to tackle the problem of stray dogs, packs of dogs and dog fouling, and no serious attempt will be made by hard-pressed local authorities to tackle those problems. They will be reluctant to say to their electorate that they intend to increase the poll tax to pay for a dog warden service. We do not think that they should be in that position.

Mr. Patnick: Does the hon. Gentleman regard the dog warden as an endangered species? Does he envisage them delivering the letter rather than the postal worker?

Mr. Rooker: No, I do not think that the dog warden is an endangered species. Rather it is the dogs of irresponsible owners who are endangered. The dog population would go down if there were dog wardens. There are an estimated 6·5 million dogs in Britain, but 1,000 a day are put down. It is a tragedy that animals which share this planet with us are put down on that scale because of irresponsible owners. It is because of that that we want the problem tackled. One way in which to do that is not to abolish the dog licence, but to increase it to £10 or £20 at the discretion of the local authority, to use the money only for a dog warden scheme and to have exceptions for working dogs, guide dogs and those owned by pensioners.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: I declare an interest as the owner of three West Highland terriers. The House would not

expect me to declare that interest on financial grounds because of the gain I would make from the licence being abolished.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Are they all licensed?

Mr. Bowden: They are indeed. I am a member of the national advisory panel of PRO Dogs and I understand the well-meaning case that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has advanced. Nobody denies that there are irresponsible dog owners, but the evidence suggests that it is the most irresponsible dog owners who will not purchase a licence.

The proposed list of exemptions is to be found in subsection (2)*(c)* which reads:

"a dog whose owner has attained the age of statutory retirement."

There are approximately 6 million dogs in Britain. I estimate that the proposed exemptions cover 2 million of them. How would the list be administered? We would have to set up a complicated and expensive bureaucratic system. We would require a Swansea for dogs. It is difficult enough to collect the licence fee for cars. We would have to establish an immensely costly system to collect a relatively small sum from, as a result of the proposed exemptions, about one third of the dog-owning population. Any such system would itself eat heavily into the revenue raised by a £20 licence.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we are now spending an enormous sum and retrieving little. Moreover, the police are spending an enormous amount of time and money looking after stray dogs. That is a bad investment for the taxpayer. Why should we not have a decent investment producing a decent revenue and a decent service which looks after dogs? A licence fee of £10 would do that, even if not all dogs were licensed.

Mr. Bowden: I thought that I had explained that. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman was not listening.

The cost of setting up a system with computers and applications, for example, that would exclude one third of dog owners would be exhorbitant. That is why I suggest that we must seek other methods, and others are open to us.

I am a dog lover and a dog owner and I do not deny that a minority of dog owners pose a substantial problem by allowing their dogs to foul the pavements and, even worse, to run loose on the roads. How do we deal with that? Surely there should be fines based on identification. The police, and even dog wardens, are reluctant currently to take people to court because hours of valuable time for many people lead to fines of only £2 or £5. If a first offence attracted a minimum fine of £50, the impact would be considerable. That would certainly be so in Brighton, for example. The imposition of such a fine would attract press coverage and thereafter dog owners would be careful to prevent their dogs from fouling pavements—at present, too many do not care—and would not let their dogs run loose on the roads. That would be a practical and realistic approach.

There will be difficulty in collecting a licence fee. It has proved difficult to collect televsion licence fees—and we cannot have detector vans for unlicensed dogs. There are difficulties also in collecting motor car licence fees.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the greatest difficulty with fines is that it is almost certain that the first person to be fined in any area for a dog nuisance offence would almost certainly be a pensioner, who would have difficulty in paying the fine? There are those who persistently allow their dogs to run free and cause a nuisance, whereas someone else's dog may escape on one occasion and thereby cause the owner to incur a fine. There is a danger that a system of fines will penalise good dog owners.

Mr. Bowden: I suspect that probably the most responsible section of dog owners is composed of the elderly and/or pensioners. They are much more likely than many others to have their dog on a lead and under control. In Brighton, I see dogs running loose. In nine cases out of 10 they are owned by people—not pensioners—who could well afford to pay a £50 fine, for example. If a pensioner happened to be the first person to be fined for such an offence, the court could ensure that time was given to pay. It would not be necessary for the fine to be paid immediately. The impact of a more substantial fine would be salutary.

In consultation with the RSPCA and other interested organisations, we should prepare an effective method of identification. That should be backed by a solid system of substantial fines. Such a system would deal more effectively with the problem than the provisions that are set out in the new clause.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I support the new clause, but that does not mean that I agree with everything within it. It is deplorable that, after 11 years of discussion, the Government have run away from the issue. In 1976, a working party firmly identified the existence of a major problem. It found that we were no longer a nation of dog lovers. Indeed, it was revealed that we were a nation of dog neglecters. For 11 years Governments have delayed taking action, and now we are faced with a decision to abolish the dog licence. No attempt has been made to address the real problem, which is that dogs suffer cruelty as a result of neglect.

The greatest merit of a substantial licence fee is that it would make prospective owners think before making a purchase or taking on dog ownership. We all know that there are pressures upon children to take a dog home as a pet. Some dogs will be cherished for a few months or for ever, but in many instances they will soon be neglected. If a youngster comes home from school and says that one of his friends is prepared to give him a puppy, the parents may take it because there is no cost involved. It is only when they have had the dog for some time that they appreciate the expense of feeding it and the other problems, and often the dog is neglected. If there were a licence fee at the point at which a person became the owner of a dog, it would make him stop and think about the commitment. It would ensure that fewer dogs were taken and neglected.

11.45 pm

If we had a substantial licence fee people would feel much more responsibility in looking after their dogs and would not, as happens in so many parts of the country, open the door first thing in the morning, kick the dog out and have very little more concern about what the dog does until it returns to be fed later in the day. If people were more concerned about their dogs, there would not be such appalling sheep-worrying——

Mr. Corbett: Does my hon. Friend agree that a spaying scheme would do away with the problem of packs of dogs around inner and outer-city council estates, driving people to distraction?

Mr. Bennett: I agree that spaying centres would be a useful development to solve some of the problems.

It was a sad day when the Government stopped collecting figures of the number of sheep and animals which are harmed by dogs. Anyone who has seen sheep which have been chased round and round a field and torn to bits by a pack of dogs is horrified. It is not just sheep but other animals which are worried by dogs. When statistics were kept, there were figures for horses and cattle which had been damaged by packs of dogs running round causing a nuisance.

In Northern Ireland when farmers complained about sheep-worrying and pointed out that the only solution was for them to carry guns to shoot the dogs that were causing the nuisance, the Government acted quickly and introduced an effective licence fee and dog warden system to solve the problem. It was, of course, undesirable in Northern Ireland to allow farmers with guns to deal with sheep-worrying. I do not see that it is any more satisfactory to have people walking around in this country trying to shoot dogs which are worrying sheep. It would be far better to tackle the problem by appointing dog wardens to impress on people their responsibility.

A licence fee would discourage people from taking on dogs without thinking seriously about it. It might do something to reduce the problem of the fouling of pavements, grass verges and sports fields. One of the most disgusting things I ever saw was a youngster scoring a try at rugby and sliding across the touchline straight into a pile of dog shit. That demonstrates how objectionable some dog owners are that they will specifically walk on to playing fields where they know that people will be enjoying sport and allow their dogs to foul those areas. It is objectionable that they use playing fields, but there are also problems in children's play areas in parks.

Dogs on the highway cause a substantial number of road accidents. There are many incidents of children being bitten by dogs. Not only do they suffer pain from the bite, but many of them fear dogs for the rest of their lives. That is a great pity for those youngsters.

I object particularly because the Government are simply running away from the problem. They have washed their hands of the whole thing and said that local authorities can provide dog wardens if they can raise the money from general rates. Even at this late stage, I suggest that the Government should come forward with a positive set of proposals for a dog warden service, paid for from the licence fee costing either £10 a year, suggested in the new clause, or involving a once-for-all fee paid when someone takes on the ownership of a dog.

We would not need a great bureaucracy to be set up at Swansea to record the system. It would be simple to sell a licence that could be clipped to the dog's collar to show whether someone had paid the licence fee and allow those who were exempted from paying because of age to have that exemption included in information on the collar.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): The hon. Gentleman complained that rates would be wasted on cleaning up dog mess from pavements. Like all hon. Members, he must have received complaints from constituents that they pay local rates, but do not use the education or social services which are the part of the general duty of a local authority in respect of all of its citizens. Why should the provision of dog wardens and the perfectly justifiable need to keep pavements and parks clean be a charge only on people who own dogs?

Mr. Bennett: I do not believe that a dog warden or anyone else should be involved in the clearing up. The one person who should be responsible for clearing up after a dog is the owner. We need someone to enforce that. That is the advantage of the dog warden.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the "poopa scoopa" schemes operating in other countries and, I believe, on the Isle of Wight? Owners can get a plastic bag and a cardboard shovel from a little machine on a street corner and clear up after their dogs.

Mr. Bennett: I am aware of that scheme. I am disappointed that such a scheme does not apply in 99 per cent. of this country, but it would be exceptional for anyone to act responsibly enough to use that scheme.

If there was a proper dog warden system across the country, the warden would give advice and no doubt encourage schemes like the "poopa scoopa". I support the new clause but deplore the fact that the Government have not come forward with their own specific proposals.

Mr. Tony Marlow: If I may declare three brief interests, first I am vice-president of the League for the Introduction of Canine Controls. It is a very valuable organisation which seeks to direct public attention to some of the problems associated with dogs and the need to deal with those problems and also, of course, the welfare of dogs.

Secondly—I think that it was the day the Americans invaded Grenada or somewhere — I had the good fortune to have a ten-minute Bill on the subject of the control and the welfare of dogs. The Bill that I put before the House was very similar to the measure proposed in the new clause moved by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) from the Opposition Front Bench. I am happy to say that on that occasion we had a vote and the overwhelming majority of the House — about 2:1—was in favour of a measure similar to that put forward by the hon. Gentleman today. I am disappointed that on an issue such as this, the Government have not seen fit to allow the House to have a free vote. I believe that on a free vote the measure would be overwhelmingly supported and passed.

That is an idea in its time and there is nothing quite as strong as an idea in its time. It is like movements on smoking, and anti-social smoking. Society has changed its view. It has moved and taken a new position, and so it is particularly in our urban areas with the nuisance of some dogs.

The third point of interest, I suppose, that I declare is that one of my sons as a small child picked up and was infected by the worm toxocara canis. As the hon. Member for Perry Barr said, 50 to 100 people a year are infected or damaged in some way by this disease. My son effectively lost the sight in one eye. It does happen. What the hon. Gentleman said is correct. It happened to my son when he was a small child. He knew nothing about it and he could do nothing to prevent it from happening to him.

People take their dogs — carelessly, sometimes casually—into public parks. The dogs defecate, and they

do not clear up after them. I am pleased to say that we are allowing local authorities to take measures, but they are still not complete.

The worm is in the faeces. It gets into the ground, and can stay dormant there for a long period. A small child, wandering or crawling around—perhaps having been eating a sweet—can pick up a bit of dirt in its fingers, suck its fingers and ingest the worm. It migrates throughout the system, and can cause epilepsy; it can also cause fits, asthma and—as I know, and my son knows—damage to the eyesight. That is a severe problem, and I believe that it is time that the Government addressed themselves to the issue more forcefully than by simply doing away with dog licences.

After noise—as I think that my hon. Friend the Minister would agree—the nuisance caused by dogs is about the biggest environmental problem that we face. That nuisance has been set out by many hon. Members, and I do not wish to go over the points that have already been made. Parks in many areas are disgraceful, however. Play areas where children go are covered in dog filth. If a mother wants to take her child into a play area, she has to watch every step that it takes. That is very unpleasant and distressing.

Blind people going for a walk using a stick can tell where the stick will take them, but not where they are going to put their feet or what they are going to tread in. When they go into their homes, they cross their carpets with the filth on their feet, because some anti-social person has allowed his dog to defecate on the pavement. We would not let human beings do it; why should we let dogs do it?

An increasing number of dangerous dogs are being kept not as pets or companions, but as macho symbols to build up the prestige of some little people in our society who want to frighten and humiliate others. That is something that dog wardens could keep an eye on.

There is also the problem of the latchkey dog. People get a dog at Christmas for a child, and are bored with it by Easter. They go out to work; they have a bored dog at home that they do not know what to do with; they open the door and let it out. It roams the streets, gets together with other dogs and forms a pack. They cause traffic accidents, or people are attacked: we often read of people being attacked by packs of dogs, and of children being savaged through people keeping the wrong sort of dogs in their homes.

Dog wardens would be able to start to deal with what is a growing problem in many urban areas. If we are to have such a system, I think that we ought to allow local authorities to finance it. Different local authorities have different problems, and different local authorities have different perceptions of the problems. The beauty of the new clause is that it allows a sliding scale of licence fees. The areas with the worst problems could charge a higher licence fee, and thereby have a more effective and complete system of dog wardens for dealing with the problems of dogs—and not only that, but for helping people to see to the welfare of dogs that suffer and are badly looked after at present. They can provide advice and instruction for people thinking of getting dogs——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): That is Socialism.

Mr. Marlow: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is Socialism, I do not think that he has been following the argument.

Let me make one further point. I have spoken about the latchkey dogs that are let out during the day to roam the streets. In my constituency, I often go around knocking on doors in the evening, canvassing—speaking to people, and feeling the pulse of the constituency to see what problems people have. One of the problems that is brought to me quite often is that of elderly ladies who dare not leave their houses during the day because if they do so a neighbour's dog will come bounding up and knock them over, having been left outside all day. What are we going to do about that?

I get in touch with a dog warden, because we have one in Northampton. We only have one, however, and we need more than that. The amendment would allow local authorities to introduce a proper system.

People say that we should not have a licence system. But what if rabies arrives here? How will we know where the dogs are? How will we control them? Is it really time, after 100 or so years, to throw out the system that would control any future menace from rabies? When it was introduced the licence cost 37½p—7s. 6d.—and in those days that constituted, for the working man, a week's wages.

What the hon. Member for Perry Barr is suggesting is that we should be allowed to increase the licence fee to £20, all of which would be spent on the control and welfare of dogs. I do not agree with every point in the hon. Gentleman's new clause, but it is courageous and worth supporting, and I certainly intend to do so.

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—[Mr. Howard.]

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee) to be further considered tomorrow.

Aircraft Accident (Stornoway)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

12 midnight

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of the aircraft accident that occurred at Stornoway aerodrome on 8 December 1983.

A Cessna Citation 500 aircraft crashed into the sea 10 miles south-east of Stornoway with the loss of 10 lives. The flight progress was negligently mishandled by the air traffic service unit at Stornoway during the 15 minutes before the aircraft was inadvertently flown into the sea. The pilot was effectively encouraged, as a result of the laxity of the air traffic controllers, to break mandatory rules that have been implemented for the very purpose of preventing this type of accident.

Senior management within the National Air Traffic Services, whose responsibility it is to advise the accidents investigation branch inspector on the air traffic control aspects of this accident, conspired to cover up the negligence of the Stornoway controllers — their fellow employees—because the matter reflects so badly on their own organisation.

There has been a deliberate misrepresentation of the air traffic controllers' involvement in this accident and an attempt to mislead my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport as addressee of the official accident report and, ultimately, to pervert the course of justice.

Late last year and early this year I corresponded with the Department of Transport on this matter. It came as no surprise that the replies were unsatisfactory and evasive, because they were provided on behalf of the Secretary of State by the very perpetrators of this deception. That is why I now urge my right hon. Friend to order an independent inquiry into the air traffic control aspects of the accident and to reopen the accident inspector's investigation so that the findings and cause can truly reflect the gross negligence displayed by the Stornoway air traffic controllers.

The facts of the case are that a Cessna Citation left Liverpool at 16.32 hours en route to Stornoway carrying a pilot, a pilot's assistant, six adult passengers and two infants. Another aircraft, a Citation Mk II, was carrying other members of the same private party. At 17.34 hours Stornoway ATC passed details of the aerodrome weather observation to both aircraft and asked them to report at 25 miles range from the aerodrome. The pilot of the Cessna Citation acknowledged the Stornoway weather but did not repeat back the altitude indication as required. Instructions to controllers require them to obtain a full read-back of messages containing an altimeter setting. This was the first of many omissions by Stornoway air traffic control.

At 17.40 hours the pilot of the Cessna Citation reported that his range was 25 miles and that he had the Citation MK II in sight. He asked for a clearance to continue his descent and was cleared by the Stornoway controller to descend at his discretion with the aircraft ahead in sight. The use of this procedure is permitted only during the hours of daylight, for reasons that must appear obvious to everyone. A moment later the pilot of the Cessna Citation was asked to report when he had the airfield in sight for a visual approach. He acknowleged this message but no further communication was received from him.

An intensive search was made for the Cessna Citation that night, and two bodies were recovered. During the next four days, five more bodies and some small pieces of aircraft wreckage were found near the same position. The bodies of two more passengers were recovered from the seabed on 28 February and 5 June 1984 and that of the pilot's assistant on 18 July 1984. Attempts to recover the main wreckage were not successful. The inspector concludes that the balance of evidence indicates that the pilot was distracted from his aircraft instruments, probably by the need to re-establish visual contact with the aircraft ahead, that he had a false impression that he was at a safe height and that he failed to check the aircraft's descent until too late.

After studying the inspector's lengthy report in great detail and taking professional advice, it became patently clear to me that the balance of evidence referred to by the inspector had been doctored by the misrepresentations and falsifications relating to the air traffic control aspects of the accident. One of the contributory factors itemised in the accident report was based on the false premise that there was a definite need for the pilot of the Cessna Citation to establish visual contact with the aircraft ahead in order to maintain his own separation. For obvious reasons, the requirements for that procedure cannot be met during the hours of darkness. Therefore, the practice is specifically prohibited at night. The accident occurred at night.

I questioned the integrity of the report in a letter to the Secretary of State on 10 November last year when I expressed my belief that a miscarriage of justice had occurred resulting from the conclusions reached by the inspector of accidents. I went on to say:

"A detailed study of the report reveals serious irregularities and discrepancies relating to the ATC aspects of the accident. Many of the claims and explanations in respect of the ATC involvement are at complete variance with regulations governing the provision of civil air traffic services in United Kingdom airspace. As a result, it is evident that the inspector has not been able to reach accurate and properly balanced conclusions."

I pointed out the glaring misrepresentations in the report, which states that it was necessary for the pilot of the aircraft to maintain visual contact with and his own separation from the aircraft ahead. Since that method of operation is applicable only during the hours of daylight, the statement in the report is a gross distortion of the rules relating to the procedure. Even if daylight prevailed, that procedure could not have been successful and should not have been permitted because the requirement for uninterrupted visual meteorological conditions clearly could not be met. That fact was confirmed by the pilot of the Citation Mk II and by the aftercast from the Meteorological Office. Contrary to the claim in the report, it was not reasonable, therefore, for the controller to assume that the pilot would maintain continuous visual contact with the preceding aircraft and follow it safely from a distance of 25 miles from the aerodrome. The controller's assumption was based solely on the aerodrome meteorological observation which, not exceptionally, was at marked variance with the conditions encountered by both aircraft in their descent towards Stornoway.

I also highlighted the gross inaccuracy in paragraph 2:7 of the report dealing with distance-measuring equipment,

or DME separation. The report claimed that with the reported DME ranges indicating that the two aircraft were separated by five nautical miles horizontally, the controller had no reason to advise an additional vertical separation. I pointed out that the manual of air traffic services clearly states that the minimum distance allowed when using DME separation is 15 miles. Moreover, there is no provision for allowing that sort of separation between two aircraft when both are descending on the same track or when aircraft are within 15 miles of the overhead of the DME ground station. Consequently, and contrary to the claim in the report, standard vertical separation was absolutely necessary.

If that absurd claim had been made under oath possibly the author and most certainly his ATC advisers would have been guilty of nothing less than perjury. The ATC advisers involved in the report must have had strong reasons for putting into print such a glaring falsehood. Undoubtedly they were confident that it would remain unquestioned because they were addressing only the uninitiated. We should know what those reasons were.

Another grave misrepresentation in the report is the attempt to justify the controller's misuse of reduced separation. It is claimed that the controller accepted the reduced standard separation applicable in the vicinity of the airfield to aircraft in visual contact. But the body of the report reveals that none of the requirements necessary for providing any form of reduced separation was properly met. Furthermore, the term "the vicinity of the airfield" cannot possibly extend to a range of 25 nautical miles from where the report implies that reduced separation was permitted, especially since the air and air traffic control regulations refer to it as the airspace which contains the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft intending to land at that aerodrome.

I ended my letter by stating that the flaws and irregularities which I had detailed gave considerable cause for concern. One may conclude that either the accident inspector chose to disregard advice on air traffic control matters that would have been rendered by the Civil Aviation Authority or that he was deliberately misled by information received from that same source. Since the inaccuracies in the report appear to have gone unchallenged by those in the CAA responsible for regulating and overseeing the standards of civil air traffic operations, the latter responsibility could not be ruled out.

I then urged my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State seriously to consider authorising the reopening of the investigation in accordance with his powers under the Civil Aviation (Investigation of Accidents) Regulations. I am afraid that the reply from the Department, dated November 1986, was drafted by the very people who had originally perpetrated the deceptions in the accident report and was a prime example of having the wool pulled over one's eyes. Not surprisingly, it made no attempt to answer my allegations point by point. Instead, it claimed that most of my arguments were not strictly relevant because they related to circumstances where reduced separation in the vicinity of aerodromes is not applicable. It claimed that the term "vicinity of the aerodrome" was infinitely variable and stated that, since the air and air traffic control regulations refer to it as being the airspace which contains the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft intending to land at that aerodrome, it was equally valid to argue that the vicinity of the aerodrome extended, on the occasion in question, to 25 nautical miles. This was because there were only two aircraft intending to land at Stornoway, and one was at 25 nautical miles. This most incredible interpretation conveniently overlooks the possible existence of unknown aircraft not intending to land at, but obviously wishing to avoid flying within the vicinity of, a particular aerodrome. In other words, that technical term was not defined for the sole benefit of known inbound aircraft, to be adjusted according to the whim of a controller.

The reply also conveniently ignored all my references to the prohibited use of visual separation by the pilots of instrument flight rules flights at night. It attempted to belittle my allegations by saying that the case I had made appeared to be based upon one fine technical point—whether or not the Stornoway controller was entitled to apply the reduced separation permitted between aircraft in the vicinity of an aerodrome. It concluded by unequivocably justifying the actions of the controller at Stornoway and stating that there was no justification for the reopening of the investigation into the accident.

I wrote again to the Department in December 1986. I disputed his allegation that the case I had made was based upon one fine technical point — whether or not the Stornoway controller was entitled to apply the reduced separation permitted between aircraft in the vicinity of an aerodrome. I said that, although National Air Traffic Services has chosen to base its justification of the ATC actions on that one fine technical point, I still maintained that all the allegations in my first letter were strictly relevant. I questioned the logic in claiming that the vicinity of the aerodrome had no dimensional limit and could be infinitely variable—in that a specific portion of air space could be classed as being outside the vicinity of the aerodrome on one occasion yet within it on another. Clearly, any such interpretation renders the term completely meaningless and contradicts all references to this matter in the United Kingdom aeronautical information publication—the official document used for notifying the requirements of the air navigation order.

This document notifies, among other things, the basic procedure to be adopted by a pilot experiencing radio failure. Under certain circumstances he has to leave the vicinity of the aerodrome. In this respect, the guidance available to him and to air traffic controllers clearly shows the dimensional limit of the airspace which contains the pattern of traffic formed by other aircraft intending to land at that aerodrome; that is, the vicinity of the aerodrome. Unquestionably there cannot be a situation — as there clearly would be under the National Air Traffic Services explanation — in which a pilot has no idea of the distance that he has to fly to comply with the requirements of the procedure and leave the vicinity of the aerodrome. I went on to dispute some of the other claims made in the letter that was sent to me. I had some subsequent correspondence with my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Transport, and I followed that up with a number of written questions.

The outcome of all this is that, having written letters and asked questions, I still feel that my hon. Friend should consider reopening the case. I have not written three times to the Department, tabled three written questions and initiated an Adjournment debate on a whim. I have a most reliable source and I know that there has been a conspiracy to conceal the true facts. A miscarriage of justice has occurred. This can happen easily enough because of the conflict of interests that exists in the Civil Aviation

[Mr. Tim Smith]

Authority, which not only provides air traffic control services but regulates those services and conducts inquiries into accidents involving its own air traffic ontrollers. There must be a full and independent inquiry into the way in which investigations into the accident have been conducted and in which subsequent inquiries have been misdirected. It must be determined why the report is riddled with lies.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I have a direct interest in this matter because the accident took place in my constituency, although I was not a Member of Parliament at the time. The controller about whom the hon. Gentleman makes serious allegations is still a constituent of mine. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that I deeply resent the fact that he did not communicate the matter to me? I read about it on the Order Paper and had to write to him to find out what aspects of the matter he intended to raise. I appreciate the fact that he gave me a copy of his speech, but he should have communicated his intentions to me before. Does he also accept that I find it bizarre that he should seek to raise the matter under the privileges of the House and to make accusations that no newspaper would publish if they were made outside the House?

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman will have noted that I have not named any individual — not the air traffic controller or the 10 people who died. I am concerned about a matter of principle — that the Civil Aviation Authority has two responsibilities which create a conflict of interests. First, the CAA is an air traffic controller itself and, secondly, it is responsible for investigating accidents which may involve a CAA air traffic controller. It is extremely difficult to reconcile those two interests. I have gone out of my way not to name any indvidual. I am informed that though no responsibility has been accepted in this case, the individual involved has been disciplined.

I want to know why the Department will not accept my suggestion that the inquiry should be reopened. If those who contributed to the report have nothing to hide, why should they resist? I assure the House that there are mandatory air traffic control rules which, had they been followed, would undoubtedly have prevented this accident.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): First of all, I acknowledge the deep interest in this matter of my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) as well as the constituency interest of the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald).

The decision whether the investigation should be re-opened is a matter for the chief inspector of accidents, who has previously examined the information that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield has put forward, and has concluded that there is no justification under the regulations for him to use his powers to re-open the investigation. I understand that this matter has been fairly dealt with in accordance with the regulations, although the chief inspector remains willing at all times to consider any new evidence that might be brought to his notice.

I am new to the matter, but I will make sure that my hon. Friend's words are brought to the attention of the chief inspector and of my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping. I do not think that my hon. Friend will expect me to get deeply involved, but I recognise that he has used the Adjournment debate to raise a matter that he regards as important. Hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that air safety is important and that many of us owe our safety to the effective work of pilots, the staff of the CAA and the air traffic controllers, as well as the inspectors who investigate accidents so that lessons can be learned from them.

My hon. Friend has made several points about the information in the report of the inspector of accidents. What he would wish me to say, I think, is that our system of investigating accidents is thorough. He has raised several points about this tragic accident, but, as I have said, I do not have the skill or knowledge to go much further this evening. I could go into a summary of the accident report, but much of that information was given by my hon. Friend so I hope that he will not mind if I do not repeat that information, or other information that is obviously well known to him, as I understand from his exchange of correspondence, and from the accident report.

It is worth noting that the investigation was hindered by the fact that no signicant part of the aircraft was recovered. I do not think that my hon. Friend has disputed the main conclusion of how the accident physically took place. I think his point is that if the aircraft had been under a different form of control it would not have taken place.

My hon. Friend has made several serious charges. I think that the House would probably prefer to take them seriously. I hope that my hon. Friend's interest in making sure that accident investigations of this kind seriously and properly consider all the information, will be correctly reported, rather than being reported in such a way that it seems that an individual is being charged, under parliamentary privilege, with some dereliction of duty. That may be associated with what my hon. Friend has said, but the important point that he is making is that he and the House should be satisfied that we have the right way of approaching issues of this kind, given that we have to learn from every sad accident to make sure that it does not happen again.

Many of the potential causes of the accident were considered in the report. In the analysis, the inspector considered the operational and air traffic aspects of the flight and found that the probable cause was the pilot's lack of awareness of his aircraft's true altitude, which resulted in his allowing his aircraft to descend until it struck the sea. Likely contributory factors were that he was distracted by the need to establish visual contact with another aircraft and that he was misled by false cues from lights on the ground ahead of him.

In accordance with the regulations, copies of the draft report were sent to the operator of the aircraft, the personal representatives of the deceased pilot and the Civil Aviation Authority. They were invited to make any formal representations that they desired to the inspector, and those were carefully considered by the inspector when he finalised his report. None of the representations made any reference to air traffic control. Following the submission of the report to the Secretary of State in November 1984, the same three parties were each sent a copy of the report in its final form. In accordance with the regulations, they were informed of the right to serve on the Secretary of State within 21 days written notice if they wished to ask for a review board to consider any findings or conclusions in the report which appeared adversely to affect their

personal reputation. No such request for a review board was made by any of these persons and the report was therefore published in February 1985.

I have said what I usefully can. I hope that my hon. Friend will not imagine that I intend any disrespect if I do not use all the available time. He has had an opportunity to raise the matter in the House, in addition to the correspondence that he had with the previous Minister for Aviation and Shipping, my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer). I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield and the hon. Member for Western Isles will find other opportunities for pursuing their various interests.

The Government regard it as important that safety in the air within the United Kingdom should be dealt with at the highest possible level. That may sometimes require awkward questions and direct points, but that is what Parliament is based on. Perhaps when the debate has been considered by my colleagues in the Department of Transport and by my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping, it may be possible to pursue one or two of the points with my hon. Friend.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 15 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two O'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL

Lords Amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Local Enterprise Agencies

1. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of local enterprise agencies.

The Minister for Employment (Mr. John Cope): There are now almost 400 local enterprise agencies in the United Kingdom. My Department, through the local enterprise agency grant scheme, encourages the development of viable agencies in England. One hundred and sixty-eight agencies were supported in 1986-87.

Mr. Kirkhope: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful reply. Does he agree that local enterprise agencies are necessarily brought about as a result of a partnership between local interests, local authorities and, particularly, chambers of commerce? Does he also agree that bringing together the practical skills and knowledge of those individuals and organisations results in the creation of much new business and many new jobs, as is the case in the Leeds business venture?

Mr. Cope: Yes, indeed. I agree with my hon. Friend. The agencies are valuable institutions which improve the survival rate of small firms which consult them, as was shown in a recent report. The Leeds business venture is a long-established and well-supported agency, which receives our grant.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister recognise that many local enterprise agencies in areas such as mine, which no longer benefit from inner-city policy or other Government policies to push money into areas of high unemployment, are worried about their future and about future money to enable them to create and secure jobs in places such as Derwentside, which, since 1979, has suffered enormous job losses? The agencies have done a good job, but they need Government support to continue it.

Mr. Cope: I recognise the concern which the hon. Lady expresses and which some of the agencies have expressed to me. The grant scheme to which I referred is intended as a pump-priming scheme to help agencies get going and develop. It is not the only way in which we assist them —there are others—and I am conscious of the case that the hon. Lady has made.

Mr. Bright: Does my hon. Friend agree that enterprise agencies have been a wonderful catalyst for bringing together management expertise from the larger companies to help the smaller ones? Have they not been one of the major contributions that have enabled the many start-ups that have taken place to continue, flourish and develop into medium-sized companies?

Mr. Cope: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said. As I said earlier, the survival rate has improved a great deal. According to the report that I mentioned, only one in six of the companies that have had advice from enterprise agencies fail. The agencies also do a tremendous job in helping small firms to develop, and many jobs are coming from that.

Tourism

2. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the amount of United States tourist dollars earned in 1986.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): United States visitors to the United Kingdom spent £1,250 million in 1986.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend will be aware that 25 years ago both France and Italy individually earned more tourist dollars than the United Kingdom and that now the United Kingdom earns more than both those countries put together. Can he say what steps he has taken to inform the tourist industry about how to live with an extremely weak dollar this year?

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend is right about the trend of increasing United States tourism to the United Kingdom and about the success of the industry. In 1986 we had a US-UK tourism surplus of £717 million. During the first nine months of this year there was an increase of about 25 per cent. in the number of United States tourists visiting Britain. At the present time the number of tourists from the United States is holding up well, but clearly, because of the gyrations of the financial market and the likelihood of an election in America next year, the industry must be fully alive to the challenge of competition.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister will be aware that a large proportion of American tourists have been coming into the golden triangle of London-Oxford-Stratford-on-Avon. Because they can probably get better value for money by going to other areas, and especially to Wales, can he say whether the British Tourist Association has come to an agreement with the Wales Tourist Board to increase the promotion of Wales in particular and Britain in general to those in the United States with an interest in Wales?

Mr. Lee: Yes, progress is being made. I fully concur with the hon. Gentleman's sentiments that Wales is an extremely attractive area which has many tourist attractions.

Mr. Bill Walker: We welcome American tourists, but most of them come to London and we should like them to visit other parts of the country. Will my hon. Friend

look carefully at that? What are his Department and the tourist boards doing to encourage visitors to go from London to Scotland and back to the United States via Prestwick?

Mr. Lee: The British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board are charged with doing everything possible to encourage tourists to move out and visit the regions and not just spend time in the golden triangle and in London. In recent years Scotland has benefited to a considerable extent from tourism.

YTS

3. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has as to what proportion of those people completing the YTS in the Truro constituency find full-time paid employment within the next six months.

Mr. Cope: Sixty two per cent. of young people who completed youth training schemes in the district of Carrick between April 1986 and June 1987 were in full-time jobs when surveyed several months later. A further 9 per cent. were in part-time jobs. I regret that separate figures for Truro are not available.

Mr. Taylor: I am sure the Minister agrees that those figures are welcome and that the increasing quality and take-up of YTS courses in my area is a very good thing. However, given the Government's plan to force all young people to go on to YTS or face the withdrawal of benefit, is it not likely that people who are unwilling and unresponsive to the courses will be forced on to them? Not only will that not help people who do not care to make use of the scheme, but it will hurt the many other people who have a constructive attitude and wish to get the most that they can out of the scheme.

Mr. Cope: That is not necessarily correct. Already, almost everyone in that positon is offered a place on the YTS. Youth unemployment has greatly improved recently. There are now fewer unemployed 16 and 17-year-old school leavers than at any time since 1974. I do not think that our new proposals will have the effects that the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend compare the YTS to its predecessor, the youth opportunities programme, which was introduced by the Lib-Lab pact Government? Does he not agree that the youth training scheme is far superior and far more successful in giving training to young people?

Mr. Cope: Yes, it is much more successful in every respect. Well over 400,000 young people are currently being trained under it.

Tourism

4. **Mr. John Browne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to encourage regional tourist boards to focus on shopping as a major element in tourist spending.

Mr. Lee: The English Tourist Board's development strategy "A Vision for England" identifies leisure and speciality shopping as an important growth opportunity for tourism, particularly in towns and cities. The ETB is actively working with the regional tourist boards and others to encourage such developments.

Mr. Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that spending on such items as specialist shopping, food and drink is of crucial importance to employment not only in the United Kingdom as a whole but in cities such as Winchester? Can he please give the House an estimate of the proportion of total tourist spending for which this type of activity accounts and, therefore, give us a target at which we can aim for spending on high-quality goods, food and drinks?

Mr. Lee: I know that my hon. Friend is keen to encourage tourists to stay overnight in Winchester.

We estimate that about 40 per cent. of the money spent by overseas visitors goes on shopping, food and drink. I certainly support all that my hon. Friend is doing to draw to the attention of visitors the attractions and heritage of Winchester—including King Arthur's round table and Winchester cathedral. Of course, the money spent by tourists will provide every opportunity for entrepreneurial retailers and shopkeepers to develop their businesses.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware of the wonderful things happening in Birmingham at the moment, with the creation of new jobs and investment; in particular the £100 million convention centre, which will attract tourists from all over the world, and the £250 million, 1 million sq ft redevelopment of the city centre and the old Bull Ring, which will provide hundreds of shops and 6,000 new jobs?

When the tourists come, should they not be able to use those new facilities on a Sunday? Therefore, should we reform our trading laws to enable this to happen?

Mr. Lee: As the Minister with responsibility for tourism, I support an extension of Sunday trading. That has always been my personal view and it is also my ministerial position. I support what my hon. Friend said. Birmingham offers tremendous opportunities, and huge developments are coming on stream. I was at the NEC Interbuild exhibition recently and heard some tremendous success stories and good reports about what is happening in the region.

Factory Inspectors

5. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current number of factory inspectors; and what was the number in 1979.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): On 1 November 1987 a total of 610 factory inspectors were employed in the Health and Safety Executive. On 1 April 1979 the total was 742.

Mr. Cryer: Is it not true that since 1979 there has been a massive cut in the number of factory inspectors, due to the meanness of the Government, and is that not lamentable, in view of the many lives and the millions of days lost each year through industrial accidents and injuries? Is it not worse still that the Health and Safety Executive has tried to gag people who work for it from pointing out the savage cutbacks by the Government of their services, on the pain of sacking if anybody speaks out? Is it not an attempt by the Government to apply the Peter Wright standard to health and safety at work?

Mr. Nicholls: No, that is not the position. The number of inspectors per 1,000 employees has remained roughly constant since 1979. Having said that, an increase in

inspectors is appropriate and next year there will be an increase of some 60 on the combined number of specialist and non-specialist inspectors. Resources have been allocated for that.

On the other situation to which the hon. Gentleman referred, obviously guidance is given on the circumstances in which civil servants have an independent approach to their Members of Parliament. We are aware of the situation that occurred, and the director on that occasion gave general guidance.

Mr. Patnick: Will my hon. Friend confirm that provision will be made for the Health and Safety Commission for an increase in the number of inspectors in 1988-89?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The extra £6·7 million allocated next year will make it possible to fund the extra 60 inspectors to whom I have referred. The chairman of the Health and Safety Commission has made it clear that those extra resources will allow those additional inspectors to be appointed.

Mr. Barry Jones: Why did the Government permit cuts in the inspectorate during the 1980s when there were growing worries and fears about asbestos? Why did the cuts take place when there were growing worries about accidents to youngsters on the YTS scheme? Surely the Government in the 1980s have been very complacent.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The hon. Gentleman assumes that one can simply look at the number of inspectors and say that the more inspectors there are, the fewer accidents there will be. That is not true. The number of inspectors per 1,000 employees has remained roughly constant and where there is a necessity for more inspectors, we have made the funding available. As to fatalities, I am sure the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that in recent years the number of fatalities has declined, and in 1986-87 they were at an all-time record low.

Mr. Strang: Is it not disturbing that the Health and Safety Executive in its annual report published this month, admitted that 10,000 work places, which, according to its criteria, are a priority for preventive inspections, were not inspected because of a lack of resources?

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman grossly over-simplifies what was of necessity a very detailed report. Essentially, the report was historical. It was looking to the past. As to the future, extra inspectors are being allocated —some 60 in total. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

Tourism

6. **Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was spent by tourists in the six counties of the west country last year.

Mr. Lee: I understand from the English Tourist Board that total estimated spending by tourists in the six counties of the west country in 1986 was £1,650 million.

Mr. Aspinwall: That information is extremely helpful. It obviously means plenty of job opportunities and investment. Does my hon. Friend agree that it was detrimental to the interests of the west country for Avon county council to withdraw from the West Country tourist board? What benefit does he see in the council's rejoining it?

Mr. Lee: It is a pity that Avon withdrew from the West Country tourist board and we hope that it will rejoin. I think I am right in saying that it is the only county council in England which is not a member of its regional tourist board. Given that Avon has such considerable attractions for tourists, such as the cities of Bath and Bristol, it is really missing out, and I hope that it will reconsider.

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the Minister confirm that many of those so-called tourists come from the north of England and from Scotland looking for jobs? They may or may not have bikes, but they are anxious to have the means to exist as human beings. Does the Minister have anything to say to people in other parts of the United Kingdom who are anxious to contribute to the national well-being, whether or not they are tourists? Can he say anything apart from his nonsensical contribution about tourism?

Mr. Lee: I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman will be encouraging all his constituents to go on holiday from Leith to the west country next year.

Mr. Key: Will my hon. Friend recognise that, in seeking to meet the demands of the important tourist industry, ancient cathedral cities such as Salisbury have particular problems? Is he aware that following the decision of the dean and chapter to remove coaches from Salisbury close, two years ago, it is beginning to look as if the only solution which will save Salisbury as a tourist centre is to breach the 13th century closed walls yet again, to make room for a coach park inside them?

Mr. Lee: I cannot give an instant answer to the particular problems of Salisbury, but I am sure that no one would want any city walls to be breached.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister spoke about the attractions of the west country for tourists. Will he tell us about the attractions of tourism for the people of the west country? In the west country, as elsewhere, the tourist industry provides the lowest rates of pay and the longest hours and has the least trade union organisation to protect the workers against excessive exploitation. Apart from uttering platitudes, what will the Minister do about that?

Mr. Lee: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman takes that view. In terms of job creation, the tourist industry sustains about 1·4 million jobs nationally. No other industry creates jobs at a rate of 1,000 a week, as our tourist and hospitality industries do. Certain conclusions can be drawn from the fact that there is no over-substantial trade union representation in that industry.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend accept that many people feel that although the West Country tourist board does good work, it covers far too large an area, stretching from the Isles of Scilly to Swindon? Will he look at the possibility of devolving part of its budget downward so that county promotional organisations such as the Cornwall tourist board can get a share of that budget?

Mr. Lee: In my discussions with the West Country tourist board, that point was not raised. It does not consider its area to be too large. However I will consider my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Job Training Scheme

7. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to arrange for people on the job training scheme to have their fares refunded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: Participants on the new job training scheme may claim reimbursement of all travel expenses associated with their training.

Miss Lestor: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that reply. However, is he aware that although the trainees do not have to pay their fares now—that is an innovation, as they had to pay them under the youth training scheme—many still have considerable expenses as they have to pay for their lunch and other expenses out of the very small amount that they receive? Will the Minister consider some way of reimbursing them so that they get the small amount to which they are entitled in total? Many trainees, particularly in my constituency, have to contribute to the budget at home because their parents are unemployed.

Mr. Cope: As the hon. Lady probably knows, we are reviewing the job training scheme and developing it along with the community programme. These matters are under consideration by the Manpower Services Commission at the moment.

Mr. Leighton: Will the Minister confirm that the DHSS recognises the cost of going to work as being £7 a week—being the cost of fares, the high cost of food away from home, and the cost of protective clothing, which will apply to the job training scheme? Under the new "Benefit Plus" scheme, if the "plus" were £15 a week, it would be only £8 a week in real terms.

Mr. Cope: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's point and, as I said, the matter is under consideration.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that JTS has played an important part in the Government's adult training programme and that one of its biggest problems has been the way in which some unions and Left-wing Labour councils have undermined and boycotted it?

Mr. Cope: I agree with both parts of my hon. Friend's remarks. The job training scheme is playing an important role, but it could play a more important role if more people would co-operate in it.

Labour Statistics

8. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of unemployed; how many are women; and how many men.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): On 8 October 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 2,751,000—a reduction of almost 500,000 on a year ago. Of these, 848,000 were women and 1,904,000 were men.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that women are heavily discriminated against in employment and that when they come off the unemployment register most get jobs that most other people do not want, which are usually very low paid—for example, in tourism in the west country? Is there not something that we could do to ensure that women have some chance of full-time jobs instead of miserably low-paid, part-time jobs?

Mr. Fowler: I accept almost nothing of what the hon. Gentleman said. In the past 12 months there has been an increase of about 372,000 in the number in work. For women, the increase in those in full-time jobs was more than the increase in those in part-time jobs. However, it is also true that many women prefer to have part-time jobs, and that is shown by many surveys.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the number of unemployed in Lancaster has fallen steadily and that, more important, the number in employment is steadily increasing? Many are employed in adaptable small firms and many in the tourist industry, which is taking advantage of our natural attractions and historic connections.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. There has been a very big increase in employment, and the tourist industry has been one of the major activities involved. It is not right for Opposition Members to criticise that increase and suggest that, somehow, jobs in tourism are not real jobs. Of course they are real jobs, and they are internationally competitive real jobs.

Mr. Pike: Will the Secretary of State recognise that unemployment is still far too high? Given the present level of unemployment, is it not crazy to have ended the job release scheme? Is it not wrong to say that that scheme has been ended because the number using it has fallen considerably? Should not the Government have been moving in the opposite direction and allowing more people to take early retirement under the job release scheme to make employment available for younger people?

Mr. Fowler: The job release scheme was being applied only to those aged 64 and was having a very marginal impact.

On the unemployment statistics, the fact is that unemployment has come down for 16 months in succession. In the past 12 months the fall in the figures has been the largest on record. It has affected every region of the country and there have been record falls in long-term unemployment and in unemployment among young people. I had very much hoped that the Opposition would welcome that trend.

Mr. William Powell: Is it not a fact that there has been not only an enormous reduction in unemployment this year but a corresponding and greater growth in employment? Is my right hon. Friend aware that in each month of 1987 the Corby jobcentre has had a record number of job vacancies? To encourage people to take the jobs that are now available, would it not be sensible for income tax rates to be reduced to reduce some of the disincentives to work?

Mr. Fowler: The last point is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. What my hon. Friend has said about the increase in the number in employment is right. The position in this country compares favourably with the EEC average and with countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Secretary of State accept that it would be helpful if his Department produced figures which showed the number of people in part-time employment and those in full-time employment? While the new jobs that are being created are welcome, there is genuine concern that they are often part-time jobs

replacing full-time jobs. Rather than exchanges which do not shed light, would it not be helpful if his Department gave us the facts?

Mr. Fowler: The fact of the matter is that we do produce those figures. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, who I think leads for the Liberal party on these matters, is not aware of that. I will repeat the figures again. Over the past 12 months, 372,000 new jobs have been created, of which 206,000—the majority—are full-time.

Mr. Burns: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the level of unemployment in the United Kingdom is at its lowest for five years? Will he comment on how he sees the unemployment trends developing in the coming months?

Mr. Fowler: As I have said, unemployment has come down for 16 months in a row. My hon. Friend is entirely right to state that it is now at its lowest level for five years. The Government want that trend to continue. That is not automatic, but provided that the lessons of the past are learned, I believe that unemployment should continue to come down.

Mr. Meacher: While we certainly welcome any further fall in the unemployment figures, may I ask whether the Secretary of State is aware that, even on the Government's figures after they have fiddled them in 19 different ways, unemployment has still fallen by only one quarter of the amount by which it has increased under the Government since 1979? Is he further aware that under this Government Britain still has the worst combination of high unemployment and high inflation of any major Western country? Is he also aware that the number of people in jobs as a proportion of the total population available for work has not improved one jot, according to the Government's figures, since the end of 1982?

Mr. Fowler: I am not prepared to take lectures from the hon. Gentleman on the inflation rate. The hon. Gentleman was a member of the Labour Government when inflation exceeded 20 per cent. The fact is that unemployment has come down for 16 months in succession. There is no question about the downward trend in unemployment. The hon. Gentleman would do much better to welcome that trend and recognise that in countries such as France, Belgium, Spain and Ireland unemployment is higher, not lower, than in this country.

Mr. Paice: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is significant that during the general election campaign in June the Conservative party was the only party which did not make rash promises about reducing unemployment to 2 million in one year? Does that not prove that actions speak louder than words?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Since the election the unemployment rate has come down by several hundred thousand. We very much hope that the trend will continue.

Fresh Claims Experiment

10. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the fresh claims experiment.

Mr. Fowler: The experiments, which involve using more senior staff to interview newly unemployed people, have just ended. Their aim was to see whether it is possible to provide a greater range of help and advice on both benefit procedures and employment opportunities at the initial point of contact with an unemployed person. The experiments are now being evaluated.

Mr. McLeish: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply. Is it not obvious to the right hon. Gentleman and the Government that the principal reason for the reduction in the number of people registered as unemployed is the increasing abuse of measures such as restart, the fresh claims experiment and the availability-for-work criteria? Indeed, 2·5 million restart interviews have taken place and some cynics would suggest that we should not be suprised about the dramatic fall in the number of unemployed that the Government talk about. Does he also accept that that view is increasingly shared by the British people? When will he elevate the tackling of unemployment above the abuse of the unemployed?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. Not only have the unemployment figures gone down, but the number of people in employment has risen substantially. He mentioned the availability-for-work test. I must point out to him that those powers come from the Social Security Act 1975, which was passed by the Labour Government. As far as I know, no one seriously wants to pay out benefit when people are not available for work.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Has my right hon. Friend any plans to extend the experiment nationwide?

Mr. Fowler: We shall have to evaluate information that we have only just collected. We shall then consider what the possible extension of the programme may involve.

Mr. Skinner: If the Secretary of State is thinking of extending the new scheme as another turn of the screw against the unemployed, perhaps he or one of his colleagues will examine the fresh claims made in the House of Lords by all those peers who turn up for work, nod to the duty officer and then walk out without even voting, complete with their £100 a day tax-free.

Mr. Fowler: That has nothing to do with me, or with the question.

Liquid Petroleum Gas

11. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the findings of the Health and Safety Executive investigation of the explosion in Balham on 21 August 1987; and when he expects the advisory committee on dangerous substances to announce the results of its consideration of the standards relating to the keeping and use of liquid petroleum gas.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive investigation into the explosion at Balham on 21 August 1987 concluded that the most likely cause was a leak of butane from a gas bottle and gas ring in the basement of the building.

The advisory committee on dangerous substances has considered proposals for future controls over flammable gases and liquids, including standards relating to the keeping and use of liquefied petroleum gas. Its recommendations have been submitted to the Health and Safety Commission for consideration at a meeting to be held shortly.

Mr. Bowis: In the light of the coroner's statement that the canister was not adequately labelled on the occasion of the explosion, will my hon. Friend pay particular attention to the fact that such labelling is required for industrial use of canisters, but not for domestic or retail use? Will he make recommendations accordingly?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right in saying that the coroner made remarks to that effect and pointed out the distinction between domestic use and storage of gas and its use in the workplace. I am sure that Calor Gas has taken careful note of what the coroner said.

Fire Fighting

12. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to seek to amend the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act as it relates to the training of employees in fire fighting procedures at the place of work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: No, Sir. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act already confers general duties on employers to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of employees. More specific requirements for general fire precautions, including training in the event of fire, are contained in the Fire Precautions Act 1971.

Mr. Madel: As there is a duty on employers to make every effort to improve safety and training in safety at the place of work, should not employers regularly communicate at least once a year with all their employees to explain what is being done to update and improve fire-fighting procedures?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right to point out that, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, employers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their employees. That applies to fire or to any other risk. However, the working of the Fire Precautions Act 1971, which is the primary legislation available for the purpose, is more properly the province of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mrs. Fyfe: Is the Miniser aware that many British employers are daily and yearly infringing the requirement of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act for their companies' safety policies to be updated annually? If he is aware of that deliberate flouting of the law, what is he doing about it?

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Lady has any specific instances of breaches of the law, I hope that she will do what is necessary to draw it to the attention of the authorities responsible.

Mr. Rowe: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the balance in the commendable desire to ensure that employees and other people are equipped to fight fires is not sometimes tipped too far and that some of the buildings in which people have to fight fires have become difficult for people to live and work in because of the requirements of some safety precautions?

Mr. Nicholls: I take my hon. Friend's point, but at the same time it must be reiterated that there is a responsibility on employers to ensure the safety of their employees, and that must be a primary consideration.

Young Training Schemes

13. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 16 and 17-year-olds are currently on youth training schemes.

Mr. Cope: On 31 October there were 391,719 YTS trainees with a two-year training entitlement and 25,084 with a one-year entitlement. Those with a two-year entitlement usually start training at 16 and those with a one-year entitlement usually start at 17.

Mr. Nellist: I thank the Minister for that reply. Has he seen the October edition of his Department's *Employment Gazette*, which shows that YTS trainees in the retailing sector produce for their employers an average of £39 per week added value? The average for the eight industries that take 59 per cent. of YTS trainees placed with employers is £32 a week. If that amount is added to the current YTS allowance, £70 a week is coming into employers' hands. Why cannot trainees have a decent training allowance of at least £55 a week?

Mr. Cope: The training allowance is adequate, and a recent survey which showed that 80 per cent. of trainees thought that their training was worth while proves that fact.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that, nationally, more than 70 per cent. of young people on YTS go on to further education training or a job, and that in some areas, including Norwich, the figure may be higher? Is this not a major success, compared with the feeble efforts of the Labour party when it was in government some years ago?

Mr. Cope: The figures are very encouraging, and they show the success of the scheme.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the Minister admit that these figures show a disappointing level of employed youngsters on youth training? The original intention of the scheme was for it to be a good training base for young people in and out of work. Is it not about time that the Government said that no youngster should be going into work without training, and is it not about time also that we caught up with our industrial competitors and trained young people who are in and out of work?

Mr. Cope: With over 400,000 people being trained on it, YTS is a very successful scheme. The option remains for youngsters to go directly into work, if they so wish, without going on YTS, and that should remain so.

Self-employment

14. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current levels of self-employment.

Mr. Cope: Self-employment has a very important role to play in the regeneration of the economy and the reduction of unemployment. The current level of self-employment is 2·7 million, representing one in nine of the work force, and it is continuing to increase.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my hon. Friend for that encouraging reply. It shows that, if those figures were taken together with the employed population, unemployment would be well below 10 per cent. Has my hon. Friend

any plans to ensure that self-employed people are helped by Government to sell their services and products to Government?

Mr. Cope: We help small firms as much as we can to tender for Government contracts. A booklet, "Tendering for Government Contracts", is available from the Department's small firms service. With our encouragement, a number of Departments are publishing similar guidance for small firms on the opportunities to do business with Government.

Miss Mowlam: Very few young people are self-employed. After April, self-employment for young people may take on a new definition, because they will either have to be on benefit or on YTS. Will the Minister guarantee that he will provide a YTS place for every 16 and 17-year-old, as the Secretary of State for Social Services is unprepared to give that guarantee?

Mr. Cope: We do guarantee a place on YTS to those eligible.

Tourism

15. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contribution the tourist industry is making to reducing unemployment in the inner cities.

Mr. Lee: The tourism industry is making a significant contribution to employment in inner-city areas. More jobs are expected to be created when the tourism potential of inner cities and urban areas is further realised as a result of Government policies, the English Tourist Board's initiatives and investment by the public and private sectors.

Mr. Bowden: Does my hon. Friend agree that not only the English Tourist Board, but local authorities and other agencies have a significant part to play in increasing tourism and encouraging employment? Is he aware of the imaginative initiatives that have been taken by Southwark chamber of commerce to encourage tourism south of the river in the inner London borough of Southwark? Will he confirm that 22 per cent. of the urban development grant is spent on tourist initiatives?

Mr. Lee: Yes, I can confirm that. In fact, about 23 per cent. of total English urban development grants are used on tourism projects. As my hon. Friend has suggested, tourism is very much a partnership industry between Government and the public and private sectors, with local authorities also having a role to play. As far as Southwark is concerned, I am delighted by the progress that is being

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Butler: Will my right hon. Friend reflect today on areas in the north, which suffer from high unemployment and which will give a hearty welcome to the thousands of new jobs that will result from the confidence of Japanese manufacturers in our economy?

The Prime Minister: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the excellent news that Nissan is expanding its investments in the north-east by about £200 million because it is delighted with the work that is done there. That will create another 1,400 jobs. Another Japanese company is expanding in East Kilbride, which again will provide a considerable number of jobs. That displays excellent confidence in the economy and work force of this country.

Mr. Kinnock: In an unprecedented action, the Prime Minister has been petitioned today by over 1,000 doctors and consultants, who are alarmed at what they call "serious reductions in the Health Service . . . which are endangering patients' lives".
What is the Prime Minister's response to them? Will she say that they are wrong and that the cuts are not really happening, or will she accept that they are right, but tell them that it is really all their fault?

The Prime Minister: I shall set out the Government's excellent record in providing more resources—about 30 per cent. more in real terms over the past eight years—and in increasing—*[Interruption.]* As they asked me to make certain that expenditure kept pace with the increasing GNP, I shall point out that when we came in, expenditure on health was 4·8 per cent. of GNP and that it is now 5·5 per cent. after eight years of Tory Government. So we have done better than they requested. I shall also point out that the allocations of the £1·1 billion for England next year will soon be announced.

Mr. Kinnock: With her recitations of figures, the Prime Minister is now making a fool of herself. She is showing a complete determination not to respond to what the highest authorities and most expert opinions have called the "crisis" in the Health Service. Will she not heed the words of Sir George Godber, who said:
"it is useless for Ministers to repeat barely relevant multiples of past expenditure, staff employed, or numbers going in and out of hospital doors . . . What matters is the volume of services not provided or too long delayed".
Will the Prime Minister now make sure that the resources are made available to bring those beds back into use, to fund the pay awards and restructuring and to ensure that she stops the rot in the National Health Service?

The Prime Minister: As I said to the right hon. Gentleman, the allocations for increases next year—which to the hospital and community services in England alone amount to some £700 million, paid for by the taxpayer—will shortly be made and the regional health authorities will soon have details of them. In the meantime, because it is the treatment of the patient that counts, let me make it quite clear that for every three hip replacement operations in 1978 there are now four, for every two cataract operations which took place under Labour there are now three, and altogether, for every six operations then, there are now seven. That is an expanding Health Service and it will continue to expand.

Mr. Kinnock: The House and the country needs to know that, much though the Prime Minister makes of that £700 million, £500 million is already allocated for pay and prices, a further £100 million is already allocated for emergency initiatives, a further £48 million will be

necessary only because the Government are putting up electricity prices, and the area health authorities have to find £170 million out of that sum to pay off the debts that they have had to run up because of underfunding this year. Why does not the Prime Minister, instead of constantly hiding behind those figures, understand that, as Sir George Godber says, the principles of equity and of access to care on the basis of need, not the ability to pay, are now seriously under threat, and make not just commendation of the Health Service, but resources available for the Health Service?

The Prime Minister: I give the right hon. Gentleman the figures because they show that no Government in history have given the Health Service more resources, more doctors, more nurses, or better pay for the nurses, than this one. That is what the right hon. Gentleman does not like.

As the right hon. Gentleman quotes from a previous chief medical officer to the Health Service, let me quote from the Labour party's document "The Way Forward", with a foreword by the noble Lord Ennals, then Secretary of State for Social Services. He gave a very different tale from the right hon. Gentleman when he said:

"Public expectations of the health and social services will frequently outrun supply and sometimes hard decisions will be needed to hold back some services to allow others to be developed."

That is what the Labour Government said when they were in power because they could not provide a fraction of the services that we have provided.

Mr. Kinnock *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Very occasionally. Mr. Kinnock.

Mr. Kinnock *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Mr. Kinnock.

Mr. Kinnock: Free speech, Mr. Speaker. Free speech. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Very occasionally a dispensation is given to the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Kinnock: Tory Members are only proving their sensitivity, Mr. Speaker.

Following what the right hon. Lady said, the infinity of demand for health care is understood to be a reality—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to contain itself. Mr. Kinnock

Mr. Kinnock: Following what the Prime Minister said, the infinity of demand for health care—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: Name him.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is no good hon. Members pointing at each other across the Chamber in such a disgraceful way. Mr. Kinnock.

Mr. Kinnock: That reaction really does show that the blood is flowing through the bandages that the Tories are trying to wrap around it. The infinity of demand of which the right hon. Lady speaks is well understood. For most Governments, it is accepted as a challenge. With her Government, it is used as an alibi. Will she heed the words of her erstwhile supporter, Mr. Nigel Harris, who said that her policies are ludicrous, deceitful and lead to the degradation of the patients? How can she take pride in that? Why does she not make the proper resources available to stop the crisis?

The Prime Minister: The doctors' petition this morning asked for the proportion of GDP to be maintained. I therefore repeat that this Government have done better than that. The last—*[Interruption.]* This Government——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This kind of noise does the reputation of the House no good at all.

The Prime Minister: This Government have increased the proportion of GDP to 5·5 per cent. The last Labour Government cut it from 5·1 to 4·8 per cent.

Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this Christmas in England will be the most prosperous Christmas that the country has ever known? Is she further aware that this happy time could be spoilt by certain yobbos, whether on the cricket field, in the boxing ring or in football crowds, whose behaviour falls short of what we expect? Do we not want, with better, prosperous times, more decent behaviour by the mass of the people?

The Prime Minister: These are—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: These are the times of the highest standard of living that this country has ever known. So far as I am concerned, if more of us emulated my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes), the House would be very much more orderly than it is.

Q2. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave quite some time ago.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Prime Minister appreciate that yesterday in the House I and several colleagues met representatives of the ambulance service in Gwent, who complained bitterly about cuts and reorganisation which have now reached the stage when life is being endangered? Will the Prime Minister tell the House what response I should make to this dedicated group of people who have served the community so well over many years?

The Prime Minister: Let me make two points. First, expenditure on the National Health Service in Wales has risen in real terms by a third. People may want more, but they should be very grateful that, under this Tory Government, expenditure goes up to levels which it could not possibly have reached under Labour. Secondly, in respect of the increased allocations for next year, paid for by the taxpayer, an average family this year pays £1,500 to the Health Service. Next year, to pay for the increased expenditure on the Health Service, the average expenditure per family will go up to £1,600 a year. The allocations resulting from that expenditure in Wales and elsewhere will shortly be announced.

Q3. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to consider the implications for the Government service of the harassment and intimidation currently going on in the CPSA and say whether that union should continue to have time and Government money to carry on its activities?

The Prime Minister: We condemn harassment and intimidation wherever they arise. Of course, the Employment Bill is concerned with the rights of trade union members, not with harassment and intimidation. The alleged harassment and intimidation is a matter for the police. It is now being investigated, so my hon. Friend will not expect me to say anything further at this moment.

Q4. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nicholson: Since we are now approaching the coldest period of the year, and since many of my hon. Friends and I have been the object of a co-ordinated campaign by the opponents of the expansion of nuclear power, will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity today to study and emphasise the strength of the British electricity generating industry, based on a variety of sources of supply? Will she contrast its happy position with the position in Romania, where the domestic ration is enough only to run one small electric heater for one hour each day?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a responsibility of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I agree that the generation of electricity needs to come from a number of different sources, including nuclear. Nuclear supplies are now approaching some 20 per cent. of our generating capacity. As my hon. Friend knows, we need a considerable programme of investment in power stations, transmission and distribution. This Government are about to embark on such a programme.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Time is up. *[Interruption.]*

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday afternoon, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) brought to your attention the fact that there is no Scottish Minister serving on the Standing Committee considering the Health and Medicines Bill. That Committee met this morning. Of course, you ruled on the matter, Mr. Speaker, and it is now concluded. I drew the attention of the Chairman of the Committee to the fact that, Standing Order No. 87(1) states:

"Mr. Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, Mr. Solicitor General and Mr. Solicitor General for Scotland, or any of them, being Members of the House, though not members of a standing committee, may take part in the deliberations of the committee, but shall not vote or make any motion or move any amendment or be counted in the quorum."

That matter was raised, and the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Lamond), ruled that it was not a matter for him.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot discuss on the Floor of the House what goes on in a Committee.

Mr. Hogg: The point is that the problem of there not being a Scottish Minister on the Committee could have been overcome if we could have sent for the Solicitor-General for Scotland because the Bill deals with primary legislation covering the Health Service in Scotland. That is not possible because the Solicitor-General for Scotland lost his seat in the general election, but the Government saw fit to reappoint him. So here we have a Standing Order that says that we may send for a Law Officer, but we have lost that right because the Law Officer is not a Member of this House. How can we get around that problem?

Mr. Speaker: I have to confirm to the hon. Gentleman that he is correct in saying that there is no Scottish Law Officer qualified to attend the Standing Committee. Membership of the Committee is a matter for the Committee of Selection. As I explained to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) yesterday, that is the place where he should take his representations. I cannot help the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to press the point any further, but we in Scotland have now reached the point at which we have no Select Committee on Scottish Affairs because the Government cannot provide membership and cannot agree on it. We have failed to have a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee, we do not have a Scottish Minister on the Standing Committee, and we cannot send for the Solicitor-General for Scotland. It must be apparent to hon. Members and to people outside that the Government are incapable of properly administering the affairs of Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of the House, will you confirm that this is a unitary Parliament in which every part of the United Kingdom is dealt with properly and that Scottish affairs are regularly dealt with in the Chamber? In fact, within the recent week we have dealt with Scottish business.

Mr. Speaker: That is true, but it does not necessarily follow from the point of order.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a member of the Standing Committee on the Health and Medicines Bill. This morning, I was silenced. I was unable to debate the very important——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that we cannot debate in the House what goes on in Standing Committee. It is not my responsibility. It is a matter for the Standing Committee itself and for its Chairman.

Mr. Hayes: You are absolutely right, Mr. Speaker. This relates to the point raised by the hon. Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg). The reason I could not speak in Committee this morning was the filibuster organised by the Labour party.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have rightly on a number of occasions pointed out that you see one of your major roles as protecting the rights of Back-Bench Members. At Question Time you mentioned to the Leader of the Opposition that it was an exception for a fourth question to be asked by him. May I ask you to re-emphasise that it is an exception because it is a dangerous precedent? May I also point out that nine of the 15 minutes of Prime Minister's Question Time today were devoted exclusively to questions by the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not need any help on this. I said to the House—and the hon. Member heard me, otherwise he would not have raised the point of order—that very exceptionally I call the Leader of the Opposition for a fourth time. I emphasise to the House that in the course of a Parliament I shall seek to ensure that every Back-Bench Member who wishes to be called is called at Prime Minister's Question Time. To that extent I have to exercise a degree of rationing. I seek to ensure that the calling is as fair and as wide as possible.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will also be aware that today we were unable to hear at least two minutes of Prime Minister's Question Time because of the actions of a number of hon. Members. I know it is very difficult for you. It would be easy for us to identify individual hon. Members, but is there any way by which you can name collectively a group of hon. Members who seek to disrupt the House by actions such as we had today?

Mr. Speaker: I welcome the opportunity of saying to the House that our reputation is in the hands of hon. Members. A row such as we had at Question Time, which, sadly, was broadcast, does the House a very grave disservice.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Given that, even in the short time that I have been here, the amount of time taken by the Leader of the Opposition increases——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That touches upon my prerogative. Let us leave it.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to the point of order before last, Mr. Speaker. When the Select Committee on Trade and Industry asked the then Attorney-General, Mr. Sam Silkin, to advise it, he replied

in writing that, although Law Officers had a duty to advise the House as a whole, they had no duty to advise Committees of the House. That was the accepted doctrine. It might be well worth reminding the House of it so that there are no further points of order on Law Officers who do not go to Committees.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for his memory of these matters.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. Member who was next on the list at Prime Minister's Question Time and who was unable to ask the Prime Minister about the very important statement——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just the point. I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman. I carefully keep a list, so I am aware that the hon. Member has not asked a question of the Prime Minister in this Session. I shall seek to make it up to him later.

Child Benefit (Uprating)

3.38 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the event of an increase in the Retail Price Index in 1988 or any subsequent calendar year, to lay before Parliament the draft of an uprating order to produce an increase in child benefit with effect from the beginning of the following financial year of not less than a corresponding percentage, and to make future increases in child benefit a charge on the National Insurance Fund.

Once again, I am seeking the leave of the House to introduce a Bill in respect of the uprating of child benefit. May I remind hon. Members of the long title of the Bill that I am proposing, which is as follows:

"to bring in a Bill to require the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the event of an increase in the Retail Price Index in 1988 or any subsequent calendar year, to lay before Parliament the draft of an uprating order to produce an increase in child benefit with effect from the beginning of the following financial year of not less than a corresponding percentage, and to make future increases in child benefit a charge on the National Insurance Fund."

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is an important ten-minute Bill on child benefit, I wonder whether you, Mr. Speaker, would ask those Members leaving the Chamber to do so quietly so that the rest of us can hear the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams).

Mr. Speaker: I am very grateful to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) for his help. Will hon. Members please leave quietly?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I believe that it is worth the time of the House to consider for a few moments the origin of child benefit and the reason why it is somewhat controversial at this time. As hon. Members will remember, the system of family allowances was introduced, with all-party support, in 1945 by the caretaker Government. That system continued until the mid-1970s as a universal benefit targeted to families with children according to the number of children in the family. However, child benefit has a much older origin than that, because it originated with the child tax allowances that featured at the very start of the income tax system when it was introduced by William Pitt at the end of the 18th century. It was decided in the mid-1970s that the two kinds of child allowance should be amalgamated. I calculate that, if child tax allowance had continued and had been uprated in the same way as the other tax allowances since that time in accordance with the Lawson-Rooker-Wise formula, it would now be worth to taxpayers in net terms, about £450 for each child.

Child benefit has not been uprated in the same way as other tax allowances and, therefore, this year it is worth only some £370 per child. Bearing in mind that that sum is paid direct to the mother and is not liable to tax, it is an important benefit for the nearly 7 million families who claim it. It is targeted to all families without test of means.

I should like to raise one or two points about the benefit because the majority of the people who claim it are people who are also liable for income tax. For them, the child benefit has the effect of a remission of their tax burden. The amount of tax and the amount of benefit breaks even

[Sir Brandon Rhys Williams]

for couples with one child only at about £100 per week, and even for couples with four children the break-even point is below the national average of male manual earnings. Between 4 million and 5 million families pay more in income tax than they derive in child benefit. Therefore, for that large number of families, child benefit constitutes a welcome remission of their tax burden. In fact, it constitutes a tax cut targeted towards families according to the number of their children.

Many people favour a reduction in the general rate of income tax, and they believe that, in some ways, that is preferable to an uplift in the rate of child benefit. I do not share that view. In fact, single people stand to do best if there is an across-the-board, untargeted reduction in income tax. However, if we were to relieve the tax burden of families specifically by raising the child benefit, the money would go to the people who obviously have the greatest need at each particular level of income.

It is worth going back to the arguments that many of us remember about the amalgamation of child benefit and family allowances in the mid-1970s. I believe that there were three particular reasons why the House decided that child benefit should be introduced to supersede family allowances and child tax allowances: first, for the ease of administration; secondly, on account of the question of incentives, which was extremely important then and, indeed, is certainly extremely important now, given the growing awareness of the importance of the poverty trap for so many people in this country; thirdly, because of the question of take-up. We had virtually 100 per cent. take-up of the family allowances before the amalgamation, and, since the amalgamation, in the form of the child benefit, once again we have virtually 100 per cent. take-up of this popular benefit, which still goes directly to the mothers.

These are particularly important questions today. Every one of us knows the pressure there is on the supplementary benefit offices to deal with their monumental load of case-work. We must remember that the child benefit not only has the highest take-up of all the family benefits; it involves virtually no case-work and is the cheapest of the family benefits to administer.

Then there is the question of incentives. I must bring to the attention of the House the tragic way in which the numbers are growing, inexorably, of people who are obliged to apply for means-tested benefit of one sort or another. I received a parliamentary answer a few days ago which shocked me and would shock anyone who studied it carefully. It appears that there are now between 15 million and 16 million people in this country who are dependent in one way or another on means-tested benefits. Worse than that, it is officially estimated that there may be about 5 million or 6 million further people who do not claim means-tested benefits, but would be eligible for benefit if they chose to do so. That is a large part of our population for whom, when they have calculated the effect of so doing, there is not a great deal of purpose in working or saving. Conservative Members and, I believe, Opposition Members, too, believe in the importance for self-respect of working and saving.

This country cannot continue to have an inexorably rising number of people who are obliged to apply for means-tested benefits. Although it may be administered in a kind manner—I know that the people in the DHSS and in the local authorities and elsewhere who have to deal with case-work do their utmost to be humane and reasonable—that number of millions of people must class themselves, inevitably, as second-rate citizens. The great advantage of the child benefit is that it is a universal benefit, and people who improve their lot do not lose their eligibility for that important benefit.

This year, by not uprating the child benefit, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State unhappily has tipped about another 40,000 people on to the heap of those who are eligible to apply for means-tested benefit. We have before us now the prospect of the community charge. I believe that that may add as many as a further 2 million to the number of people who are eligible to apply for means-tested benefits.

The time has come for the House to make a clear recommendation to the Departments concerned about the future of child benefit. When I introduced a similar Bill about 18 months ago there was a Division, and the number of Members who voted in favour was 152; only three Members voted against. The Department should have noted the expression of opinion in the House at that time; but it did not. I regret that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State chose not to increase child benefit this year, but I should like to make it clear to the House that my Bill as drafted is not a confrontation with my right hon. Friend. I understand his reasons; at the very time when the new family credit is being brought in, which everyone must welcome, he did not feel inclined also to uprate child benefit. I understand his reasons, though I regret his decision. My Bill however, is not a confrontation with that decision. The effect of my Bill, if passed by the House, would be only to put child benefit on the Lawson-Rooker-Wise formula with effect from next year. That truly is something on which the House could unite in all parties.

I realise that there are certain people, inside and outside the House, who feel that they do not need child benefit, so why should it be given to them? To them, we should make the point that they are entitled to a reduction in taxation if tax cuts are in the air, and there is no reason why tax cuts should not be targeted specifically to families——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had 10 minutes. Will he now bring his remarks to a close?

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: I will indeed do so.

There are some 10,000 claimants in each constituency, which is a point that hon. Members may care to bear in mind.

My last point is to explain why the national insurance fund features in my long title. We should revive the concept of national insurance, so that child benefit, just as much as pensions and unemployment relief, may be seen to emanate from the national insurance fund. I trust that the House will support my Bill.

3.50 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Field: I seek to oppose this important proposed Bill. It is important because it affects 7 million mothers and 14 million children and it would be wrong for it to be nodded through. The only way in which we have a chance to express our individual preferences is in the Division

Lobby, and when the time comes I shall seek to divide the House. Needless to say, I hope that the Bill is given leave to be brought in by a massive majority.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must oppose, not praise and then oppose.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 234, Noes 20.

Division No. 112] **[3.50 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benyon, W.
Boateng, Paul
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carrington, Matthew
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, James
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Ingram, Adam
Jack, Michael
John, Brynmor
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mudd, David
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Neillist, Dave
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams and Mr. Tony Marlow.

NOES

Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Brazier, Julian
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Dover, Den
Forth, Eric
Gow, Ian
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Mans, Keith
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Redwood, John
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Field and Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Jim Lester, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Tony Marlow, Mr. Tim Rathbone, Mr. Robin Squire, Mr. Dafydd Wigley and Mr. Tim Yeo.

CHILD BENEFIT (UPRATING)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams accordingly presented a Bill to require the Secretary of State for Social Services, in the event of an increase in the Retail Price Index in 1988 or any subsequent calendar year, to lay before Parliament the draft of an uprating order to produce an increase in child benefit with effect from the beginning of the following financial year of not less than a corresponding percentage, and to make future increases in child benefit a charge on the National Insurance Fund: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 12th February and to be printed. [Bill 71].

Orders of the Day

Local Government Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [14 December], That the clause (Dog Licences), *proposed on consideration of the Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee)*, be read a Second time.

"(1) The duty charged under the Dog Licences Act 1959 on Licences for dogs shall from the date set out in subsection (5) and subject to subsection (2), be determined by a London borough, or district council, as appropriate at a level of not less that £10 per annum and not more than £20 per annum in any financial year and shall be allocated by the authority to the funding of a dog warden service in its area.

(2) No duty shall be charged in respect of any dog which is:—

(a) a trained guide dog kept for the purpose of assisting a blind or partially-sighted person;

(b) a dog kept for the purpose of work in connection with the maintenance of livestock or gamekeeping;

(c) a dog whose owner has attained the age of statutory retirement.

(3) In Section 1 of the Protection of Animals (Cruelty to dogs) Act 1933 (disqualification for keeping a dog of any person convicted of cruelty to dogs), at the end there shall be inserted the following subsection—

(5) For the purposes of this section a person shall be presumed, until the contrary is shown, to keep a dog—

(a) if it is found or seen in that person's custody, charge or possession, or in his house or premises;

(b) in the case of hounds, if he is their owner or master."

(4) In section 1 of the Protection of Animals (Cruelty to Dogs) (Scotland) Act 1934 (disqualification for keeping a dog of any person convicted of cruelty to dogs), at the end there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(5) For the purposes of this section a person shall be presumed, until the contrary is shown, to keep a dog—

(a) if it is found or seen in that person's custody, charge or possession, or in his house or premises;

(b) in the case of hounds, if he is their owner or master."

(5) this section shall come into force at the end of the period of 2 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.".—*[Mr. Rooker.]*

Question again proposed.

4.3 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I support my hon. Friends in seeking to maintain the dog licensing system. I shall not dwell on the matter at length because several important points have been made, but it is worth pointing out that, unless we have some system of registration, we shall not be able to detect animal diseases with the accuracy and precision necessary to take remedial action.

With the development of the Channel tunnel and the completion of the internal market by 1992, there is a grave danger that rabies will be a greater possibility in Britain. In the Common Market, rabies is spreading at the rate of 25 miles each year, and the barrier against rabies that the Common Market has attempted to set up through an inoculation process has not stemmed the spread of the disease. Therefore, it is reasonable that we should have a licensing system, because, although one hopes that that possibility will never come to fruition, we should be forewarned.

The National Canine Defence League takes the view that we should retain the dog licensing system. The Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society, which is chaired by Lord Houghton of Sowerby and Lord Irving of Dartford and has as its vice-chairman the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes), who is taking her usual interest in the subject, points out:

"However, the decision to abolish rather than to increase the licence to a sensible level of up to £10 goes against the advice of the veterinary bodies, the welfare bodies, the local authorities, the environmental health officers and the farmers. The present income goes to local authorities helping to fund, in a minimal way, present dog warden services."

If there were an adequate dog licence fee, those dog warden services could be made very much more effective in reducing the nuisance of dogs while helping to maintain standards which the vast majority of dog owners seek to maintain. It would provide for a much more effective service.

New clause 4 seeks to give powers to local authorities to draw up a register of dangerous dogs. It is a probing clause. If the Minister says that the definition of dangerous dogs should not be left to local authorities—I am happy to leave it to democratically elected local authorities to examine what prevails in their areas—and insists that there should be a central, universal definition, I would be happy for a clause to give the Minister power to define such categories by means of a statutory instrument.

It is a matter of concern. A newspaper comment on the increase in the category of dangerous dogs states:

"Strict conditions should be imposed on the sale of giant Rottweiler dogs, says former police dog handler Stephen Allinson.

Mr. Allinson, who runs a Rottweiler dogs display team —the Black Devils—billed as 'The SAS of the Dog World', spoke out after last week's attack on a Bradford headteacher who as savaged by one of the dogs as he took a pupil home from school.

'The problem today is that the Rottweiler is a fashionable dog and is getting into the wrong hands' said Mr. Allinson."

It went on:

"Mr. Allinson said the dogs are not necessarily dangerous or ferocious, but breeders were selling them to the wrong people.

'A condition of sale should be that the new owner attends dog training classes until the dog and owner can prove a competent team together.' . . . Bradford Council's environmental health chiefs have already urged owners of big dogs, especially guard dogs, to make sure that they get their animals properly trained."

That is the voice of experience. A man who trains that category of dog regularly and who was a former police dog handler says that there are dangers.

There have been a number of attacks, and I wish to dwell on one which occurred in my constituency and which was mentioned in my previous quotation from the local evening paper. It involved the head teacher of a local school who had a pupil who had suffered an asthma attack, so he kindly and humanely agreed to take the small boy home. When he got the boy home, a Rottweiler dog

"broke free from its chain when they arrived, hurling itself at . . . and knocking him to the ground.

The owner sought to drag the dog off its victim as it sank its teeth into his arm and other parts of his body. Bradford Council's emergency dog warden team was called in to subdue the animal with special restraining equipment. The two wardens then held down the dog with lasso poles while a vet raced to the scene. When vet Neil Adams arrived, he injected the animal with a fatal shot and Mr. Waterhouse was rushed to hospital."

Mr. Waterhouse has been off work for three months, at considerable cost to the local authority and the education service.

The new clause would enable the mounting of some sort of scrutiny of dog ownership. It would enable a register of dangerous dogs to be drawn up and conditions of ownership, such as kennel provision, chaining and fencing, to be checked by the local authority, which would help the owner in that respect. Those who argue against it say that the cost would be too high, but the new clause may well save public expenditure if it can prevent accidents such as the dreadful vicious attack that I described.

We need to consider other consequences, too. There were two Rottweilers at the house where the attack took place. The one that was killed because of the attack was immediately replaced by a bull mastiff, so there are now at least three dangerous dogs at the house. They are not always chained up.

Another of my constituents has a four-month old baby daughter. Can those who criticise the supervision of dogs through licensing, and the closer supervision of some categories of dog, assure me that that four-month-old baby will be perfectly safe if she is left in the garden next to a house where there are two or three Rottweilers and a bull mastiff? Of course they cannot. The parents cannot leave their four-month-old daughter in their garden and enjoy any peace of mind or security. They have erected a fence at considerable expense, but they cannot be sure that one of the animals will not break away, leap over the fence and savage the baby. Given that an adult who was savagely attacked needed hospital treatment and has been off work for three months, one dreads to think of what the dog could do to a four-month old baby.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does my hon. Friend recognise that one merit of the new clause is that it would allow the identification and location of the dangerous American pit bull terriers being imported into this country at great cost to facilitate illegal dog fighting?

Mr. Cryer: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is precisely the sort of dog that would fall into the category required to be registered under my new clause. That would meet the objections to the way in which some dogs are cruelly and viciously set against each other in illegal fights.

In addition to the four-month-old baby, a number of young children live around the house to which I have referred. When the dogs are loose, the children have to be kept in. They cannot play in the garden as their parents would like them to. This is not an isolated incident. Several of my constituents have written to me saying that they have experienced similar problems.

The House cannot just shrug off these cases and say, "Well, decent dog owners should and do look after their dogs," and tut-tut a little at those who are not so careful. In the case that I cited, there has been no prosecution. I have raised the matter with the Home Office, which says that the law is adequate and that dog owners who do not control their animals properly can be prosecuted. However, in this case, the police have decided against prosecution, for reasons that are not spelt out in their letter to me.

The new clause is a very modest measure which seeks to minimise accidents. We all know that they happen from time to time, and when they do hands are raised in horror. We can seek to take remedial action and to provide a

[Mr. Cryer]

legislative framework for local authorities to ensure that the number of accidents and of terrible competitions in which dogs are pitted against each other illegally is reduced.

The Minister may say that my new clause is too broadly drawn. I should be happy to accept a clause drawn up by his Department if it gave the same degree of security and supervision. Bradford has a very good dog warden service which has improved the process of rounding up stray dogs. However, that dog warden service is not adequate to protect people against some of these ferocious dogs because it does not have the information necessary to pinpoint the dangers. I hope that the House will support my new clause.

4.15 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I shall keep my remarks brief because I have to chair a Standing Committee at 4.30 pm. I hope that it will be understood that I shall not be in my place for the rest of the debate.

It will not surprise my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to learn that I deplore the Government's decision to abolish dog licences — a decision that goes against everything that I have worked for for 10 years or more. I want the dog licence fee raised to a realistic sum to support a dog warden scheme and a package of measures for the welfare and control of dogs.

I shall support the new clause if the Government cannot give me anything better, although it has certain drawbacks. I believe in the general thrust of the argument of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and would not wish to be too critical of his proposal. I query whether it is wise to have variable licence fees as between one local authority and another because difficulties could arise if adjoining local authorities levied different sums. I query, too, whether it is wise to have quite such a blanket exemption for retirement pensioners. However, I fully agree that we should have a dog licence fee to enable us to go ahead with a package of reforms.

No taxation is popular and new taxes are even less popular, as the Government will shortly discover — if they have not done so already. Therefore, I query their wisdom in doing away with a tax that at least has the benefit of familiarity and which people have accepted because it has been in place far as long as anyone can remember. It is an astonishing act to get rid of a reasonable means of obtaining money to do a specific job, and I query it on that ground alone.

Furthermore, as the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said, the concept of a package of measures to control dogs commands a rare degree of agreement among a whole variety of groups, not least the animal welfare organisations. Those groups also include the National Farmers Union. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National Farmers Union do not always see eye to eye, but on this matter they march as one.

I query the Government's decision to do away with dog licences most of all because of the order that they themselves introduced in Northern Ireland in 1983. I gather that that measure is working well and has done much to reduce the nuisance on which other hon. Members have expatiated. Are the Government so displeased with the scheme that they propose to discontinue it in Northern Ireland? If they do not propose to discontinue it, why is it not good enough for the mainland of Britain? I look forward with interest to the answers to those two questions, even if I am not in my seat to listen to them.

No one would suggest that it would be possible to achieve 100 per cent. enforcement of the increased dog licence. Frankly, it is worth no one's while to collect the miserable and paltry sum of 37p. I believe that if the dog licence fee was raised to a proper level of £5 or £10 that would be an inducement to enforce collection. I gather that there is a fair degree of enforcement in Northern Ireland and we therefore have a practical precedent to follow.

Although my next point goes beyond the scope of the new clause — and I will do no more than touch on it briefly — I believe that dog wardens should be given greater powers than they possess under existing legislation. They should be the enforcement agents for the collection of the licence fee and for the laws relating to dog fouling and other matters. That would go far to deal with the problems that many people who do not love dogs as I love them find so objectionable, for example the dog mess which they find in many places and the danger to children to which reference was made earlier.

The Government have missed a great opportunity. If they do not want to accept the new clause, I hope that they can offer something in its place. A general gesture of good will stating that local authorities will be able to introduce dog warden schemes without giving them the wherewithal to carry those schemes out will not be acceptable. We must remember that the authorities will have less money if the new clause is passed because the money that is collected is used by local authorities.

Even at this late stage, I hope that the Government will reconsider. If they are not prepared to progress on the present basis, will they consider the ever-present threat of rabies entering this country? I am aware that a set of draconian reserve powers exists, which can be implemented if rabies enters the country. However, I do not believe that the Government will be thanked if those powers have to be invoked when it would have been possible to have a far more humane and attractive approach through a good system of licensing and registration and a dog warden scheme. If rabies should enter the country, I will not hesitate to remind my hon. Friends of what I have just said. We cannot shrug off the threat of rabies as something which is unlikely to happen. It is all too likely to happen. It would be far more prudent to have a proper system of dog control in force than the present system, which will result in utter chaos.

I am connected with two welfare societies, the RSPCA and the National Canine Defence League. The societies bear the brunt of dog owners' irresponsibility and the very inadequate controls on the breeding of dogs. They bear that brunt day after day, and it gives them no pleasure to have to destroy dogs when it is not possible to keep them for a variety of reasons. Money is being spent which would not have to be spent for that purpose if we had a proper set of controls. Unwanted dogs that are turned out by irresponsible owners lead a miserable existence. My hon. Friends should look at some of the homes — and Battersea dogs' home is close to the House — and they would see what welfare societies have to deal with every

day. Once Ministers had witnessed that they might give more thought to the problem before deciding to do away with the dog licence.

In short, I support the new clause, with reservations, for the reasons that I have given. I am anxious to see that the pass is not sold entirely and that we retain the dog licence as a necessary means of funding a scheme of dog wardens and other control measures. I would like to see a new Act which would bring all the dog laws together. However, I am aware that that goes beyond the scope of the new clause and I will say no more.

Mr. Hardy: I need not detain the House for long, because I share the concerns expressed by many hon. Members so far and not least those expressed by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes).

I believe that the Government have acted with gross irresponsibility. Since the debate started, much has been said about the nature of the problems that are presented by irresponsible dog owners. I do not dissent from the need for the maintenance of the licence. However, the Government's record must be exposed. They have known since 1979 when they assumed office of the need for an improved, fair and effective system of control. The evidence has been available since the mid-1970s. I recall advancing an argument that certain reforms were required in 1975, when I suggested that the first priority was to remove the six-month exemption for the purchase of a licence whereby people getting a puppy do not need to buy a licence until the puppy is six months old. That exemption must be the single greatest cause of the difficulties from dogs that confront society.

While I am delighted that the Opposition have tabled amendment No. 29 which, if it was accepted by the House, would force the Government to reconsider the whole position and perhaps come forward with a sensible arrangement such as that advocated by the hon. Member for Drake I would have been delighted if the Opposition's position rested with that amendment. However, I have reservations about new clause 4. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) will consider my points when he advises Opposition Members in another place.

To many hon. Members and perhaps to the vast majority of dog owners, £10 may not be a large sum of money. Indeed, £20—the maximum set down in the new clause — may not be a large sum. However, to many people who will not enjoy the "most prosperous Christmas" that this country has ever seen, to quote the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) — that means the 8 million on or below the poverty line—£10 or £20 is a great deal of money. They would be bitterly resentful if they had to scrimp and save to find the £10 or £20 when they were responsible dog owners.

I hope that I can be regarded as a responsible dog owner. A number of hon. Members have mentioned their dogs. At home at the moment we have a large Irish wolfhound and a young deerhound. Our licences have always been paid on the dot, not because of my efficiency but because my wife insists on it. I strongly suspect that in my area and in all other areas, only a minority of dog owners obtain licences for their dogs. I suspect that, even if the new clause were passed, many people would not pay the £10 or £20. The responsible dog owners whose dogs do not do the kind of thing that we have heard about would be even more angry and bitter.

Perhaps the Government have rather more cunning than some of us would give them credit for. They have failed to act for nearly 10 years despite the weight of evidence and the arguments advanced by Conservative Members, including the hon. Member for Drake. The reason why they have not acted is that they did not wish to incur unpopularity. However, it is no part of the Opposition's job to incur unpopularity. Had the Government any serious and intelligent intentions in this matter, they would have accepted one of about five or six private Members' Bills presented to the House over the past six or seven years.

4.30 pm

As far as I can recall, in every instance the Government used, or wished to use, those private Members' Bills to get out from under and transfer the responsibility entirely to local authorities. I do not think that that is on from a Government who have inflicted rate capping on local authorities. I take the view that, if there is to be a fee, it should be determined centrally, and not left as a means of ensuring that more odium falls on the shoulders of local government. We wish to avoid the ridiculous state of affairs in which people living on one side of the road pay £10, while those on the other side pay £20.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that that is dealt with in new clause 15—tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace)—which provides for a licence fee of £10 per annum? That is the crucial difference between new clause 4 and new clause 15, although the principle is the same in both.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind that I have sat through the whole debate. While that may be the intention of new clause 15, it is not the only intention that the Liberal party has demonstrated. The Liberal party's position seems to be very draconian. I believe that it would discourage not only irresponsible but responsible dog owners.

That, however, is not my only reservation about new clause 4. I note that, under subsection (2)*(b)*,

"a dog kept for the purpose of work in connection with the maintenance of livestock or gamekeeping"

would be exempted from the licence charge. I trust that my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr has sought legal advice. I am not a lawyer, but it strikes me that some masters of hounds would be given an opportunity to argue that their packs should be exempt. That is surely not a proposal that the Opposition should contemplate.

Gamekeeping is a reputable activity. But if the gamekeeper is to enjoy such an exemption, what will be the position of the welfare organisations referred to by the hon. Member for Drake? Many breed clubs within the dog fancy also operate their own rescue societies. Will they have to find £10 or £20 for every dog that they take into care, which otherwise would probably be roaming the country or causing a general nuisance?

The same applies to boarding kennels. It is to be hoped that dog owners who go away on holiday ensure that their dogs are properly cared for while they are away; I do not consider it reasonable to require dog licences costing a

[Mr. Hardy]

maximum of £20 from all boarding kennel owners. That would inevitably put up the cost, and discourage people from ensuring that their pets were properly looked after. If the gamekeeper — who is serving an important, or established, leisure interest — is to receive a concession, why should not such a concession also be offered to responsible people who are engaged in breeding and showing dogs? Thousands of people in Britain shoot, but I suspect that far more show dogs.

That leads me to a further suggestion. People who show dogs usually value them enormously, and the dogs may indeed be very valuable. Such people will not let their dogs wander about school fields — at least, they certainly should not do so. They recognise that the dogs may be a substantial asset. If those dogs are not likely to cause a nuisance to society, I suggest that their owners should pay no more than one licence fee. Those who own several dogs may be more responsible owners than those who own only one, but do not know how to look after it. I certainly do not wish a system to be introduced that would deter people from enjoying a perfectly sensible pastime in which I occasionally indulge — sometimes with substantial success—with my son's wolfhound.

We should be encouraging people to enjoy life, and to take part in the various activities that owning a dog can provide. We ought not to insist on a penalty that may make it impossible for poorer people to own dogs. I therefore hope that, by the time that the Bill reaches another place, the Opposition's proposal will be slightly more acceptable to responsible dog owners than it now appears to be.

Many hon. Members — perhaps the majority — consider that the entire cost of a dog warden scheme should fall on the shoulders of those who pay the proposed licence fee. That is entirely unreasonable. Why should responsible dog owners have to bear the whole cost of the irresponsibility of those who refuse to pay? If the Minister, or any of my hon. Friends, maintains that view, we may eventually reach a time when only smokers will be called upon to bear the cost of the fire brigade.

I agree with the view, expressed by a number of hon. Members, that the Government have acted irresponsibly, and should reconsider. In doing so, they may wish to consider a version of new clause 4 amended in the way that I have suggested.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I join my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) in urging my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government to consider the new clause sympathetically. Its wording is by no means perfect, but I believe that its principle is right, and that the Government should take it to themselves and bring forward in another place a form of wording that does not suffer from the same defects.

I urge the Minister to do that, because the new clause has an honourable history. I had the privilege of proposing a similar new clause to the Control of Pollution Bill 1974 from the Opposition Front Bench. The principle was the same — that we should give local authorities the power to introduce a dog warden scheme, which they could fund by charging a licence fee. They could then carry out the important measures necessary to ensure that dogs are well looked after, and that the physical environment is well looked after at the same time, so that dangers from rabies, and to children in parks and playgrounds, can be properly dealt with and the risks diminished.

Unfortunately, I was not able to test the then Government's view, because the new clause was outside the long title of the Bill. Nevertheless, it enabled me to have discussions and negotiations which ended in the setting up of a working group which reported in 1976, accepting the principles and urging the Government to introduce legislation of the kind that we are now discussing.

From 1976 until 1979, the Government of the day found excuse after excuse not to legislate. I rather suspect that similar reasons will be given from the Government Front Bench today for not introducing the legislation that the Opposition are now demanding. It is remarkable how being in government and being in opposition tend to change hon. Members' views on certain matters, and this is certainly an example.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Government at that time had such a tiny majority—if, indeed, they had a majority at all — that they would have been unable to do anything but what they did. The Opposition would certainly have used any Bill so presented for political purposes far beyond the interests of dogs. In any case, the hon. Gentleman is talking about a period of little more than two years. The present Government have been in power for eight years.

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman's recollection is at fault. It was then Opposition policy to promote such legislation and, from the Front Bench, I was promoting it on behalf of the Opposition. The Government of the day would have had a good answer, because they could have said, "We now call on the Opposition to support what their Front Bench spokesman has been urging on us."

After 1979 I had the privilege of serving as a Minister in Northern Ireland, and it was no accident that an experiment was tried there with the introduction of an enlarged fee for a warden-controlled system. The problem was that people tended, as they do on this side of the water, to buy puppies for children at Christmas time, but after the Christmas holidays the puppies became a nuisance and were thrown out. They tended to roam in packs and the problem was that those wild packs savaged sheep throughout the countryside. It was necessary to find ways of controlling them.

It may be said that the experience of Northern Ireland has not been all that great; collection of the new enhanced fee is difficult and — I am unaware of the figures for today — possibly about 50 per cent. of dog owners do not pay the licence fee. If my hon. and learned Friend intends to argue that, I shall tell him that the collection by authorities of fees, taxes, rates and rents is generally difficult in certain parts of Northern Ireland. He should recognise the circumstances that appertain there for the collection of moneys by the authorities.

The introduction of the enlarged fee was successful because it gave the means to deal with the problem that I outlined. There has been a substantial reduction in wild dog packs, which were causing much danger to animals and, on occasions, to human beings.

As I understand the new clause, it is proposed to give local authorities the power to set up dog warden schemes.

Local authorities already have that power and can do that without the need for further legislation, but they do not have a particular means of raising money for a new service.

I disagree with the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who said that people who keep dogs should not make a contribution to the creation of a dog warden scheme. Contrary to what my hon. Friend the Member for Drake said, this is not a matter for a national organisation, national apparatus or national levy.

The problem varies from area to area. Some local authorities will find it necessary to use the power and to raise money for a dog warden service. Others may not have that problem or may not wish to have a dog warden service. Some may need only a slender service and therefore would not need to raise whatever the House determines as the correct maximum, whether it be £10 or £20. It would be within the discretion of the local authority to decide, within the parameters of its needs and with regard to the number of dog owners that lived in its locality, the amount that it needed to charge to run this service efficiently and effectively. We should enable local authorities to do that.

I represent an urban constituency, where dogs can be an enormous problem. There are many guard dogs in my constituency because of the levels of crime in certain areas. Dogs must be walked in the parks and streets, which creates an unseemly and dangerous environment, particularly for children.

There must be the means to encourage the local authority to set up an organisation that will ensure that that nuisance is kept to a minimum. To enable local authorities to employ people to do that, one should not expect them to pay for it out of the community charge —which they will be enabled under other legislation to levy—because £178 per annum per head of population may not be sufficient if we are to add the provision of a dog warden service to the responsibilities of local authorities.

4.45 pm

I ask my hon. and learned Friend to treat this matter with some seriousness. It is a matter which the Environment Select Committee has considered since 1983 —since when I have been privileged to be its chairman. We have looked at the Estimates of the Department of the Environment and, year after year, pointed to the absurdity of the cost of £3 million per year for collection of the national dog licence fee. I can well understand that the persistence of the Select Committee in pinpointing and underlining this absurdity each year, has driven the Government into considering the abolition of the dog licence.

That is one part only of the equation; the other is how one deals with the other problems that must be tackled, and for which local authorities must be given the wherewithal.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I am a member of the Environment Select Committee. Would it not be true to say that it deliberately tabled a motion, when the report on the Estimates was last considered, with a blatant view to making the Government think about this problem and come forward with a solution not only to the matter of licensing but the wider implications of the control of dogs?

Sir Hugh Rossi: Given my involvement with the subject since 1974, that thought was not far from my mind when the Committee agreed to table that motion. It is a matter of disappointment that the Government did not have the courage to deal with those matters.

The response of the Government will be similar to that which I received from the Government during the 1974-79 Parliament. No doubt they have received advice from the same officials, and the same considerations will apply, but if that is the case I must tell my hon. and learned Friend not to expect me in the same Lobby as him tonight.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I should like to speak specifically to new clause 15—*Dog Licences*—

'(1) Subject to subsection (3) below, the duty charged under the Dog Licences Act 1959 on licences for dogs shall be set at £10 per annum and shall be increased on 1 April of each year in line with the percentage increase in the retail prices index.

(2) The duty provided for in subsection (1) above shall be collected by a local authority from owners of dogs living in its area and shall be used by the authority for the funding of a dog warden service and for other dog control purposes in its area.

(3) No duty shall be charged under subsection (1) above in respect of:-

(a) a dog kept and used wholly or mainly for guidance by a blind or partially-sighted person, if the owner of the dog obtains a certificate of exemption in respect of the dog under this section;

(b) a dog whose owner has attained the statutory age of retirement;

(c) a dog kept and used solely for the purpose of tending sheep or cattle on a farm;

(d) a dog under the age of three months where that dog is kept by the person who at the time of its birth was the owner of the bitch which gave it birth;

(e) a dog kept by such other person or for such other purposes as may be specified, in England or Wales by the Secretary of State for the Environment, or, in Scotland by the Secretary of State for Scotland, by a statutory instrument subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(4) Where no duty is charged under paragraphs (a), (b) and (c) of subsection (3) above, the owner of the dog shall obtain from the local authority a certificate of exemption from duty in respect of the dog.

(5) In subsection (2) above, "local authority" means a district council, a London borough council, the Council of the Isles of Scilly, or the Common Council of the City of London.

(6) This section shall come into force at the end of a period of 2 months beginning with the day on which this Act is passed.',

and in support of the clauses and amendment that are the subject of this debate.

The debate in Committee confirmed that the Government have but one argument for changing the position that they adopted, on a provisional basis, during the consultations on this matter a couple of years ago. Their Green Paper, which was produced after many years of internal consideration, came to the clear-cut conclusion that the Government would prefer the abolition of the present national licensing arrangements and said that new discretionary powers should be given to districts and London boroughs. Thus, the proposal in new clause 4, proposed by the Opposition Front Bench, is on all fours with the view that the Government took about a year ago.

The Government have not explained their about-turn in response to the weight of the evidence. They have not said what the weight of the evidence was, but if they were to do so it would confirm that 10 of the reputable organisations that submitted evidence, such as the RSPCA and others, came out clearly in favour of a national dog licence, and only two opposed it.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

A substantial number of individuals have also made views known. They have come to believe that it is necessary to get rid of the dog licence for the twin reasons that the present position is clearly ludicrous—there is no dissent about that—and that it is illogical to make responsible dog owners pay for irresponsible dog owners because there will always be people who do not apply for or pay for licences. Indeed, in Committee one of the Minister's hon. Friends admitted to being an example.

The fallacy of that argument is that there are many parallels in taxation policy where people are charged for the use or ownership of something, but where not everybody may pay. The example that comes most obviously to mind is that of the motor car. Not everybody who should do so pays the vehicle excise licence, but it is still the rule that the Exchequer benefits by collecting the money that goes into the pool to allow more money to be available for dealing with issues of transport and road policy. There are other examples.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I put it to the hon. Gentleman that there are even stronger arguments than the one that he is advancing. Most responsible dog owners, indeed all responsible dog owners, are concerned about animal welfare. They love their own dogs deeply and are concerned about those who do not properly cater for or look after their dogs. Most responsible dog owners would be happy to pay a higher licence fee if dogs were generally better catered for and looked after.

Mr. Hughes: I accept entirely the hon. Gentleman's point. I was here when he spoke yesterday, and I commend him for his speech on the subject and for his views. He has the additional merit of speaking from personal experience, which in this case, as in many others, is persuasive. Responsible dog owners are happy to pay the licence fee. I have not received any letters or representations from dog owners to say that they would not be happy about that, even if the fee were to be higher than the amount suggested —£10 is the most commonly quoted figure.

Like the Minister's hon. Friends who have spoken against the Government's view, I ask the Government to change their view, because it is illogical to ask responsible dog owners to pay for the irresponsible. The reality is that the community as a whole will have to continue to pay for dog control exercises, the kennelling of stray dogs and animal welfare. That will always be the case because of the minority of people who are not responsible dog owners.

Therefore, as the Government will argue tomorrow in relation to the poll tax, the fairest way would be a per capita payment. In this case it would be a per dog capita payment for the dogs that are owned, as opposed to a per human capita payment. Each contribution should be spent for the general benefit of the community.

The difference between new clause 15, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and myself on behalf of the Liberal party, and new clause 4, tabled by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on behalf of the Labour party, is that the latter provides for a national system, but with varying amounts. I agree that there is likely to be some antagonism if, across a border, the amount is different. That will detract from arguments about the principle of the issue. However, new clause 15 argues for a nationally fixed, but locally collected and locally spent, fee. It seems right that local authorities should have the prime responsibility for collecting and spending the money. It is better that they should do so and, indeed, they are willing to do so.

I believe that the Minister accepts the general presumption that local authorities are in, as it were, the front line of dog control. He suggested in Committee that he supported the view that the responsibility for stray dogs, which is a separate but linked issue, should be taken from the police and handed to local authorities. I hope that he will expand on that and state that that is still the Government's view and that they intend to move in that direction soon.

The Government's position would be more defensible if they were to say that they would replace the money that would be lost—small though it is, or much larger as it would be if a £10 licence fee were the norm — by additional money for local authorities specifically to enable them to set up dog warden schemes and the like. However, I have never heard that said and, clearly, the Government have not said it. Local authorities have a right to be suspicious that the little that they receive at the moment will be taken away and that their capacity to deal with what is a major problem in rural and urban areas —often a major problem of environmental nuisance— will be severely diminished.

Ministers may have noticed that even the Kennel Club, an organisation which has, for some time, lobbied for the abolition of the dog licence fee, now says that it favours a tattooing system for the identification of dogs, for which there would need to be a registration system. Once that is in place, an administratively simple and cost-effective way of paying for the registration system would be through a licence fee. The Kennel Club is the only substantial single-interest body that has argued against the view proposed by my hon. Friends, the Opposition and some Conservative Back Benchers. It does not favour a licence, but favours an identification system. Therefore, even that body seems to have a qualified position.

For reasons that seem illogical, the Government have decided to move away from the proper steps which they implemented, by trial, in Northern Ireland and which have proved adequately successful there, of having a system of collecting revenue that would be spent on dealing with the difficult but important issue of dog control and welfare. The Government are sadly misguided. We hope that an amendment, either in the form of the new clause that has been tabled by my party, or in the form of one of the other Opposition new clauses or amendments, will be accepted before the Bill completes its passage through the House.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin: (Weston-super-Mare): One of the problems with the procedures of this House is that after an arduous period in Committee, when a subject comes back for further debate on Report, some hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) feel that the debate is already over and that there is nothing more to say. It was a good thing that the debate was adjourned, because we have had some good speeches today from Opposition Members, who have promoted the new clause with much greater enthusiasm than did the hon. Member for Perry Barr himself.

In 1979, when I had the honour to be appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I discovered to my astonishment, and

that of my fellow Ministers, that for some reason the fee for the dog licence was fixed by that Department, although the Department of the Environment had the local government responsibilities for dog licences and the Home Office had the overall responsibility for all licensing. Eight years later, I believe that the dilemma of the then Government has been resolved in the wrong way. I am not in any doubt that it is a question of a toss of the coin in such matters because I appreciate that, whichever position the Government adopted, they would have some critics.

I remained of an open mind until quite recently when I became persuaded by the continual correspondence that I receive on this matter. It was not just one or two letters. Week after week, month after month, and year after year, I have received letters from my constituents, especially those in the urban area, protesting about the complete lack of control over dogs in towns, in relation to dog mess, barking, lack of control over fierce dogs and other aspects. There is a substantial feeling that the issue must be resolved in the immediate future. Some of my councillors would agree that no single issue raises greater passion at local government level in Weston-super-Mare than that of dogs. Therefore, for many people, this is a much more serious issue than it may have sounded when we were debating it last night.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) has made most of the important points, so I shall not tire the House by repeating them. The dog licence is an additional form of taxation which, much to our cost, we have failed to increase year by year. The Government took a weak view on this — many years ago, I accept — and it has become increasingly more expensive to collect, and, in parallel, the problem of out-of-control dogs has become worse.

It is rare for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National Farmers Union to agree on anything. When, for the first time in my memory, they do agree, backed by the British Veterinary Association and other responsible bodies, it is rather disappointing that the Government should take a contrary view.

5 pm

In defence of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Local Government, may I say that the minds of the public have been considerably concentrated by the Government's firm decision. It was the announcement of that decision that led many bodies into an opposition in which they had not engaged before. Having done that, they have gathered a considerable amount of public opinion behind them. I fully accept that a more expensive licence of £5 or £10 would penalise the law-abiding dog owner who pays his licence, but I have not had any letters from dog owners saying that they did not think it desirable.

I have just returned from Norway, and the Norwegians have a completely different attitude to dogs. They look upon owning a dog as an exceptional privilege. Indeed, as anyone who has bought food in Norway will know, it is also a costly privilege. The Norwegian people require no further incentives for looking after their dogs. If they did, it would become a matter of national behaviour. A case of dog cruelty achieves headline status.

I shall listen with great interest to the argument about Northern Ireland dogs. My hon. and learned Friend will no doubt adduce some devious argument about why an Ulster dog is different from an English or Welsh dog. I recall clearly that when the decision on that was made there was a sharp intake of breath at such courage from the Government. In fact, the measure went through with no difficulty. Licence fees are paid relatively well and, as has already been said, that is not so usual for Northern Ireland. It has enabled the proper control of dogs and wild packs no longer roam.

I cannot support the new clause in its entirety for the reasons that I have given, but I shall vote for it because the Government have gone the wrong way. I join my hon. Friends in saying that I hope that in another place they will give further thought to this. I have not yet heard a speech in support of the Government's view.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I do not want to repeat all the arguments about the desirability of a dog licence because they have been well and truly made. However, I have an interest because Scunthorpe borough council was one of the pioneers of the dog warden service. That service was introduced in response to local demand and the enormous problems caused by dogs.

All hon. Members who have spoken so far have conceded that dogs can be a considerable nuisance. It is evident from the letters that I receive from my constituents that dog owners favour a licence on the terms set out in the new clause. Just as all smokers are often blamed for the failings of the irresponsible minority of smokers, responsible dog owners are blamed for the failings of an irresponsible minority of dog owners. The dog licence is a measure of control which is much needed, particularly in urban areas. It also gives some protection to the dogs.

As has been mentioned, Christmas is traditionally the time when people buy puppies on the spur of the moment without taking into account the commitment that any pet requires. Indeed, some people collect dogs like others collect stamps, until they end up with a house full of them and that causes a nuisance through noise, smell and the problems in the streets. A properly funded dog warden service, with money going to local councils to fund it, is one way of tackling that problem.

All the responsible organisations are in favour of a dog licence. I have before me a letter from the National Farmers Union, which adds its weight to those organisations. The letter was also sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). The NFU argues strongly for a dog licence and points to the problem of livestock savaged each year by pets that are allowed to roam.

A dog licence is not the automatic solution to all the problems with stray dogs, but it is a step forward in tackling that problem. It is certainly a better solution than that proposed by the Government, which is no solution at all. The Government are missing an important opportunity to put the matter right and to tackle the problem. If they take that opportunity in the Bill they will have the support of all responsible dog owners and the majority of the British people.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): It is not uncommon for some major issues to pass calmly through the House, if not on the nod, certainly without the heat and light generated by this topic. But mention dogs, and calm goes out of the window and emotions — on both sides of the debate — take over. Last night confirmed that fact, even if the late hour was some excuse.

[Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo]

One accepts the need to protect livestock in rural areas, but I am not sure whether a licence is the way to achieve that. The problem is largely one for the urban areas. Let us agree on common ground. There is a need for a warden service to deal with strays and the public have a right to clean pavements and parklands free from dog soil. Both those objectives are, rightly, the responsibility of local government which needs the power to enact the necessary byelaws to meet that public demand and to enforce penalties where necessary.

Why should that general provision, unique among other general needs within local authorities, require a special licence which needs a bureaucracy to police it in order to provide the resources to pay for it? We pay for many general services through our rates which we never use, and, perhaps because of our age, will never use, but we pay none the less. That general rule should apply in this case.

I am puzzled why the Opposition should have tabled the new clause in this form, for deny it though he may, the heart of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was not in his speech last night, except for the customary passion for taxing everything that moves. None of the situations that he described would be diminished or solved by the imposition of a dog licence.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I said that, but the hon. Gentleman was asleep.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: No, that is precisely my point. The hon. Member listed what he objected to and then admitted that the dog licence was no cure. Why on earth, then, put in for a licence?

Mr. Rooker: The point was that the licence provided the revenue to fund the dog warden scheme which would assist in dealing with those problems.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had clearly said that it would not, but perhaps we had better study *Hansard* again.

The Opposition have realised that the 7s 6d tax is nonsense and have chosen anything between £10 and £20 to replace it. However, as they are fearful of adverse reaction, they seek to make some exclusions for the elderly, which is fine at first sight, but it means quite a few hon. Members can keep a pet free. Are the disabled, the unemployed, the family on a low income and the single parent any less in need of the comfort and protection that a pet can give? Are they less deserving than those people mentioned in the amendment or than some Members of this House?

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) pointed out the inadequacies of the exclusions in the new clause. By the time he had finished speaking, I was convinced that he had convinced himself that the clause would not deliver and that he would probably join the Government in the Lobby tonight. When one goes down the exemption route, there is no end. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) said last night, the cost of policing the system will make the policing of the banded community charge or local income tax a piece of cake.

The abolition of the existing licence brings savings to the public purse. The immediate abolition means that the public service will benefit by about £3 million. If that is so, may I suggest to my hon. and learned Friend that some of that saving could be paid as block grant to the PDSA, the RSPCA and other bodies which do a wonderful job and would not necessarily be helped by the kind of licence fee mentioned in the clause.

Many daft things are done by local authorities up and down the land, but the provision of wardens, clean pavements and clean park space would have universal support from ratepayers, whatever the ultimate system of local taxation. However, a separate dog licence would not have such support.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I wish to declare an interest and say that, although I do not have a dog, I have a parrot and two tortoises. As far as I am aware, no proposal has yet been made to license such pets, but if such a proposal were made, I would pay the licence with great pleasure.

I have received a number of letters about this subject. All have protested about the abolition of dog licences and that is why I want to intervene briefly. I cannot follow the Government's logic in respect of their proposals and that is why I support the new clause. The licence fee is too small and not worth collecting. In addition, too many dog owners fail to pay the licence, so the proposed solution is to scrap the licence.

If we apply the logic of failure to pay, we can see the ridiculous situation that would develop. We do not know the precise number of people, although it is quite large, who fail to pay their taxes. They fail to pay their television licences. That includes the Prime Minister who has, as I understand it, 13 television sets in No. 10 Downing street, yet she does not have to pay any licence fee. That is not failure to pay, but she has been given a discretion so that she does not have to pay. Many people do not pay the television licence fee or the road fund tax for their cars. I have yet to hear any Conservative Member say that, because of failure to pay, we should scrap those taxes. The Government are in a difficult position when it comes to logic.

5.15 pm

I am raising this somewhat sniffy subject because, in the east end of London, many people keep dogs as pets. It is a tradition and, if anyone looks around the parks in the east end at weekends, he will see how many people keep dogs. They do so for a number of reasons, including companionship and protection of their property. The many burglaries, car thefts and street crimes in the east end encourage people to keep dogs not so much as pets but as protectors. That is why we have so many large and somewhat vicious dogs in the east end, but most of them have responsible owners. They are certainly far more responsible than the Earl of Leven.

I refer hon. Members to early-day motion 432, tabled by several Labour Members, in respect of the conduct of the Earl of Leven and the sentence imposed by Inverness sheriff court, which states

"That this House condemns the conduct of the Earl of Leven J.P., Lord Lieutenant of Nairnshire and Chairman of the Governors of Gordonstoun College,"—

I understand that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales went there, so I hope that he did not learn anything from the Earl of Leven—

"who fractured the skull of a terrier dog which had wandered onto his grouse moor, attacking the animal with such force that the instrument used, a walking-stick, broke; deplores the

leniency of sentence imposed by Inverness Sheriff Court; believes that £75 fines are unlikely to deter thugs and hooligans; and calls for the Earl of Leven to be stripped of all public offices."

I am sure that dog lovers on both sides of the House will warmly endorse the words of early-day motion 432.

Fortunately, the dog owners and the people of Newham do not follow such vile practices. The dog owners of the east end are responsible, but, unfortunately, problems arise from keeping dogs as pets. The immediate problem in an urban environment is the dog mess produced in car parks, streets, open spaces, parks and many other areas where children play and people go. That is very distressing.

I find it distressing when I am walking to my newspaper shop in the morning to get my copy of *The Daily Telegraph*.—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but it is a serious point. I like to know what the Government are saying from morning to morning, so I buy a number of other newspapers. When I walk, to the newspaper shop just around the corner from my home in the London borough of Newham, I spend most of my time with my shoulders stooping and my eyes on the pavement. That is not merely because of the problems that I bear on my shoulders as a representative of an inner-city area. It is also to avoid stepping in all the piles of dog mess on the pavement. It is a serious problem which is accepted by Members on both sides of the House. I shall step lightly, as they say, on this matter, but it is a serious problem which brings many complaints to me, as the local Member of Parliament, and to local councillors.

There are some advantages in having one's eyes transfixed on the pavement in an attempt to avoid the dog mess. The other day I found £1.20 on the short walk to the newspaper shop. When I reached the newspaper shop, I put that money in the box for cancer research because it is the only way that cancer wards and the Cancer Research Campaign will receive adequate funds. The Government will not provide the funds needed for cancer research. In this country, we rely on charity to deal with the serious aspects of society. When it comes to such matters as defence, there is no such thing as charity appeals or flag days — *[Interruption.]* I understand what you are indicating to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There was an occasion when I walked round the corner and was faced with the terrible dilemma of seeing a £1 coin embedded in a dog turd. I was left with a problem. There was a natural, primitive, capitalist, acquisitive instinct and a need for hygiene. As it happened on that occasion, hygiene won. But I managed to find a small boy who, for a crack of 50p, was prepared to retrieve the coin. He washed his hands in my house, and we put the money in the cancer box.

We know that 4,000 stray dogs are registered every week. That is appalling. We talk about being a nation of dog lovers. We are actually a nation of dog killers. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will find that appalling. At any given moment, there are 500,000 stray dogs on British streets. About 200 stray dogs are destroyed every week. We are coming up to the Christmas period. Parents will be buying presents for their children. Unfortunately, regrettably, lamentably, many parents will buy puppies as pets for their children.

Hon. Members who represent constituencies outside London, particularly constituencies with motorways going through them, know that I speak the truth when I say that dogs are literally thrown out of cars on motorways. They are abandoned at the side of motorways. That is a tragedy, and it should make us all feel ashamed.

We cannot just walk away from the problem. We cannot just say that, because people fail to pay the licence fee, we should abandon it. We should establish a properly funded dog warden scheme that is paid for by the licence fees that are paid by responsible dog owners. The new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) would bring in only a fraction of the annual costs of keeping a dog. Therefore, no responsible dog owner would refuse to pay the licence fee. It would enable us to fund a proper dog warden scheme. Therefore, I ask all hon. Members to support the new clause.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) demonstrated the paucity of the anti-licence argument when he described stray dogs as an urban problem. If they are an urban problem, why is the NFU so opposed to abolition? I gently suggest to him that any hon. Member who has had the sad opportunity to see a flock of sheep being savaged by a wild dog knows that strays are not simply an urban problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) and the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) touched on the possible rabies problem. Hon. Members who were present in the Chamber late last night heard my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) give perhaps one of the most moving pieces of personal testimony that the House has heard for a long time. He described how his own child was affected by a parasite that was picked up from dog mess and, as a result, is now blind in one eye.

It is a problem of control. The Government appear to recognise that fact. In their Green Paper, they said that they had carefully weighed the arguments, that the principal aim of abolition should be to promote responsible dog ownership, and that abolition would not best serve that purpose. In the words of the National Farmers Union, choosing abolition would be to throw away the means of financing proper dog control, the obvious way of tracing the owner of a stray, the potential deterrent to casual purchases, and, indeed, all hope of improvement in dog control in the future.

The legislation envisaged by the Government would provide for registration schemes to include mandatory fee exemptions for guide dogs for the blind and working sheep dogs and discretionary exemptions and part-exemptions for other categories such as dogs owned by the elderly. Were that legislation being proposed by the Government, I and, I suspect, most of my colleagues and many Opposition Members would support it.

The new clause porposed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) will have my support. Opposition Members were kind enough in Committee to give me their support when I invited my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to put forward his own proposals. I do not support all aspects of the proposed new clause. The exemptions are too wide and I am not certain that allocating all the revenue solely to a dog warden service is the right priority. I firmly believe that the prerequisite of any dog control system must be an efficient registration scheme. When we raised the matter in Committee, my hon. and learned Friend said:

[Mr. Roger Gale]

"It is already a legal requirement that a dog should wear a collar with a plate or disc showing the owner's name or address while on a highway or in a public place. . . . There is provision for local authorities to make byelaws relating to the fouling of pavements and grass verges and to ban dogs from certain beaches and parks. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is also prepared to approve byelaws requiring the person in charge of a dog to clear up the mess deposited by the dog in certain places — the so-called poop-scoop byelaw . . . Roads on which dogs must be kept on leads can be designated. None of those provisions is dependent on licensing.

Again, there is comprehensive legislation to afford the farmer protection under which he can gain redress from the keeper of the dog and, indeed, if it is the only way to stop an attack, as a defence, he may shoot the dog. Again I stress that that is entirely independent of licensing."

In Committee, I challenged my hon. and learned Friend. Every one of the regulations that are presently available is dependent upon identification of a dog. Without an efficient registration system, it is not possible to identify an animal, and it is therefore not possible to bring a successful prosecution. I put that point in Committee. My hon. and learned Friend, who has established in this House a reputation for intelligence, courtesy, and, particularly, for precision, said:

"I do not entirely accept that". [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 8 December 1987; c. 1196.]

If my hon. and learned Friend does not entirely accept that, being the precise gentleman that he is, I suggest that, by implication, he must accept part of it. The laws and byelaws upon which the abolitionist case has rested are worthless without a proper means of registration. Many reputable organisations have been named. They are wholly opposed to abolition. Apparently, only one organisation is in favour of abolition, and that is PRO Dogs. Speaking on its behalf last night, my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) said that licensing was not necessary and that, to control dogs, we need "identification and fines."

How does one identify an animal and the owner of an animal without a registration system? The British Veterinary Association, the National Farmers Union, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals favour a licensing scheme. The latter society is particularly relevant. In a letter which I suspect that most hon. Members will have seen, its director stated:

"so far the new licensing scheme"—

which this Government introduced in 1983—

"has been a great success. Not only are dogs being looked after better now, but far fewer are suffering from the actions of irresponsible and uncaring owners. I personally"——

this is, the director of the Ulster society—

"feel that the changing attitude towards dogs in this country is very, very encouraging."

5.30 pm

In support of that sentiment, the National Farmers' Union says that it would like to see

"the extension to the rest of the United Kingdom of the very welcome and successful measures which the Government introduced in 1982-83 to control dogs in Northern Ireland, including a licence fee of £5. . . . We do earnestly believe that the Government has made the wrong decision on this matter and would urge you to assist in seeking a change of mind."

That is what the NFU has written to many hon. Members, including members of the Standing Committee.

It was made plain in Committee that at this stage the Government have no desire to change their mind. There is a growing and very responsible body of opinion that believes that registration is not only necessary but possible. Tattooing has been mentioned. The British Veterinary Association has given a clear undertaking that its members could carry out painlessly the tattoing registration process and supply the necessary documentation to a central register, be it controlled by Government bureacracy or, as I would prefer, by the BVA itself or the Kennel Club.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) thought that the fee proposed in the new clause was too high. In the context of the £200 to £300 that it costs to keep a dog properly fed and in receipt of proper veterinary care an additional £10 licence fee is not a great deal to pay in return for the service that would be provided by registration. Considerable distress is caused to even the most responsible of dog owners whose animals go astray. Dogs go after bitches in heat and the families live in considerable anxiety, often for some time, not knowing where the dog is, although it may be in safe care but unidentified. Registration would be a control factor and would also be of considerable value to dog owners. That is recognised by dog owners, of whom I am one.

I said in Committee that I would table a new clause. I studied carefully the new clause proposed by the hon. Member for Perry Barr. As I have said, I do not believe that it is perfect, but it is worthy of support from both sides of the House. This is not a party political matter. The new clause has sufficient meat in it to enable my hon. and learned Friend to think again and come back with suitable amendments. I hope that in another place the noble Lords will consider what has been said in this debate and in Committee and will introduce the necessary amendments. I look forward to supporting those Lords amendments when they come to this House.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): This has been an extremely interesting debate. The House has benefited particularly from the historical perspectives that were brought to our consideration of the issues by my hon. Friends the Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) and for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), who gave us the benefit of their experience, drew to the attention of the House the shifting sands of the different policies that Governments and Oppositions of both political parties have adopted on the matter in the past, and spoke of some of the surprises that they encountered when they first took on their responsibilities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green, who has explained why he cannot be with us, was a little unfair when he said that the Government were guilty of the same sin as the Labour Government in their consideration of the matter. He reminded the House that he, from the Opposition Benches, had espoused a policy similar to that espoused by the Opposition during our deliberations yesterday and today, but the Government then had refused to take action. That accusation cannot be levelled against this Government. We have decided to take action. We have decided to do away once and for all with the nonsense of the existing system, which has not found any friend on either side of the House during the debate. It is true, of course, that we have not achieved unanimous support for the action that we propose, but one cannot have everything.

There is far from being unanimity amongst our critics. In Committee there were at least four different proposals as to what the Government should do. I judge that during the debate almost as many alternatives have been advanced as there have been hon. Members who have spoken. We have heard proposals for a national system, a "Swansea for dogs", as it was aptly described by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). The Opposition propose a system under which local authorities would be free to determine the licence fee within prescribed limits. We have had the idea of local schemes, with a nationally determined licence fee, index-linked. We have also heard about what was described as a simple system, with licences and tags on sale in corner shops and post offices.

None of those proposals addresses two fundamental points. The first, which is crucial to consideration of the issue, is that we do not need a licensing system to have an effective body of law covering the control and welfare of dogs. I shall not weary the House by listing again the various elements that exist in the present law. Indeed, a large number of them were put before the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), to whose persistence and diligence in the pursuit of his campaign I pay tribute. None of the extensive range of legislation in existence, and none of the need for action to be taken, depends in any way upon licensing.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that if the new clause proposed by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) were brought into operation, with the exemptions that it allows, approximately one third of dogs would not need a licence? Therefore, the whole basis of what the hon. Gentleman is trying to achieve would fail. What we need is an effective identification scheme, not a licensing scheme.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend's estimate sounds reasonable, but I cannot confirm it precisely. His point is accurate. Of course, there is an identification scheme in the law as it stands. Under the Control of Dogs Order 1930 a dog must wear a collar with a plate or disc attached, bearing the owner's name and address, when it is on a highway or in a public place. The penalty for non-compliance is a fine of up to £2,000. So the law is there. What no one has yet been able to establish during the debate is why a different law, designed to achieve the same objective, will be any more effective.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not understand. The Minister has said that if a dog in a public place does not have the necessary identification, a fine of £2,000 is applicable. If the dog does not have any means of identification, how can the law be enforced?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman, with his customary shrewdness, has identified a difficulty in enforcing the present law. It is not a difficulty that is unique to the present law. That difficulty would be unique to any system of registration and licensing. If a dog that was found did not carry any means of identification, the very same difficulty that the hon. Gentleman has so shrewdly identified would arise, regardless of the system in force.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister accept that if resources are available it is likely that fewer dogs will be left unregistered and that the consequential activities could be carried out more effectively? If no money is derived from a licence, no such resources will be available.

Mr. Howard: I believe that that is a highly optimistic assessment. It is unrealistic to suppose that the resources that would become available—especially as a result of the new clause tabled by the Opposition, and subject to the limits that were pointed out by my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown — would be anything like sufficient to provide an effective system along the lines suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hughes: The sum of £40 million would be raised.

Mr. Howard: I do not accept that estimate. One must bear in mind the limitations described by my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown.

Mr. Rooker: There are 6 million dogs.

Mr. Howard: I do not believe that the hon. Member for Birmingham Perry Barr, (Mr. Rooker) understood the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown.

Local authorities are free to appoint dog wardens, and many of them do so. I am happy to confirm the undertaking that I gave in Committee. In fact, the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) did not get it right when he reported it to the House this afternoon. I did not undertake to take powers away from the police and give them to local authorities. I gave an undertaking to consider giving local authorities additional powers parallel to those that the police presently hold. We are considering that undertaking, and if we come to the conclusion that that would be a sensible thing to do we shall take the appropriate steps in another place.

If we consider the examples that were given by the hon. Member for Perry Barr during the debate yesterday evening, we can appreciate that the system that he has advocated would not get to grips with the problem. The House will recall that the hon. Gentleman gave us a vivid example of the postman who, having been bitten, had to return to the house to deliver a letter of complaint to the householder. In those circumstances, there was no difficulty in identifying the owner of the dog. I fail to see how things are improved if, in addition to having to return to the house to deliver a letter of complaint from the head postmaster, the postman has to make another visit, either before or after the incident—indeed, it may provoke a further incident—to deliver the licence.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) described, with an emotion that was more moving for its restraint, the effect on his child of toxicariasis. No one would seek to underestimate the significance of that disease, which causes about 50 cases of eye damage every year. The risks can be reduced by regular wormings of dogs and the exclusion of dogs from children's play areas. Local authorities have the power to impose such a ban. Here again, the problem is not affected by the existence of a licence.

The second fundamental point that the alternative proposals fail to address is enforceability and the consequence of a large increase in the licence fee. We can reasonably assume that the responsible and caring owner would buy a licence. However, it is by no means certain, to put it mildly, that there would be a significant effect on the irresponsible and careless owner. Presently, that latter group do not pay a fee of 37p, and it seems rather optimistic to suppose that they would more likely to pay a fee of £10 or £20. That assumption is at the heart of the various new clauses that have been tabled.

Mr. Marlow: With respect to my hon. and learned Friend, he must decide whether he is the chicken or the egg with regard to this argument. If a scheme is set up on the grounds advocated by the Opposition Front Bench there will be the necessary resources to pay for a system of dog wardens. That system of dog wardens would enforce registration, licensing and the collection of the fees. Therefore, the money would be available to ensure that those who do not pay the licence fee would be required to do so in the future.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Look at Northern Ireland.

5.45 pm

Mr. Howard: I can only return to the answer that I gave earlier. I believe that it is wildly optimistic to suppose that the dog wardens who might be appointed in the circumstances that we are presently discussing would be able to clean up the dog mess, which has proved so tantalising to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), deal with dangerous dogs, which have bitten postmen and others, deal with stray dogs, and deal with those owners who do not license their dogs.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey referred to Northern Ireland, but I believe that experience in the Province has demonstrated that the licensing fee has not had any significant effect on the number of stray dogs that have been found and impounded. The experience in Northern Ireland does not support the argument.

Mr. Marlow: I know that my hon. and learned Friend is defending a prepared position, but before he reaches any conclusion about what measures to introduce in another place will he consider the scheme that is employed in the Medway towns? My hon. and learned Friend said that the dog wardens would be unable to cure all the ills and problems, but in those towns, which have an effective system of dog wardens, those problems have been resolved. It can be done.

Mr. Howard: If such problems can be resolved in the Medway towns without the imposition of a licence, I do not see why they cannot be resolved elsewhere without such a licence.

The local authorities are perfectly capable of dealing with the matter. If they have the necessary money as a result of economy in other areas—this is the case with councils in the Medway towns and there is no reason why councils elsewhere should not practice similar economies — they can use such available resources as are considered appropriate by their residents and voters to deal with that problem.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister believe that the objectives for which he has expressed support and which are commonly supported by the House—cleaning up dog mess, rescuing strays and the advancement of animal welfare—would be more, or less, likely to be advanced by the collection of £10 per dog? That collected sum could be £40 million. Are the objectives more, or less, likely to be advantaged by that available money?

Mr. Howard: That is not by any means the only question, because a question of fairness enters into this matter. The real question is whether the burden of paying for the necessary measures to deal with the problems should rest upon all ratepayers or community charge payers in an area, or simply upon those dog owners who are responsible enough to pay and who therefore shoulder the burden that those dog owners who are sufficiently irresponsible not to pay are not prepared to shoulder.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I have given way twice to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North.

Mr. Gale: A few moments ago, in response to a sedentary intervention, my hon. and learned Friend referred to the situation in Northern Ireland and suggested that there had been virtually no reduction in the number of strays. I am certain that my hon. and learned Friend would not wish to mislead the House. Therefore, he should consider what the director of the Ulster Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said:

> "In the years following the new legislation in Northern Ireland, the number of dogs licensed increased by almost 60 per cent. over the years immediately preceding the changeover. Significantly, the number of dogs destroyed has also decreased considerably.
>
> There are generally far fewer strays roaming the streets".

Is my hon. Friend saying that the director of the Ulster Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is wrong?

Mr. Howard: I am saying that the information available to my hon. Friend is different from that with which I have been supplied, so I cannot take that aspect of the matter further. What happened in Northern Ireland, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North will know, is that, when the working party was set up in 1976, it examined various matters and came to the conclusion that there was a particular problem in Northern Ireland which was much more serious than that which existed in the rest of the United Kingdom, so special measures had to be taken there.

It is easy to identify, to wax eloquent upon and to be extremely witty and amusing about the various aspects of nuisance which have been, and are caused by, dogs in this country. That has played a prominent part in the speech of every hon. Member who has taken part in this debate, but it is not really the issue before the House, which is: given that local authorities have powers to deal with this matter and that we are prepared to consider extending those powers, should the resources that may be necessary to deal with it be provided by all the people of the area concerned, or by responsible dog owners, who are at present a minority of dog owners? There is no great positive basis for supposing that the number of people who would take out a licence if the fee were increased would increase. I invite the House to take the view that this would be an undue burden to place on responsible dog owners, which is why I ask the House to reject the new clause.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister's response at the end of his speech was interesting. He rehearsed the argument about whether dog owners should fund the dog warden scheme, and contradicted the whole thrust of the Government's view on introducing charges for services—that those who use a service should pay for it. That argument is implicit in the Opposition's new clause, yet on this occasion the Government are rejecting it. So they are contradicting their stance on other matters.

There is no requirement for the whole dog warden service to be funded by the licence. The new clause states that the money raised

"shall be allocated by the authority to the funding of a dog warden service".

The point is that all the money from the licence must be used for funding the dog warden service, which does not stop a local authority adding to that money from its own resources. We would not want money from the dog licence to be used on other local authority services if there was no adequate dog warden scheme. I have made the point, as has every hon. Member on both sides of the House who has supported the new clause, that having a licence will not of itself solve the problem. The discussion has been about how to obtain the resources to assist in solving what is, by common consent, a major problem.

I accept that—with the exclusions—we would not obtain, say, £10 per dog for the 6 million dogs in this country. We are not looking for £60 million. About 2 million dogs might be excluded, which would yield £40 million. If half the dog owners pay the licence, we will end up with £20 million. That is a lot more than the £900,000 that we get from today's dog licence, which represents a negative cost because one has to pay £3·5 million to collect it.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister put the curious argument that an increase in the cost of a dog licence would not affect those who evade payment. The Government never use that argument against increasing the television licence fee. I have never heard them argue that the television licence fee cannot be increased because that will not encourage people to pay the licence. It is absurd.

Mr. Rooker: That is right. This is an area in which the Government have abdicated their responsibilities. The Minister's speech showed that. He admitted that the Government had no answer. He tried to come up with an answer—that dogs will still require collars in public places under the law, and that failure to wear them will attract a fine. So the next time we find dogs in public places, we will tell them that they are not supposed to be there without collars, or they will be subject to fines. It would be better if the dog warden took the dogs in hand, being funded to do so by those who paid the licence.

The new clause is not a perfect solution. I said in Committee that we should return to the matter on Report so that the House could make the decision. When the Opposition propose what is, by any stretch of the imagination, a substantial increase in taxation, it is an unwise Government who do not accept that gift and realise that they can, perhaps, obtain something from it. However, that is the Government's problem.

I do not accept the Minister's argument—I have said this before, and I shall keep on saying it—that there is justification in having a dog warden scheme that is wholly funded by the poll tax. That will be the result if the dog licence is abolished. I hope that the other place will examine the matter and give us another opportunity to debate it.

Having or not having a dog licence, at whatever cost, is not by any means a central plank of Government economic policy. The seriousness of the problem caused by dogs, which was illustrated last night and earlier today, has warranted a few hours' discussion. The House has spent fewer than three hours on the issue, and all that time has been warranted. What is not warranted and will not be understood by the public is the fact that we must have a whipped vote. I sincerely believe that if there were a free vote and the House could decide this matter, we would vote to impose a dog licence of some sort to run a dog warden scheme of some sort, and I should be delighted at that.

I invite Conservative Members to join us. This is not an issue on which the Government will fall; it is not a matter of confidence. It is not like the poll tax; it is not a massive issue that will cause trouble with the Whips. I ask Conservative Members for once to do something to benefit their constituents. The new clause is not perfect, but it will force the Government to re-examine the issue in another place.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 286.

Division No. 113] **[5.55 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Miss Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Gale, Roger
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irving, Charles
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamble, David
Lamond, James

Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 6

CONTRACTS COMPLIANCE IN RELATION TO PUBLIC SUPPLY OR WORKS CONTRACTS (NO. 2)

'(1) It is the duty of every public authority to which this section applies, in exercising in relation to its public supply or works contracts, any proposed or any subsisting such contract, as the case may be, any function regulated by section 17 to exercise that function with reference to the enforcement of the law by any appropriate agency and the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment.

(2) The public authorities to which this section applies are those specified in Schedule 2 to this Act.

(3) The contracts whic are public supply or work contracts for the purposes of this section are contracts for the supply of goods or materials, for the supply of services or for the execution of works.

(4) A local authority may in pursuance of the functions regulated by this section, have regard to any of the following:—

(a) the terms and conditions of employment by contractors of their workers, the arrangements for the training of their workforces, or the employment (in the case of an inner city area or region of high unemployment) of a reasonable percentage of their workforce from among the local unemployed which shall be determined by the authority;

(b) the actual or potential membership of contractors of industrial, trade or professional associations, technical guarantee schemes or any other associations or schemes pertaining to their competence to perform the contract;

(c) in cooperation with the relevant local employment office, the employment by contractors of disabled people in accordance with the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

(5) In this section, any term defined in section 17 (8) below shall having the meaning thereby ascribed to it.

(6) In this section, 'inner city area' and 'region of high unemployment' shall have the meanings set out by the Secretary of State in regulations.

(7) The provisions of sections 17 to 21 shall have effect subject to the provisions of this section.

(8) This section shall have effect from the date of Royal Assent.'.—*[Dr. Cunningham.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 221, Noes 301.

Division No. 114] **[6.11 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James

Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Ames, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth

Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

DEFINED AUTHORITIES

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 21, at end insert
'a parish council, a community council'.

I expect that many Opposition Members will be concerned that the Government are proposing to impose compulsory competition upon the only level of local government not already covered by the Bill. We are proposing the amendment because not all parish or community councils are any longer the very small-scale operations which people commonly believe them to be. Some large parish councils operate certain services on a similar scale to smaller districts, and could benefit from competition in the same way as other local authorities. For example, the extent of some ground maintenance work undertaken by parish councils can be considerable, including parks, picnic areas and open spaces.

There would be little logic in obliging a small district to go out to competition for such activities, while not applying the duty to a parish or community council which was in fact operating them on a larger scale. Most parish councils will be unaffected by this provision if the £100,000 de minimis threshold which we have proposed is implemented, as I expect it to be. Even if we are talking about no more than a few dozen councils being affected, the amendment will ensure that there is a common approach to all local authorities. I hope that hon. Members will agree that the amendment is fully justified and will support it.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Minister is right: Opposition Members are opposed to the inclusion of parish and community councils in the provisions of the Bill. We consider that parish and community councils are unsuitable for inclusion. As we are opposed to all local athorities and all bodies being included, we are opposed to the inclusion of community and parish councils in competitive tendering, but there are special reasons which apply to community and parish councils.

We thought that the Government were being logical in leaving such councils out of the provisions of the Bill. We thought that the Government had recognised the bureaucracy that would be imposed on small community and parish councils. Whatever the Minister says about their size, parish and community councils are small compared with most local authorities and district councils. The bureaucracy imposed on local government by the procedure of competitive tendering and the need to submit all the necessary forms to the Secretary of State were such that, in view of the size and the budgets of community and parish councils, we thought that the Government had reasonably decided to leave them out of the legislation, but obviously they were left out as an oversight. The Government are so doctrinaire that they want to include everything, even though it will cost ratepayers more money than it will save.

Most community councils are either in the north of England or in Scotland; there are few elsewhere. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 defines the function of community councils as follows:

"In addition to any other purpose which a community council may pursue, the general purpose of a community council shall be to ascertain, co-ordinate and express to the local authorities for its area, and to public authorities, the views of the community which it represents, in relation to matters for which those authorities are responsible, and to take such action in the interests of that community as appears to it to be expedient and practicable."

Not many of those functions need to go out to competitive tendering. It is nonsense for the Government to put out to competitive tendering consultation and representation to the local authorities in whose areas the community councils operate.

The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 provides about the financing of community councils:

"islands and district councils may make such contribution as they think fit towards the expenses of community councils within their areas, may make loans to those councils, and may, at the request of such community councils, provide them with staff, services, accommodation, furniture, vehicles and equipment, on such terms as to payment or otherwise as may be agreed between the councils concerned."

In other words, many parish and community councils have no major functions, no revenue-raising powers and no money, but they must still go out to competitive tender. That is nonsense. The Minister is right about the de minimis threshold of £100,000. "De minimis" means that any contract below that threshold does not have to go out

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

to competitive tender because the amount of money that the Government suppose might be saved by competitive tendering — and there are many examples of money being lost through competitive tender — would be less than the bureaucracy of going out to competitive tender. We believe that the threshold is too low. However, 90 per cent. of any function that any parish or community council may have to put out to competitive tender would be below that de minimis level. There is no doubt about that.

The Government's doctrinaire attitude means that they will not let anybody or anything escape; they must impose their free market philosophy on even the smallest community or parish council, even if that is bureaucratic and will cost the ratepayers more money, just for the sake of making sure that the private sector can take any pickings from community and parish councils. Opposition Members oppose the amendment.

Mr. Simon Hughes: My hon. Friends and I also oppose the amendment strongly — as do the organisations representing the parish and community councils. They feel aggrieved not least because the Government expressly said —this year—that they would not be included.

Let me deal with the history of the measure. In the original 1985 Green Paper on competition in the provision of public services, the Government said explicitly that parish and community councils would not be included in the legislation to make competitive tendering compulsory. That statement was repeated in a letter, I think, from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment——

Mr. Chope *indicated assent.*

6.30 pm

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman confirms that.

The Minister wrote to the chairman of the National Association of Local Councils in March 1987 to confirm that parish and community councils would be left out of the provisions. The proposals went out in November for consultation. The Government left one week for consultation; the parish and community councils, of which there are 8,500, had one week to consider the matter. The consultations resulted in a mass of objections in principle. Subsequently the Government changed their mind.

Even more surprising and appalling is the fact that the Government's reason, which was given by an official of the Department of the Environment to an official of the National Association of Local Councils on 10 December —I shall quote it almost verbatim—was that they had not been aware of the extent to which individual parish councils spend substantial sums on activities covered by the Bill. The Department of the Environment, which runs local government in England, and to an extent elsewhere, was not aware of what the parish and community councils were doing.

The regular refrain is heard from the opposition parties that it is not a good thing that the Government have centralised powers and taken them away from local government. We argue regularly, vociferously, forcefully and, I believe, convincingly that it is impossible for a relatively few officials in Marsham street to know what is going on at county, metropolitan district, London borough and district level — let alone at parish, town and community level. That assertion is explicitly confirmed in the Government's response.

The first and most substantial argument against the amendment is that the Government are being thoroughly dishonest and are indulging in thoroughly bad practice. They are going against everything that democratic government should be about. They are rushing in at the last moment contrary to their express word, and they deserve to have the book thrown at them, and worse.

We always try to anticipate what Ministers will say. The Minister may say, "If we are to include district, borough and county councils, it is illogical not to include parish and community councils." That is one argument. However, the Government are taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut. I am advised that 70 out of 8,500 parish councils provide services costing more than the £100,000 de minimis sum to which the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) referred. The argument may come back, "If there are only 70 councils in that category, why worry?" There are many reasons for worry and I shall address them now.

First, the Government's real motivation may not be that it is not logical to exclude parish and community councils. The real motivation may have arisen from the consultations on sports and leisure facilities, which revealed, as they were bound to reveal, that many parish and community councils have parish, village or community halls which could fall within the provisions on competitive tendering.

My second point is an important one and I should be grateful if the Minister would go further than he did in Committee. We do not yet know the exact nature of the relative cost-benefit advantage that the Government say requires them to legislate.

The Minister will remember that in Committee Ministers commented a couple of times that if the costs to local authorities of complying with competitive tendering requirements were greater than the benefits that would result, there would be a case for exemptions. Clearly, that was a statement only of outline, because we did not receive any further information on it. Is the Minister yet in a position to say what the exemptions will be? If he is serious in arguing this complete about-turn, I hope that he will say that the Government will grant exemptions in cases in which the cost-benefit is negative or doubtful and that, although in theory and in law parish and community councils are to be brought within the terms of the legislation, the Government propose to exempt them because they can see the strong economic arguments against their inclusion.

I ask the Minister to repeat the statement that he made in Committee, so that the whole House can hear it, that exemptions will be considered and that the Government support the idea of exemptions if the cost of competitive tendering is less than the benefit. Will he tell us what that will mean in practice? Why have not the Government introduced an amendment to that effect at this stage? Will the Government at least tell us that we shall get such an amendment in the other place and tell us its import?

The expenditure of parish and community councils on services will very rarely exceed £100,000. In almost every instance it will cost more to put services out to competitive tender — tender specifications will have to be prepared, bids assessed and additional staff employed — than competitive tendering can possibly save. Do the Government accept the assertion that, even when parish and community councils come within the remit because

the sums that they spend do not fall below the £100,000 cut-off point, they are ripe for exemption because of that cost-benefit disadvantage?

There will not be many private companies to do the work of tending open spaces in villages and remote rural communities. The experts will be the employees of the parish and community councils, who know the local area. They will tender for the work and win the contracts. Therefore, the tendering process will be a frightful waste of money. The Government say that they want to reduce the burden of taxation — whether through local government in the form of rates or otherwise, yet they now propose to impose an additional burden on this much-respected, much-loved tier of local government, which for many people is the closest to home.

The National Association of Local Councils and the Association for Neighbourhood Councils oppose the amendment. I hope that it will be in order, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this debate to continue, if necessary—albeit for a relatively short time—so that we can hear what the Government have to say to justify their complete U-turn on this matter. This is the one provision on which there has been a complete U-turn within a matter of months. With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, we can perhaps respond before the end of the debate. Like this lowest and most community-based tier of local government, my hon. Friends and I will strongly oppose the extension of the provision. The Government should be embarrassed to be making this proposal.

Mr. Chope: First, let me deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). We are referring to community councils in Wales. If we were not doing so, the hon. Gentleman would have a point because the community councils in England would certainly not come within the scope of the Bill. The hon. Gentleman will see that the amendment applies not to Scotland, but only to England and Wales.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Where does it say that? The amendment states:

"Page 2, line 21 *(Clause 1)*, at end insert 'a parish council, a community council'."

It does not say Wales, Scotland or England.

Mr. Chope: If the hon. Gentleman looks at clause 1, and particularly at lines 19 and 20 on page 2 of the Bill, he will see that it states:

"In the application of this Part to England and Wales, 'local authority' in subsection (1) above means—".

The amendment relates to subsection (1) in clause 1. I hope that I have been able to allay the hon. Gentleman's concerns.

With regard to the points raised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), it is true that the Government have taken a different opinion following information about the extent to which some parishes are spending on services that are subject to the competitive tendering provisions in the Bill. Many councils have expenditure in excess of £100,000. For example, Swanage had expenditure last year of £657,000. That is a large sum of money. Similarly, Stratford had expenditure in excess of £500,000. Several other authorities have many hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of expenditure. We believe that it is reasonable and logical that the same provisions should apply to those councils as to other district councils.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why on earth, then, did the Minister and the Government say explicitly twice this year that they would not apply what they are now going to apply? Did the Government not know what parish and community councils did when they went to consultation and when the Minister wrote to the officer at the National Association of Local Councils? Did the Government have no idea at all about that?

Mr. Chope: As the letter of 10 December to which the hon. Gentleman referred makes clear, the Government were not aware of the extent to which individual parish councils are spending quite considerable sums of money on activities covered by the Bill. The hon. Gentleman criticises the Government for not having that information. However, once we received the information, we reached what I hope hon. Members will believe is the logical conclusion — that the provisions of the Bill should be extended to apply to parish councils with larger amounts of expenditure.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's point about extending the provisions of the Bill, I must state that village halls, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, do not come within the list of facilities that we have proposed should be covered if we add sport and leisure management to the provisions in the Bill. The proposed exemption of £100,000 has been put forward in a consultation paper on implementation. We did not say that we would amend the Bill generally. However, we said that we would consult about implementation and that is what we are doing now. We are still considering how we should propose implementation for parish councils.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister neglected to deal with one point. Why was the matter subject to one week's consultation?

Mr. Chope: I am not sure of the exact length of time for consultation. My department wrote to the National Association of Local Councils on 6 November and it replied in a letter dated 9 December. The time span is considerably longer than one week. If the National Association of Local Councils had not replied within one week and the Government had said that it was too late and they would not allow any reply to be taken into account, that would have been unreasonable. We waited for more than four weeks for a reply. Having received the letter we considered the arguments in it. Of course, it was not the first time that we had heard those arguments because a number of individual parish councils had responded to our letter of 6 November.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I am grateful for that reply and at least that is now on the record. The Minister did not say that any council was in favour of the proposal so we are entitled to presume that no local authority responded by saying that it supported the Government's proposal. That would still have been the case had the consultation period been longer or shorter.

In June this year, when a smaller percentage of the population than ever before voted for the Conservatives, the Government moved rapidly to the Right. They moved rapidly away from supporting local government. They moved to a position where they will be able to interfere more in local government at a lower level. To repeat a metaphor that was used earlier, the Government found themselves "grasping entrails further down". The amendment is evidence of that.

6.45 pm

It is a sad day when the Government have to get their maulers on local parish and community government and insist that it must have the morality of Ministers in the Department of the Environment and in 10 Downing street. The local parish and community councils have done a good and well respected job. They resist and oppose the Government's proposal. If the Government insist on arguing for the amendment, I hope that the clause will be rejected in another place.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 276, Noes 200.

Division No. 115] **[6.45 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 2, line 26, leave out 'islands'.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): With this we may take the following amendments: No. 5, in clause 2, page 3, line 26, at end insert—

'(7A) Work which would (apart from this subsection) fall within a defined activity shall not do so if it is carried out on or in connection with the carrying out of a defined activity on an island in relation to which the number of persons for the time being registered as being entitled to vote at a local government election by virtue of being resident therein shall be less than 1000.'.

No. 6, in clause 6, page 5, line 30, at end insert—

'(6) The Secretary of State may by order provide that a local authority may carry out functional work which falls within a defined activity without the conditions mentioned in subsection (1) above having been fulfilled if it appears to him that the functional work will only be carried out on or in connection with the carrying out of a defined activity on an island situated within an islands area in Scotland.'.

Mr. Home Robertson: I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) is acutely concerned about the impact that the legislation is likely to have on the services provided by his local authority for his constituents. No doubt he will be seeking to catch your eye presently, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Bill will require local authorities to go through an elaborate set of procedures, designed by the Government to enable private contractors to muscle in on local authority services. It will be a wasteful and harmful exercise in many respects, but it will be downright absurd in its application to remote rural areas, particularly Scotland's three island areas. The islands councils will be required to advertise contracts, invite contractors to submit tenders and maintain a whole range of detailed records of those procedures. For a range of services on the islands it would be a waste of time. There is not the remotest likelihood of more than one contractor offering to do the work, and in many cases no contractor will tender, so the islands council will be compelled to go through procedures laid down in the Bill before continuing to provide the services that it has in the past.

7 pm

It might be helpful to give the House one or two illustrations of the sheer idiocy of the Government's

[Mr. Home Robertson]

proposals for these areas. For example, the Scottish Office proposes to require the Shetland islands council to put its school and welfare catering out to competitive tender by October 1989. That will include the provision of 10 meals a day on the island of Fair Isle, nine on Fetlar, seven on Foula and four on the island of Papa Stour. Does anyone seriously think that a catering contractor will parachute four hot dinners a day on to the island of Papa Stour?

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, as Papa Stour does not have a proper landing strip, those meals will have to be parachuted in and that in adverse weather conditions that may be impossible?

Mr. Home Robertson: I am worried about the hon. Gentleman's constituents on Papa Stour because they could go hungry for days on end as a consequence of this legislation.

The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) has an interest in refuse collection. Will Pritchards want to take over the islands' five refuse vehicles that operate in the massive area between Sumburgh Head in the south and the north of Unst in the north? I am glad to see the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield in his place. Will he want to take over the tractors and trailers that serve as refuse collection vehicles on the islands of Bressay, Foula, Fair Isle, the Skerries and Papa Stour?

The Orkney islands council will apparently have to put its refuse collection service out to competitive tender by April 1989. Interestingly, it has developed a refuse disposal service on some of its smaller islands in partnership with private contractors, without being compelled to do so by this silly legislation. That is how the service has been extended to the 74 households on Eday, 28 households on Flotta, 52 on North Ronaldsay and 39 on Papa Westray.

Does anyone seriously believe that Pritchards or any other contractor will bid to bring their refuse collection vehicles over from the mainland on ferries to those small islands and communities? I rather doubt that it will.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): As I understand it, Orkney council has private refuse collection on the island of Westray while Skye and Lochalsh district council has contracted out its refuse collection on the island of Raasay and street cleaning at Glenelg. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that some small places in Scotland are contracting out services?

Mr. Home Robertson: Not only am I aware of that—I mentioned it a moment ago. It is absurd that small contractors operating in those areas are to be confronted with competitive tendering. Does the hon. Gentleman seriously believe that anyone on those small islands will tender for those operations? This legislation does not make sense for the areas that we are considering.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the natives of Glenelg will be fascinated to hear that its street cleaning arrangements have been the subject of earnest debate in the great mother of Parliaments? Does he agree that, since time immemorial, local authorities have made common-sense arrangements, whether with the public or private sector, and operated in a non-doctrinaire way? The idiocy of this legislation is that it will introduce a doctrinaire factor, and non-political councils in places such as Glenelg or Raasay will be forced to make arrangements that are unsuitable for their needs.

Mr. Home Robertson: My hon. Friend has considerable experience in communicating with people in those areas. If we are talking about the same Glenelg, I suspect that it may come as a surprise to its residents that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) thinks that Glenelg is an island. *[Interruption.]* It is always a pleasure to have the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) present during these debates.

I move now to the experiences of the Western Isles islands council following the 1982 legislation on competitive tendering for road maintenance and gritting. I understand that on the island of Barra no contractor was willing to undertake this work. However reliable the Caledonian-MacBrayne ferries may be, I suspect that the people of Barra would not have been too happy about having to wait for a road gritter to come from Oban to clear the ice, so the council still provides that service.

Mr. Patnick: Private contractors, farmers and similar people in places such as Sheffield, which the hon. Gentleman disparaged, contract out to the council for snow clearing and other services. When we discussed this matter in Committee, I gained the impression that Labour Members were saying that no services in Scotland could be privatised and that firms would not compete. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), who joined the Committee and then left it, said that these proposals were rubbish and typical of the Conservative party and that people in Scotland were not interested, yet my research has revealed that some small services in Scotland are contracted out.

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not know how many times I must say this to make it clear to the hon. Gentleman. He served on the Committee and listened to these points being made over and over again. It has been traditional in remote rural areas of Scotland to operate services on a pragmatic basis. Where there are private contractors who can do the job well, they are doing so, and where it is necessary for local authorities to do the job they are doing so. It is absurd to require local authorities to go through the rigmarole of contracting out and advertising when it will not add to the sum total of human knowledge or provision of services.

The Montgomery committee, which the Government appointed to report on the government of the island areas of Scotland, specifically recommended that legislation should be subject to variation to take account of the special circumstances of island areas. This legislation is obviously not appropriate to the island areas, so why have the Government not paid any heed to the committee's recommendations?

There is an interesting precedent. In 1984 the Western Isles health board was exempted from a requirement to tender for domestic and catering services because it was considered unrealistic to do so.

The procedures in this part of the Bill represent a pointless and wasteful bureaucratic imposition on remote local authorities areas. Amendment No. 3 would exempt islands councils altogether; amendment No. 5 would exempt services on all islands with a population of less than 1,000 — I understand that that would cover a number of islands in the Strathclyde and Highland region,

in addition to the Western Isles, the Orkney islands and the Shetland islands — and amendment No. 6 would allow the Secretary of State to exempt certain services on certain islands in the islands councils areas. I must confess that I do not have confidence in that degree of rationality on the part of the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The three amendments make broadly the same point to avoid the most absurd implications of this irrelevant legislation in the island areas of Scotland. I hope that the Minister will at least undertake to give this matter further consideration before the Bill is dealt with in the House of Lords. I hope also that we shall have some sensible legislation for our rural and island areas.

Mr. Wallace: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has forcefully illustrated the nonsense that could result if the Bill were enacted in its present form and applied without exemption to the islands areas of Scotland. As he stated, my amendments are somewhat different, but aim to tackle the same situation. Amendment No. 5 tackles the definition of defined activities and would take out of part I activities that are carried out in islands that have fewer than 1,000 local government electors. That is narrower in detail than the hon. Gentleman's amendment, although wider in that it would cover islands in Strathclyde, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) and in the Highland region. However, my amendment would not include the mainlands of Orkney and Shetland.

I have no doubt that when the Minister replies—it is always useful to try to anticipate his reply—he will refer to the de minimis provisions. As I understand it, £100,000 is to be proposed as the gross sum. One assumes that that will be the gross sum for, for example, the provision of school meals throughout particular local authority areas. Therefore, it would not make allowances for the individual islands that must be served. As the hon. Member for East Lothian pointed out, in the case of the Shetland islands council, a small number of school meals have to be provided for each of a large number of islands. Therefore, it does not make sense to have competitive tender provisions as are now envisaged. The hon. Gentleman thought that the provision of four school meals on Papa Stour was perhaps a record. He overlooked the two pupils in the school of Graemsay on Orkney, which would also have to come under the provisions.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): The hon. Gentleman has missed out the island of Papa Stronsay, which, if I remember rightly, has one person. The main vehicle back and forth in my day used to be the Government boat.

Mr. Wallace: I know of the hon. Gentleman's native knowledge of my constituency. There is not a school on Papa Stronsay, but I confirm that if it has a population of one it will fall within the definition of amendment No. 5.

Obviously, we are dealing with services that are widely dispersed but delivered in small volume. In Shetland, although the cost of building cleaning for education and social work is not insignificant, being £450,000 and £250,000 respectively, the cost of the remainder, which is spread over 22 locations, amounts to only £89,500. If the Government do not accept any of the amendments that have been tabled, or any that may be put forward in another place, we will be asked to build up an enormous administration, which would place an enormous burden on the local authorities which prepare the detailed specifications. Inevitably, that administration will be more expensive in island and rural areas, as we must also consider the costs of transport and supervision.

We are being asked to do something which runs counter to what the Government are trying to achieve in the Bill, which is more efficient local administration. If we are to achieve that, some exceptions must be made. Again I am trying to anticipate arguments, but it could be argued that there should be one detailed specification, which could cover all the work in one islands council area. If that were proposed by the islands councils, I imagine that it would not be long before some contractor or potential tenderer suggested that the councils were making it more difficult for a contractor to put in a tender. Clause 7, after all, refers to

"the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition."

Amendment No. 6, which relates to clause 6, is of fundamental importance. In some respects it could be argued that it duplicates clause 2(8), which gives a general exempting power to the Secretary of State. Together with the islands councils, to which the hon. Member for East Lothian referred, I am anxious that there should be such a clause because of the recommendations of the committee that sat under the chairmanship of Sir David Montgomery. Although I am sure that the Minister will have heard the recommendations before, I repeat that the committee reported:

"We conclude that there may be circumstances in which Acts of Parliament should include a provision to allow the Secretary of State to vary their application to the island areas, and we recommend that such provisions should in future be considered in relation to all Scottish legislation at an early stage in its preparation."

7.15 pm

The Committee reported in April 1984. We waited a long time for the reply of the then Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), but in response to that recommendation he stated:

"I accept recommendation 4, and will consider for future legislation whether it would be appropriate to ask Parliament to approve a power to vary the application of particular provisions in specified areas."

We are asking that the present Secretary of State practise what his predecessor preached.

There is a case for treating the island areas differently because of the cost and administrative burden and the possible expansion of the labour force. If a council is, within its administration, to encompass the client as well as the provider of services, the islands authorities feel strongly that an unreasonable burden will be placed on them. When the Minister replies, I shall be grateful if he will advise the House on what consideration has been given to the recommendations of the Montgomery report.

The power would be permissive. Under my amendment, the islands councils would have to justify the case for each island and each activity. As has already been stated, refuse collection on the six Orkney islands of Eday, North Ronaldsay, Papa Westray, Stronsay, Westray and Flotta is already performed privately. In those cases, the local authority maintains that it has used good, sound common sense. The authority has considered each island, its circumstances and the activity or function to be performed and has used common sense. Where it has been appropriate and sensible to use a private operator, it has

[Mr. Wallace]

done so. Where it is far more sensible for the local authority to carry out the function, it has done so. There have not been any ideological barriers to introducing private contractors if that has made sense.

If the Government do not make any concessions, they will be saying that we should create a huge bureaucracy to achieve what common sense could achieve far more practically. I hope that the Minister will make a constructive response and be prepared to move an amendment, possibly in another place, or at least meet representatives of the island authorities to discuss such matters before the Bill goes to another place.

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): As the House is to consider many amendments tonight, I shall try to make my remarks as brief as possible. In this amendment opposition Members do not oppose the general principle of the Bill which, as we understand it, aims to force local authorities to put out to tender various defined activities so that the result is a more cost-effective provision of those activities. However, in amendment No. 3 we seek to raise the question whether that principle can sensibly be applied to an area such as that covered by the islands authorities in Scotland.

I draw the Government's attention to the fact that the Audit Commission's occasional paper No. 3, published in February 1987, and entitled "Competitiveness and the Contracting out of Local Authorities' Services", stated:

"the assessment of long-run competitiveness will need to be faced on the facts of the local situation rather than on generalized assertions about the relative advantages of the private sector and direct labour".

In other words, the Audit Commission emphasised the importance of the local situation in assessing the value of the general principle that the Bill seeks to promote. The importance of the local situation is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the islands authorities.

The Montgomery report, which has already been mentioned, emphasised the need for a special and specific islands council perspective in local authority matters. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) said that that point seemed to be implicitly recognised by the Government in 1984 when they specifically excepted the islands authorities from the provisions of the National Health Service circular in 1983 which required domestic and catering services in the NHS to be put out to tender. That seemed to be an implicit recognition of the unique situation of the islands authorities and of the fact that that principle is not applicable to them.

The islands authorities are unique because they provide a complete range of local government services for a relatively small population over a relatively large geographical area. My constituency corresponds to the boundaries of the islands' authority for the Western Isles. It has a population of over 30,000 and an area of some 300,000 hectares. To provide the complete range of services for a small population over such a large geographical area, local authorities have developed a unique structure which, above all, emphasises the virtues of integration and flexibility.

Many of the defined activities contained in the Bill are indistinguishable from other local authority activities. For example, the department of environmental health and consumer protection deals with an entire range of cleansing services — not only the defined activities contained in the Bill, but items such as derelict vehicle disposal, waste disposal, looking after the abattoir at Stornoway, public conveniences, and so on. In doing that, it eliminates lines of demarcation within the department, allowing those various activities to share management supervision, personnel, and even, in some cases, plant and office space. By doing that, it achieves efficiency and low costs across the board. Despite the immense geographical difficulties in providing a service such as cleansing in an area such as the Western Isles, the cost of cleansing per head is one of the lowest in the country; that testifies to the success of the local authority's methods in providing those services.

What will happen if, as a result of the Bill, artificial divisions are introduced between defined and non-defined activities? As has been pointed out, there will be a loss of administrative efficiency and the introduction of artificial lines of demarcation. If the council, as a result of tendering, lost control over some defined activities, the remaining activities would be less cost-effective because of the fixed costs of plant, buildings, manpower and so on. Costs presently shared between all those activities would then be shared between fewer activities, so that costs per unit of work would increase.

On the other hand, if the council were successful in the tendering process and the defined activities remained in-house, there would be an even more ridiculous situation. Within the present tightly integrated streamlined structure, internal trading organisations would be set up, with vertical splits and demarcations being created, not only between the defined and other activities, but within the defined activities. The staff involved in the preparation, submission and operation of tenders would have to be separated from the staff in charge of the specification and the appraisal and supervision of contracts. That would lead to a grave loss in efficiency.

A further loss would be the virtue of flexibility, which presently pertains to the way in which the islands council operates in tackling the specific problems of the area. One problem is not moving workers around from job to job, but rather moving them around a large geographical area. That has been tackled by having great flexibility within the work force so that when problems arise workers can be easily shifted around to tackle them. Such flexibility is of the essence in providing good services in a small, multi-purpose authority.

When those services are in-house, such flexibility is easy because staff who are directly under one command can respond immediately to new instructions to meet new problems and can be redirected. That ease of solving problems would fall by the wayside if the defined activities were contracted out and there would be a much less flexible system. Even small unexpected problems would cause communications problems and larger problems might mean that contracts would have to be renegotiated.

That highly prized virtue of flexibility within the councils will be lost. For example, the Western Isles council prizes the fact that its repair and maintenance section has sufficient flexibility to respond immediately, particularly in emergencies, and need maintain only a minimum physical fleet. The loss of that flexibility will mean the inevitable increase of its fleet, which, in turn, will lead to higher costs for the local authority.

Further costs will accrue because, given the present streamlined nature of the islands authorities, drawing up

detailed specifications for the proposed defined activities which are to be contracted out will involve the employment of new personnel. They will either have to be hired or perhaps even contracted out. They will give rise to the absurd situation whereby the drawing up of contracts will have to be contracted out simply because the authority runs such an efficient and streamlined ship at present. The supervision of contracts will almost inevitably require more personnel, which will also be inefficient.

Because of the peculiar circumstances of the islands, the council employs some specialised equipment — a point not mentioned so far — which has been obtained at considerable cost and is intended to suit the particular needs of the islands. One humble example is the rubbish bins in the Western Isles. So many of the households are set so far back from the main road that it would be inefficient for the local authority to take its rubbish trucks up every small private road. Special bins are provided at considerable expense to every householder on the island. They are equipped with wheels so that householders can wheel them down to the main road, thus providing a more efficient collection of rubbish. The system has been highly successful. Other examples of such specialised equipment abound.

What will happen to such specialised equipment as part of the tendering process? If the council has to dispose of such equipment, it will be a grave financial loss to the ratepayers who have sunk capital into the purchase of that equipment. If it is retained, but ends up being under-utilised because of the tendering process, it will again be a grave loss.

The final absurdity of imposing the provisions of the Bill on the islands authorities is that it is all likely to be for naught. It is likely to be a mere academic exercise because there are grave doubts about whether suppliers exist within such a confined market to provide the kind of services that are provided by the council.

After all the administrative work that has gone into the contracting-out process and the costs involved, there will be no change in the provision of services. It will end up being a gigantic waste of money. The islands authorities are in many ways model authorities, even according to the Government's own lights. They are non-political authorities. They have followed Government guidelines year after year. They are cost-efficient and have flexible and integrated work practices. The Bill will impose financial and administrative burdens, without any corresponding rewards, upon the authorities. It will increase their overheads and unit costs and will impair the efficient use of their manpower and physical resources. It will destroy the virtues of flexibility and integration that are so crucial in the islands context and will diminish their ability to deliver quality services.

I beg the Government, therefore, to listen to the arguments made by the Opposition, to change the Bill before it reaches another place, to follow the precedent set by the Scottish Home and Health Department in 1983, to stop the present nonsense and to exempt the islands authorities.

7.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The hon. Members for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) have argued ably on behalf of their constituents. I wish to speak to three of the amendments, which seek varying degrees of exemption from the competitive process in respect of the islands and Scottish island authorities.

I am convinced of the need to include all local authorities in the scope of the Bill, including the Scottish islands authorities. The only good reason for any exemption is when the cost of compliance with the competition requirements outweighs the possible benefits from the competitive process. That is, however, the purpose of the de minimis level, which the Scottish consultation paper suggested should be set at £100,000 of expenditure a year on any given service. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland mentioned one service which, if I heard him correctly, has been worth £89,500. That would be excluded under the terms of the consultation document.

Mr. Wallace: I think that the Minister misunderstood me. That figure was for building cleaning. If one excludes educational and social services buildings, the rest, which was spread over 22 locations, was worth £89,500. However, the global sum is far in excess of £100,000,

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the cost of compliance with competition outweighs the benefits of the competitive process, that will be taken into account. The representations made by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents and those sent in by the islands council will be considered carefully with all the other responses, which are due by 31 January. It is reasonable to stipulate that any service involving expenditure above a given exemption level should be exposed to the competitive process, wherever that service is provided.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Minister have any estimate of the costs or the manpower burdens to be placed on the islands councils as a consequence of the Bill? Does he accept the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) that this would add extra burdens to the islands councils?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is why we put out a consultation document, and we shall weigh with the utmost care every representation sent in. They must be in by 31 January, so there is plenty of time. The facts speak for themselves and they will be considered with great care.

There is no need for competition to be confined to urban areas and examples can be found in remote parts of the country. Orkney islands council, for example, uses private contractors in the provision of a refuse collection service for its distant islands. The Government are fully aware of the special circumstances in which the islands councils operate, but private enterprise in the islands has to operate in the same circumstances and there is really no case for exemption for the islands authorities alone, on the grounds that it is more difficult or expensive to provide services in remote and isolated areas.

Mr. Wallace: Are the refuse services in Orkney run by private contractors as a result of competitive tendering? The director of administration and legal services said in a recent letter to me:

"the council considers all the factors relating to each Island before choosing the best solution for each Island so that the most efficient service is provided to the ratepayers at the most economical cost."

Was there competitive tendering in the cases to which the hon. Gentleman has referred?

Lord Douglas James-Hamilton: The direct labour organisation was not considered for refuse collection in the Orkneys. In almost all cases, the exception has been those islands with tiny populations; for example, in North Ronaldsay, which has 14 households, where there were more than two tenderers in the private sector. In each case the private contractor was a local licensed haulage contractor.

The hon. Member for the Western Isles made a point relating to mainland Orkney rather than to the distant islands. After the reorganisation of local government, the new islands council put its refuse collection out to tender. It advertised nationwide, but there were no suitable applicants and the contract was awarded to the DLO. What the hon. Gentleman said about the matter being academic may turn out to be right, but I give him an assurance that the representations sent in by the islands council will be considered with great care.

It is the Government's firm view that the opening up of services to competition can bring substantial savings and improvements in the standard of service, but the Government's policy is not enforced privatisation. The legislation will impose fair competition between local authorities' own work forces and the private sector. If an authority, including any of the three island authorities, can provide the best and cheapest service, it should continue to do so, but if the private sector can offer a better deal for the ratepayers and the consumers of the service, the local authorities should choose that option. The crux of the matter—whether the private sector can compete—can be established only by testing the market. Without that test, authorities cannot be sure that their present operation is the best available.

With regard to amendment No. 5, it does not matter how small the population of any one island is. The purpose of the Bill is to subject those local authority activities defined in the Bill to the competitive process. The proposal is, as I have said, that there is only a case for exemption in respect of any de minimis provision applied to the whole of any local authority's activity. There is no case in support of selective exemption within the authority for specific groups or islands.

With regard to amendment No. 6, nor is there any need for a power which would enable the Secretary of State to choose not to apply the competitive process to any particular island. This is the point about the Montgomery report. The Secretary of State already has the power under clauses 6(3) and 15(6) to make regulations applying competition to such authorities and with such exceptions as he may determine, and that is quite sufficient. The existence of the power does not mean that competition will not extend to the Scottish islands other than any exemption that they may gain by way of a de minimis provision. I assure Opposition Members that the representations from their constituency councils will be carefully considered.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister has read that brief before. I do not think that he believed it then, and I do not think that he believes it now. Frankly, it is a load of rubbish. It is absurd to suggest that any useful purpose can be served by going through the competitive tendering exercise for running a tractor and trailer on the island of Papa Stour to clear the refuse from households in that area or to provide the four school meals that are provided every day on the island. I do not think that the Minister believes that nonsense. We recognise that he must go through the exercise to remain part of the ludicrous Government. This proposal is one of the sillier manifestations of the Conservative party's policy.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Rise——

Mr. Home Robertson: I shall not give way.

We are not satisfied with the Minister's explanation. I should like to hope that the Government will heed the representations that have been made to them by the Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles councils. I have no doubt that the islands councils will clearly explain how irrelevant this proposal is. I cannot say that we have much cause for confidence in the minority administration in the Scottish Office.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 2

Defined activities

Mr. Howard: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 3, line 8, at end insert—

'( ) Before making an order under subsection (3) above, the Secretary of State shall consult such representatives of local government as appear to him to be appropriate.'.

Hon. Members will recall that in Committee my hon. Friend undertook to consider whether to bring forward an amendment to put it beyond doubt that the exercise of the power contained in clause 2(3) should be subject to consultation. It was said then that this was already the standard practice of the Department on these matters. Indeed, we have just come to the end of the consultation period on the addition of sport and leisure management, and we are in the process of consulting on phasing in and de minimis levels, and there will be other consultation exercises in connection with this Bill alone—all on a voluntary rather than a statutory basis.

We have no desire to inflict upon local authorities totally unworkable legislation. We depend upon consultation responses to ensure that our competition proposals are viable in practice. That is the only way in which competition will be really effective and its benefits may be reaped by all.

The amendment will require the Secretary of State to consult such representatives of local government as appear to him to be appropriate before extending competition to other activities in the future. I believe that the amendment should reassure Opposition Members that we shall continue to ask for local government views on the issues that affect them in this part of the Bill, while giving the Secretary of State the flexibility to tailor consultation to the needs of the particular activities under scrutiny at the time.

Mr. Wallace: I make a brief contribution to state that the concession is indeed welcome. We have talked to closed minds for most of the evening, but, for once, a mind has been open.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7

The conditions

Mr. Chope: I beg to move amendment No. 7, in page 5, line 39, after 'work', insert 'free of charge'.

This amendment seeks to ensure that the detailed specifications which councils will need to prepare in order to go out to tender may be inspected free of charge. In Standing Committee, hon. Members agreed that inspection of the annual reports required by this Bill should be free of charge, and this amendment merely ensures consistency of approach to the other inspection right in this part of the Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8

THE CONDITIONS: FURTHER PROVISIONS

Mr. Chope: I beg to move amendment No. 8, in page 7, line 37, at end insert

'(5) If the Secretary of State so provides by regulations, the fifth condition shall not be treated as fulfilled unless—

(a) in accordance with prescribed requirements there is prepared and certified a document which appraises and fulfils such other conditions as may be prescribed with respect to responses falling within subsection (2) above and the bid referred to in subsection (3) above; and

(b) at such time or times (prior to reaching the decision referred to in section 7(7) above) as may be prescribed, copies of that document are provided or made available in accordance with any prescribed requirements;

and "prescribed" here means prescribed by the regulations.

(6) Where any document is provided or made available in accordance with the requirements of regulations under subsection (5) above, the publication thereby of any defamatory matter in the document shall be privileged unless the publication is proved to be made with malice.'.

Part I of the Bill is about competition, and, in order for competition to have the desired effect of creating genuine pressure for better value for money, it naturally contains provisions to ensure that competition will be open and fair. Apart from the general duty in clause 7 not to act in an anti-competitive manner, it contains certain specific duties, such as to meet financial objectives and to publish accounts showing whether they have been met, and powers to add further relevant duties, such as those in clause 8 dealing with the handling of tenders.

This amendment is tabled in response to representations which have been made by various interested parties —and with which I wholeheartedly agree—to the effect that one of the most useful of all possible ways of ensuring fairness of competition is to enable all those concerned to see the tender appraisal on the basis of which councils are likely to take a decision to award work in house. The reference to a certified document reflects our belief that any such appraisal should be certified as fair by an appropriate officer.

7.45 pm

We have thought it right to introduce this notion also via an enabling power rather than as a set of duties spelt out on the face of the Bill. Essentially, that is because we realise that imposition of such a duty may be less straightforward than it seems. The last element of the amendment already recognises, and deals with, the possibility of the duty leading to the publication of material which might otherwise be construable as defamatory. Other issues could arise, and we therefore wish to approach the use of this power via consultation on a fully worked-up set of detailed proposals.

Although I cannot anticipate what they will be, I can point out to the House that at least one authority—the London borough of Wandsworth—already publishes its tender appraisals for service contracts because it sees them as simply one important element of open and accountable government, whether or not there is an in-house tender for the work. I understand that this practice has not given rise to any problems at all—the very opposite, indeed, since people can now read for themselves the basis on which these important decisions are made.

I hope, therefore, and fully expect, that it will be possible to work up an entirely acceptable scheme on the basis of this power, and commend it to the House accordingly.

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful to the Minister for the way in which he explained the amendment. It stopped my asking him a series of questions. I press him about the content of the proposed subsection (6). If the appraisal document simply tells the truth in respect of what is thought about a company's actions, I presume that it will not be defamatory. It is probably a legalistic point, but will the Minister enlighten us on it? I am not looking for problems. People want to know whether they can put the truth in appraisal documents without being defamatory. Therefore, they would not need the protection of privilege. We are not looking for barriers.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman is quite right.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 17

LOCAL AND OTHER PUBLIC AUTHORITY CONTRACTS: EXCLUSION OF NON-COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 16, line 46, leave out '18(10)' and insert '(Race relations matters)'. — *[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 18

PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTARY TO OR CONSEQUENTIAL ON SECTION 17

Mr. Howard: I beg to move amendment No. 12, in page 17, line 10, at end insert—

'(2A) An order under subsection (1) above may include such consequential and transitional provisions as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient.'.

The ingenuity of some local authorities in dreaming up ways in which they might circumvent the provisions in part II of the Bill was discussed many times in Committee. As we pointed out, we have tried to cover all the practices that authorities currently adopt to discriminate against certain contractors or to protect their DLOs, but it would be unwise to assume that the provisions cater for all possible abuses of the contractual process which authorities may hit upon in the future.

Clearly, therefore it must be sensible to avoid the need for further legislation every time an authority comes up with a new way to avoid the provisions, and clause 18(1) allows the Secretary of State, by order subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, to add to the non-commercial matters in clause 17(5). However, as at present drafted, the Bill does not allow the Secretary of State to make consequential or transitional provisions in any order under clause 18(1). For example, there is at present no power to require authorities to redraw select lists that have been drawn up by taking account of a matter which is

[Mr. Howard]

rendered non-commercial by an order under clause 18(1), and the purpose of the amendment is to correct that omission. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Rooker: If ever there were a justification for voting against giving the Bill a Third Reading, it is embodied in the amendment. The Minister has told us all. The Government are trying to run every itemised detail of local government. Frankly, it does not matter how clever the whizz kids in Marsham street are, they will not defeat the 400 legitimate local authorities that are trying to serve their residents. The amendment is unnecessary, but, given the need to make progress, we do not intend to oppose it.

Mr. Howard: It is not the intention of the Government to defeat any legitimate local authority. Where local authorities are prepared to act in such a way as to circumvent the provisions of the legislation these powers are necessary and will be used.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 14, in page 17, line 43, leave out from beginning to end of line 7 on page 18.

No. 20, in page 18, line 12, leave out 'subsection (10)' and insert 'section (Race relations matters)'.

No. 22, in page 18, line 16, leave out 'subsection (10)' and insert 'section (Race relations matters)'. — *[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 20

TRANSITIONAL DUTY OF PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AS REGARDS EXISTING LISTS

Amendment made: No. 25, in page 19, line 42, leave out from beginning to 'section' and insert

'authority's action was reasonably necessary to secure compliance with'.—*[Mr. Howard.]*

Clause 27

PROHIBITION ON PROMOTING HOMOSEXUALITY BY TEACHING OR BY PUBLISHING MATERIAL

Mr. Simon Hughes: I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 27, line 27, after 'authority', insert

'may undertake Sex Education in the course of which an awareness of different sexual orientations may be taught but the local authority'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 33, in page 27, line 30, leave out subsection *(b)*.

No. 34, in page 27, line 35, leave out 'either of the purposes' and insert 'the purpose'.

No. 35, in page 27, line 35, leave out 'paragraphs' and insert 'paragraph'.

No. 36, in page 27, line 36, leave out 'and *(b)*'.

No. 47, page 27, line 38, leave out 'treating or preventing the spread of disease' and insert

'care counselling and health education on AIDS and other diseases'.

No. 37, in page 27, line 39, at end insert:—

'(2A) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of discouraging discrimination against any homosexual person, or designed to protect the civil rights of any such person.'.

No. 38, in page 27, line 39, at end insert

'(2A) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of providing information, counselling or advice to any pupil at a school or other educational establishment maintained by the authority as to his personal or social development or any family relationship which can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect that development.'.

No. 48, page 28, line 3, at end insert:—

'(1A) Nothing in this section shall permit or encourage discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation'.

Mr. Hughes: If I understand correctly, the Government do not intend to agree to amendment No. 32. Therefore, we shall force a Division so that hon. Members may have an opportunity to vote for the inclusion of the words in the amendment.

At this stage I shall set out our views on the other amendments which are being considered. Amendment No. 33 is substantive and amendments Nos. 34 to 36 are consequential. My hon. Friends and I support amendments Nos. 47 and 48 in the name of the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) and amendments Nos. 37 and 38 which have been tabled by the official Opposition. If there are Divisions on any of those amendments, we shall support the amendments. So that hon. Members are clear, the amendment that I have moved and those that follow from it are supported by all my colleagues in the parliamentary Liberal party.

Clause 27 is a late arrival in the Bill. It came by way of a new clause tabled in Committee by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) which was supported by other Conservative Back-Bench Members. It was accepted, with an amendment, by the Minister for Local Government. Therefore, it comes before the House for the first time as part of the Bill.

The history of the proposal is slightly longer. The derivation of the new clause was the Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill which was introduced into the other place by the noble Lord the Earl of Halsbury. It also appeared as a private Member's Bill in this House. It is interesting to recollect the view of the Government on the proposal then—which, as I think the Minister for Local Government will concede, is substantively, if not exactly, the same as clause 27.

Lord Skelmersdale gave the Government's view in response to the Earl of Halsbury's speech on Second Reading. The Bill changed the law on two matters, the second of which was the matter that concerns us now. Lord Skelmersdale said:

"Turning now to the second part of the prohibition we are all agreed that the most dangerous and pernicious effects of loosening sexual values are on children. Schools must approach the difficult task of teaching their pupils about sexual matters in a responsible and sensitive manner. We must ensure that children are not subject to insidious propaganda for homosexuality. Moreover, the physical and emotional dangers of promiscuity should be spelt out. Regrettably there have been instances—we have heard some referred to in this debate—of the use of unsound teaching methods and materials and the propagation of extreme and unrepresentative views of sexual ethics and mores in the main related to the presentation of homosexuality. The Bill seeks to make this illegal by prohibiting financial or other assistance being made available by local authorities for this purpose. Moreover, it refers to a very subjective word—namely, 'acceptability', a word which could occupy your Lorships, sitting in your judicial capacity, for hour after hour."

In Committee the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) and I raised exactly this point with the Minister. The definition in the second provision of the Bill has no qualification and has in it several words which are not defined in the Bill. It was the view of the Government as recently as less than a year ago, on 18 December last

year, in the other place that the word "acceptability", which we debated in Committee only last week, was capable of substantial debate and was very unfair.

In another place Lord Skelmersdale went on to make two points which we raised in Committee. First, he said that the amendment that the Earl of Halsbury's original Bill would have introduced was better dealt with in the context of education legislation. He made the point that the Government had just legislated in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 to provide that sex education be taught in schools and that the arrangements for the curriculum should include the views of parents and governors. Again I quote Lord Skelmersdale:

"Under the new arrangements, all those responsible for the provision of sex education in county, voluntary and maintained schools will be required by law to ensure that any teaching offered is set within a clear moral context and is supportive of family life."

He said later:

"What all this means is that the Bill of the noble Earl seeks to prevent local education authorities from encouraging the promotion of homosexuality in schools at the very time that those same authorities are about to cease to have a direct role in determining the kind of sex education to be offered in schools."

He therefore made the second point which was that not only is the word "acceptability" laden with possible interpretations but that the Bill was seeking unnecessarily to legislate in the education context. I do not quote all the points that the Minister made against the Bill, but he said:

"Finally, on that aspect of the Bill, I should express reservations about how the wording of the Bill—with its prohibition of the promotion of homosexuality as an acceptable family relationship — might be interpreted in practice. The House will want to investigate, again in Committee, whether the meaning is clear or whether there is a risk that any teaching about homosexuality will effectively be outlawed. The Government's policy is that schools should be prepared to address the issue of homosexuality, provided they approach it in a balanced and factual manner, appropriate to the maturity of the pupils concerned. The issue cannot be ignored by schools when it is widely discussed in society and when pupils may well ask questions about it . . .

The Government have made it quite clear that any teaching about homosexuality must never, in any sense, advocate or encourage it as a normal form of relationship. To do so would be educationally and morally indefensible. I appreciate that the noble Earl's Bill seeks to prevent only such abuses. I fear, however, that the distinction between these, and what I have described as proper teaching about homosexuality, cannot be drawn sufficiently clearly in legislation to avoid harmful misinterpretation. That is a risk we cannot take."

That is what a Minister from the Department of the Environment said on 18 December 1986.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

8 pm

Mr. Hughes: In a moment.

"in the Government's view, the Bill is unnecessary".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 December 1986, Vol. 483, c. 334-6.]

He went on to say that it was not a sensible way to proceed.

Mr. Michael Brown: I sought to intervene because I wanted to ensure that the hon. Gentleman quoted the last sentence, and he has just done so.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me earlier that that express statement of view was confirmed by the Government during the early stages of the passage of the Bill in the other place.

On Third Reading in the other place, Baroness Hooper, speaking on behalf of the Government on 11 February 1987, said:

"My Lords, this gives me a convenient opportunity to remind the House of the Government's position on the Bill".

At the end of her speech, she said:

"We do not therefore believe that the Bill is necessary or an appropriate method of dealing with this one small aspect of the problem".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 11 February 1987; Vol. 484, c. 708-9.]

That is what two Ministers, from the relevant Department, said less than a year ago. They came out clearly against the Government's present position.

We are used to Government about-turns. In a short debate that we had barely an hour ago, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment told us that, a few months ago, he had sent out a letter expressly saying that the Government would not legislate to impose competitive tendering on parish and community councils. However, tonight the Government moved an amendment expressly to include parish and community councils. Therefore, we are used to U-turns and misrepresentation from that Department of the Environment.

I have dealt with the history of this matter and the Government's sordid role, and I shall now consider the issue of substance. In Committee I made it clear that the initial part of the clause that reads:

"Local authorities shall not—

(a) promote homosexuality or publish material for the promotion of homosexuality"

had the support of the Liberal party. We believe that, using the dictionary definition — there is no other definition because the Government have not supplied one —that is a proper statement on what should be the role of local authorities. Members on both sides of the Committee accepted that there is a need to qualify that statement, and that is why my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and I tabled amendment No. 32.

That amendment is intended to make it expressly clear that a local authority

"may undertake Sex Education in the course of which an awareness of different sexual orientations may be taught."

It seeks not to undermine the initial part of the clause regarding the promotion of homosexuality, but to ensure that it is natural and, indeed, perfectly proper, for education to include education about different sexual orientations that are found in any community. Indeed, it would be irresponsible to do otherwise.

The unqualified assertions in the three subsections of the clause are extremely dangerous. They represent a possible vehicle for misinterpretation that would be to the grave detriment of a non-discriminatory society or local government. My colleagues and I have two major criticisms. The first is that the original Bill and the clause are almost irrelevant to most of Britain in the sense that they are based on a few localised examples of abuse or possible abuse. The second is that the clause is damaging in its width, and the provisions that the Government intend to introduce to deal with the problem are also damaging. They are damaging to individuals who may well need the benefit of education, counselling, support

[Mr. Hughes]

and the opportunity to meet and discuss with other people their own and others' sexual orientation. They are also damaging to our pluralist society.

In Committee the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) asked whether there had been any evidence or suggestion of a local authority promoting homosexuality in Wales. The Minister could give no example. To my knowledge, there is no evidence of any example in Scotland. If we are wrong, perhaps the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland will be able to correct us. However, I note that the Minister is no longer present; that shows his interest and the clause's importance to Scotland. Obviously, he does not consider that this is a matter of importance, or he would be on the Front Bench. He sat through the Committee proceedings, so presumably he could have managed to survive the final proceedings in the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne made an appalling speech when he moved the original amendment. He chose to give examples that were not truthful and, until I questioned him in Committee, he chose to imply that a certain publication had emanated from local authorities when, by his own admission, the specific publication of which he had spoken did not. That represents an unacceptable misrepresentation. It epitomises the way in which Conservative Members have sought to raise the spectre of local authorities, especially those supported by other political parties, campaigning for the mass transformation — if that is biologically and genetically possible — of the land into a cast of rampaging homosexuals. That was the implication of the hon. Gentleman's speech.

Mr. Wilshire *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I shall give way in a moment.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne cited a second example — it has been dealt with by the hon. Member for Copeland — concerning the London borough of Ealing and a job advertisement. It concerned a worker for lesbian and gay rights, but the hon. Gentleman did not say that that advertisement had had all-party support within that borough. In the event, the post has not been filled.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): They are all bonkers in Ealing.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I will give way, but first I will give way to the hon. Member for Spelthorne because I have referred to him.

The speech made by the hon. Member for Spelthorne represented a grave distortion of the argument, and it is that type of prejudice that we must ensure does not occur. Such a wide, badly drafted and unqualified clause is open to such prejudice. We have seen such prejudice evidenced by Conservative Members and that prejudice is now supported by the Government, despite the fact that a year ago they recognised the folly of such a position.

Mr. Wilshire: The hon. Member has put words into my mouth. He challenged me on a dossier that I presented to the Committee. I was speaking about a book entitled "The playbook for kids about sex". I gave that example to the Committee to make the point that the book had been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions in 1983. I was seeking not to say that it had been used in schools, but that it was available and had been challenged under existing legislation, yet the DPP had said that that legislation was not adequate to deal with the matter. That was all that I was seeking to illustrate, and the record shows that.

Mr. Hughes: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will make his own speech. However, in Committee he asked us all to consider a bundle of documents that he had produced. The Chairman of the Committee made it clear that the argument was about local government activities and that that was the only matter in order for debate in the Committee. I asked the hon. Gentleman:

> "Is the hon. Gentleman asserting that the 'The playbook for kids about sex' is a local authority publication?" — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 8 December 1987; c. 1202.]

The hon. Gentleman replied "No, I am not." The whole argument was about publications by local authorities. The hon. Member for Spelthorne can explain his position when he comes, as he no doubt will, to his speech.

Ms. Short: I think that it is important that the hon. Gentleman spells out what he has just alleged. He suggested that the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) had attacked Ealing for having appointed a lesbian and gay rights worker. I understood the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to say that the appointment was supported by Conservative councillors in Ealing. If so, I should like him to say that clearly and loudly in the House tonight, so that we can deal with some of the nasty games that are being played here.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Lady is quite correct. The hon. Member for Copeland, or someone on his behalf, made the inquiries that confirmed that the Conservative party in Ealing supported the proposal.

I hope that the House does not want the role of local authorities to be to promote sexuality of any kind. Homosexuals do not happen as a result of campaigns for their promotion, just as heterosexuals are not suddenly brought into active heterosexualism by having a campaign on their behalf. I am not a biologist or scientist, but I know that that belief is founded on prejudice. If it is believed that, by allowing people to be informed of different sorts of sexuality, they are suddenly converted to those forms of sexuality——

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman heard the comment made from a sedentary position by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who said that all the councillors in Ealing were bonkers — that obviously included the Conservative members of the council. It might be worth having that on the record.

Mr. Hughes: I did not hear that, but I see that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) is nodding his assent to the remark. For a moment, I thought that bonking and bonkers had to do with another activity, which might be appropriate to this debate. I do not know whether that is the first use of the word on the record, but I gather that it is in common parlance, so we should talk about it here, too.

I do not believe that homosexuals want their sexuality to be promoted any more than anyone else does. They would argue not for discrimination in their favour, but for equal treatment with everyone else. They want their

sexuality to be accepted and to have equal access to jobs, housing, social and medical help, advice and particularly the sort of advice and counselling that take place during education and growing up.

8.15 pm

If the clause's aim is to protect the young, why are we not doing something about soft porn magazines, which are on sale in newsagents? Why are we not doing something about the matter raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) only last year—page 3 pictures in the popular newspapers? If we are trying not to promote different forms of sexuality, why do we not deal with television advertising, which often tries to sell products merely by appealing to people's sexual nature and motives? Why do the Government suddenly select this target, rather than another?

Of course, there are always people who will take advantage of positions of responsibility in a sexual context. However, that is true across the whole range of sexual activity. There is no evidence of any greater incidence of crime against young people by homosexuals than by heterosexuals. Sadly, there is always the risk that some adults will abuse their sexual adulthood in relationships with the young. But that is not a result of the promotion or advancement of arguments about homosexuality's existence. Indeed, I would argue strongly that unless awareness of homosexuality and acceptance of homosexuals is taught in school, they will be taught away from the classroon, in private, in a more harmful way.

That is why our amendments, and those tabled elsewhere, are important. I have heard informally that the Government plan to resist the amendments; but this prejudiced and bigoted late change of mind, which is presumably an effort to capitalise on a populist view and to gain the maximum political advantage from the scares and fears about AIDS and so on is something from which I hope they will resile. It is about time we had some principle on the issue, and not a sudden U-turn in the space of 12 months.

The debate about the new section, as set out in clause 27, raises many questions of definition. The Minister conceded in Committee that there was no definition in the Bill of the words "promotion", "acceptability", "pretended" or "family". Subsection (1)*(b)*, if unamended, would read as follows:

"A local authority shall not—. . . *(b)* promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship by the publication of such material or otherwise".

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Hear, hear.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member says, "Hear, hear." It is unacceptable to prevent the teaching that maintains that other people's relationships should be accepted by all civilised adults, whatever their personal views of the rightness or wrongness of those relationships.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: It depends on what one means by "civilised". I do not regard the practice of sodomy or buggery as being civilised.

Mr. Hughes: I am not asking the hon. Lady to regard those practices, or any others, as civilised. I am merely asking her to live in England in 1987 where, just as in 1887, or 1787, those practices go on. From the beginning of time there have been, are, and will be people who are homosexual, living in such relationships, sometimes with children.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Disgusting.

Mr. Hughes: I defend the hon. Lady's right to think that it is disgusting, but I do not defend her right, on behalf of a minority Government, to legislate to pretend that it does not exist. If the hon. Lady made an effort to inform herself, she would realise that these things are not encouraged or discouraged by teaching that they should be accepted—just as other things that she might not like are accepted. There is theft in society: she might not like it, and it might be uncivilised. Burglary, robbery and even murder exist in society. They are uncivilised, but we must teach people that those sorts of things happen and, more importantly, that all our fellow adults should be entitled to make their own choices, provided that they do not try to intrude on the lives and lifestyles of others. That is why the definitions in the clause are extremely dangerous.

Whatever our view about the morality of different sorts of sexual behaviour, and although there might be agreement in parts of the House about the immorality of certain sexual behaviour, we should allow local authorities as the agents of Government throughout Britain to teach that homosexuality is to be accepted. That is what this clause is about. Children, as they approach school-leaving age as young adults, should be taught about the risks in sexual relations and about the medical and other dangers. Those things should be taught as a regular and normal part of their curriculum. I shall give two examples, and I invite the Minister to say on what side of the line he comes down.

The Government use the words "safe sex" in their advertising campaigns. Does a leaflet promoting safe sex for homosexuals, perhaps from the Terrence Higgins Trust, which is funded by the Government, count as promoting homosexuality? If not, where is the dividing line? What about the funding of help lines, counselling lines or centres promoted by local authorities for lesbian women or gay men? Given that local authorities have a duty to all their electors, they must have a duty to gay men and lesbian women.

It is sad that we have to have this debate. If the Government had held to their principled position of less than a year ago, we would not need to have a debate such as this because the reactionary view propounded by some Conservative Back Benchers would be resisted just as it was resisted a year ago.

However, things have changed. The tragedy is that at the last minute in Committee the Government took a new position and are now advancing a piece of legislation that they admitted was defective and that is generally regarded as dangerous. That was why in Committee I expressly said on behalf of my party that we would not support the proposition. That is why I now confirm that the amendments that I and my hon. Friends have tabled are the minimum necessary to make this legislation acceptable. It is quite wrong for local authorities to promote homosexuality, but the clause goes miles too far and should be amended to make it in any way acceptable to the House and to the country.

Mr. Michael Brown: In Committee last week, I said that it was with great reluctance that I was prepared to go along with the new clause. I endorse a great deal of what has been said by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The Standing Committee was bounced into accepting the new clause. The hon.

[Mr. Michael Brown]

Gentleman has drawn our attention to the debate that took place almost a year ago this week when the noble Lord Skelmersdale who held office in the Department of the Environment made a speech.

The point that the Minister must address is a simple one. I have a copy of the Bill that was introduced in the House of Lords and it is almost exactly identical to the Bill that is before the House. Even the wording is almost the same. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) who put her name to the new clause, is nodding assent. Therefore, we have it from my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston that the new clause which the Government accepted last Tuesday is exactly the same as the one in the Bill about which the noble Lord Skelmersdale spoke in another place. He said:

"I fear, however, that the distinction between these, and what I have described as proper teaching about homosexuality, cannot be drawn sufficiently clearly in legislation to avoid harmful misinterpretation. That is a risk we cannot take.

In these circumstances, in the Government's view the Bill is unnecessary." — [*Official Report, House of Lords,* 18 December 1986; Vol. 483, c. 336.]

By accepting the new clause, the Minister is saying that he is now prepared to allow an insufficient and incorrect line to be drawn in legislation. He is prepared to risk "harmful misinterpretation" whereas his predecessor said that it was a risk that the Government were not prepared to take. The Minister's predecessor said that the Bill was unnecessary, but the Minister says that it is now necessary. What has changed in the last year? Unfortunately, what has changed is a degree of populism that is becoming a symptom of a less tolerant society.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): What has changed, surely, is that the Bill as it was passed through all its stages in the other place without question. It came to the House of Commons and the Minister who was responsible for it at the time strongly supported the whole thinking behind the Bill of the need to protect children. However much my hon. Friend may think that that is not necessary, I am afraid that it is true.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston has very sincere reasons for wanting to see this legislation go through. I am merely drawing to the attention of the House the view of the Government that was reported in the House of Lords' *Hansard.* Again I pose the question, "What has changed?" Of course I accept that it is necessary to protect children and to ensure that irresponsible local authorities do not promote homosexuality. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey says, the clause has gone much further than that.

While I go along with the objections of my hon. Friend the Member for Edgnbaston, I do not accept that only those objectives will be served by the enactment of the new clause. Therefore, I shall not vote with my hon. Friends against the amendments.—*[Interruption.]*

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The new clause inserted in the Bill in Committee and the amendments tabled by the official Opposition—I specifically refer to amendments Nos. 37 and 38—raise fundamental issues of personal liberty and civil rights.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. If people in the Strangers' Gallery continue to try to inhibit debate, I shall spy strangers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No one interrupts debates in this Chamber, and I hope that there will be no reference to any interruptions from elsewhere.

Dr. Cunningham: I hope that that rule applies tomorrow in the poll tax debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I say, the amendments raise fundamental issues of personal liberty and civil rights. The Opposition believe in equal rights and equal treatment for all people, including homosexuals. We are not asking for—nor do gay people demand—positive rights or preferential treatment. Equal treatment, however, is central to the civil liberties of all people as citizens. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) was right when he said that the House is really debating standards of tolerance in a civilised society. It is obvious that if Conservative Members had their way, those standards of tolerance and dignity would be eroded and downgraded. The Minister should state at the outset of his response whether the Government intend to allow on the statute book a clause which may well infringe the civil liberties of many homosexual people.

8.30 pm

The amendments seek to set out clearly the priorities of the Opposition Front Bench in relation to the new clause tabled in Committee. The amendments make it clear, first, that we do not believe that any local authority has or should have a duty to promote homosexuality, but that this restriction relates solely to the promotion of homosexuality, and not to services or information to homosexual people or those personally close to them, such as their family or friends. "Promote" should not be taken to mean only "actively encourage, help and advise people to understand the circumstances they are in". Nothing in the new clause should be allowed to prevent or hinder the discouragement of discrimination against homosexual people, or to impinge on their civil rights.

That position underlay the decision of myself and my hon. Friends on the Standing Committee not to oppose the clause, to the extent that it covered the promotion of an act, but to make it clear that we intended to seek amendments on Report, as we are now doing.

In the light of the debate that took place in Committee, the amendments are all the more important. Without them the drafting of the clause could lead to widespread misunderstanding, indeed, fear, and could cause serious damage to the rights of homosexual people. In moving the new clause, the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) said:

"Nothing that I seek to change by the new clause has anything to do with homosexuals: it is about the act of promoting homosexuality; nothing that I want to say seeks to speak against the freedom of adults to follow their own beliefs and morals in private; and nothing that I intend to say seeks to encourage any person or body to discriminate against homosexuals."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A,* 8 December 1987; c. 1201.]

If the hon. Gentleman believes that—I hope that he does—and if the Government believe that, they should accept amendments Nos. 37 and 38 and the hon. Member for Spelthorne should vote for them — even if the Government oppose them — if he is to stand by the intention of his words in Committee.

Amendment No. 37 would exempt from the ambit of the legislation any activity of a local authority, or funded by an authority, which is undertaken for the purpose of discouraging discrimination or desiring to protect the civil liberties of homosexual people. The problem concerns the meaning of "promotion" where a section of the population is disadvantaged in some way. The provision of information or services which contribute to the well-being of members of that section of the population are not intended to promote homosexuality, yet some could argue that they contribute indirectly to promotion in a wider sense, merely by improving the lot of the everyday lives of such people.

The hon. Member for Spelthorne denied that his clause had anything to do with homosexual people, yet implicitly he argued the contrary when, as reported in col. 1204 of the *Official Report*, he stated that the production of positive images of homosexuals amounted to promotion. It is generally accepted in every other civilised society that an important aspect of discouraging any form of discrimination against any individual or group is the discouragement of negative images of the people concerned.

Mr. Wilshire: Can the hon. Gentleman distinguish between negative images, positive images and neutral images? I ask him to consider that point.

Dr. Cunningham: We all know what negative images are; we have seen them thoughout history. There were negative images of Jews and immigrants. Now we have negative portrayal of homosexuality. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he is really not fit to be a Member of the House.

It is generally accepted that the important aspect of discouraging any form of discrimination is the discouragement of abuse of people, denial of equality of opportunity and denial of their civil rights. The clause would appear to include the prevention of such activity. Therein lies the nub of the difficulty with the term "promotion" and the wide terms which it appears to be intended to have. It need hardly be said that the risk that such an interpretation might be adopted by the courts should give rise to serious concern, and that is the main reason for amendment No. 37. If banning promotion means or carries the risk of meaning the banning of anti-discrimination activity, it would be a serious and retrograde step against civil rights in our society, which our amendment seeks to prevent.

We can all agree with the words of Lord Skelmersdale who said last year:

"we are all agreed that the most dangerous and pernicious effects of loosening sexual values are on children. Schools must approach the difficult task of teaching their children about sexual matters in a responsible and sensitive manner. We must ensure that children are not subject to insidious propaganda". — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 December 1986; Vol. 483, c. 334.]

Amendment No. 38 deals with information, advice and counselling to pupils at schools and colleges. The hon. Member for Spelthorne said that the new clause

"seeks to prevent local authorities promoting homosexuality, from teaching children about homosexual relationships as acceptable family relationships and from helping others to do so."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A* 8 December 1987; c. 1206.]

If that is really the meaning of the new clause, it would require a local authority to advise its teachers that children seeking information, advice or counselling about their family circumstances, perhaps because a parent was homosexual, would have to be told that the life of their family was not acceptable under the law. The psychological effect of any such response on a child is difficult to imagine, but one can only think that it would be appalling.

I turn to the Government's contradictory position. The hon. Members for Brigg and Cleethorpes and for Southwark and Bermondsey have raised the point, almost in identical words to those I had written in my notes. On 18 December 1986, almost exactly one year ago, the then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, Lord Skelmersdale, speaking for the Government in the House of Lords, said that the very use of the word "acceptability" in the Bill being debated meant that the Government could not recommend acceptance of the Bill. That is the very issue we raised in the Committee, for the obvious reasons that I have just outlined.

We must know what has made the Government change their mind. What events, influences and legal advice have brought the Government to find not only acceptable, but necessary, something that was totally unacceptable only 12 months ago? We do not have a shred of evidence from anyone to substantiate the argument for the use of the word "acceptability" in the clause, let alone any vestige of a case on which the Government could base such a volte face. We are led to the conclusion — perhaps the Minister of State can persuade us otherwise — in the absence of any evidence, that this U-turn is for the most base and contemptible politically opportunist reasons.

I do not intend to requote every word of the noble Lord Skelmersdale's speech as it has already been put on record by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, but he said:

"Moreover, it refers to a very subjective word—namely, 'acceptability', a word which could occupy your Lordships, sitting in your judicial capacity, for hour after hour."— [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 18 December 1986; Vol. 483, c. 334.]

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman will know that that comment was made a year ago. When hon. Gentlemen pressed the Minister for Local Government in Committee, he appeared to be content with a one-sentence, off-the-cuff answer about such a definition. He said:

"I have said that I do not believe that it is part of a local authority's duty to glorify homosexuality or to encourage youngsters to believe that it is on an equal footing with a heterosexual way of life." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 8 December 1987; c. 1228.]

The Minister is not willing to introduce an amendment or put any definition in the Bill.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right, and I fear the worst of the Government's intentions. I hope that the Minister will accept the amendments. If he does not, he will have a difficult job to explain to the House why he will not do so.

When the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) spoke in the debate mentioned by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) he said that the recent provisions on sex education and a moral framework in the Education Act 1986 should be given time to work in practice, and that the code of practice under the Local Government Act 1986 should be issued first and be given time to take effect. The latter reason is almost laughable, except that these issues are not

[Dr. Cunningham]

funny. Even now, seven months later, the Government have not finalised that code of practice, of which there is now a fifth draft.

Ministers should answer two questions to explain the Government's situation. What evidence do they have—which they did not have in May—that section 46 of the Education Act 1986 is not working in practice and is deficient, and what is that evidence, if there is any? Secondly, they should explain what has changed to make the code to which I have referred irrelevant to that process, and why is no time being allowed for it to operate in practice before yet more legislation is introduced? That code was introduced in previous legislation. It has never been published and given a chance to operate.

Finally, some concern has been expressed by AIDS workers that the Government's amendment on AIDS—now subsection (2)—will not be sufficiently comprehensive. It would be useful, and indeed important, for Ministers to clarify whether care and counselling services would be affected by the operation of the clause.

The exemption covers treating and preventing disease, but it is not clear whether that extends to wider care and counselling services. It must be clear that, without sympathetic advice and assistance and proper facilities for the care of infected people, efforts to arrest the spread of AIDS and improve awareness of it could be severely hampered, and that those with possible infection will be more reluctant than ever to come forward for advice and treatment. The Government would not wish—at least, I hope that they would not—to impede any assistance which local authorities or other agencies can give.

I hope that my hon. Friends will give the Minister time to respond to those points and perhaps they will question him on his answers because we are entitled to know now why the Government have accepted those proposals, and why they have put the House into this position and what they intend to do about it.

8.45 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I do not doubt the sincerity of the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) or that of other Opposition Members. I question what they said on the basis of constituency experience and personal conviction.

When Ealing council changed from Conservative to Labour in May 1986, there was a long and sustained campaign by the new council to have homosexual and lesbian relationships taught in schools as being as valid as heterosexual relationships.

Ms. Short: Where is the evidence?

Mr. Greenway: The evidence is in the rubric and the documents that were openly circulated by the council to parents and governing bodies. The council made no attempt not to be completely open in that discussion, and that was absolutely right. The evidence is there for all to see.

The parents and grandparents of children in Ealing and other people came to see me in their hundreds and thousands to express their great concern about that policy and to express their opposition to it. I decided to promote a full discussion on it, and in February of this year I arranged a conference on the family, which was addressed by Cardinal Home, Bishop Maurice Wood, an Anglican bishop, representatives from the free Churches and leaders of the Sikh, Moslem and Hindu communities. There was a section on AIDS, addressed by Dr. Pinching, to try to give the conference the fullest possible profile, and that was right. The conference became a way in which parents, responsibly and without a lot of shouting, expressed their opposition to the policy of Ealing council, and that opposition was virtually unanimous.

Children are vulnerable. I taught in schools for 23 years and saw that children are vulnerable at various ages. They are totally and continuously vulnerable between the ages of 5 and 12, and they continue to be vulnerable, sometimes to adulthood from the age of 13 years, as we know. It is essential that children are protected. I do not believe that the House would ever say that children should not be protected, and I know that Opposition Members will agree with that.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way; it is very unusual. I would certainly want to be protected from him. Did he think of inviting any gay groups from Ealing to the conference, which he carefully loaded to get the version of events that he wanted, to achieve the open debate that he said he was trying to encourage?

Mr. Greenway: I did not invite gay groups, but it was open for them to attend. Indeed, I believe that some did attend, because they spoke and put their point of view. I do not object to hearing their point of view. However, the conference was essentially for parents and for the groups of people to whom I referred earlier. I am certain that all hon. Members would agree that children should be protected.

Mr. Banks: From what?

Mr. Greenway: From any insidious and dangerous influences, such as homosexuality.

Dame Jill Knight: I wonder whether during my hon. Friend's conference he heard from parents such as those who contacted me when they wished to complain about the way in which their children were being dealt with in schools promoting homosexuality. Those parents were hit, spat upon, urinated on and one, who was pregnant, was punched very hard in the stomach. I wonder whether my hon. Friend has heard similar complaints from those poor parents, whose only wish was to protect their children and complain about what was happening to them.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend makes her own point. I well remember my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) making a vivid speech about that very subject a few months ago.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No, I wish to make my speech.

Ms. Short: Please.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Lady will have her opportunity.

For the past 18 months all advertisements of teaching posts in Ealing have contained invitations to men and women of any sexual orientation—to gay men and lesbian women and the rest of it—to apply for posts. My constituents find that excessive and distasteful and think that it is a misuse of public money. I share their view.

Only last week I received complaints in my surgery from parents who said that a homosexual recently appointed to a school makes up his face in school in front of the children, and they object to that. One has to support them. That is wrong. I do not believe that Opposition Members would say otherwise. If they do not support it, they should stand up and say that it is wrong.

It was incorrect of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey to say that the Ealing Conservatives supported the appointment of a lesbian and gay officer. The Ealing Conservatives believe that the gay and lesbian rights committee of Ealing council should never have existed and that it should be dissolved immediately. That committee spends money on promoting activities for homosexuals, and that must be wrong.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I shall give an example. In September that committee promoted two meetings for homosexuals.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: No, I have already given way, and I want to be brief. That committee promoted two meetings for homosexuals and lesbians at a cost of £2,000. Only 12 people attended one of those meetings. Is that a correct use of ratepayer' money? The House should remember that Ealing ratepayers have had to pay an extra 65 per cent. to Ealing council this year and that many elderly and poor people are having to go without food to pay their rates. Their objections are massive. It is my duty to represent in the House those who object—

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: For the last time.

Ms. Short: I am not sure that I completely believe the stories that the hon. Gentleman has told us. Earlier he told us that he had been a teacher for 22 years. I ask him sincerely and honestly whether during his 22 years of teaching he was ever approached by a child who thought that he or she was a homosexual or lesbian who was disturbed and troubled by it and needed his advice and guidance. Did he ever give such guidance, and does he think that the sensible guidance that should be given in these circumstances should be made illegal by the proposals that he is supporting tonight?

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhonda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I have only just given way, but perhaps I may be allowed two in one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We had better have one intervention dealt with first.

Mr. Greenway: In answering the hon. Lady, I may perhaps deal with the question of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who is always courteous in the House.

I was approached by children with all kinds of problems and I always found people to give them the counselling that they needed or coped myself, whatever it was. The hon. Lady says that I am telling stories. I am not; I am stating the facts. I have no interest in telling stories, nor do the people of Ealing. They have to deal with a fact that has hit every parent and grandparent—and many others—hard in the teeth. That has now been going on for nearly two years, and they have a strong point of view. They want the Government to do what the Bill does, which is to prohibit the teaching and promotion of homosexuality.

Mr. Allan Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: This will be the last time.

Mr. Rogers: I am listening attentively to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. He often refers to the interests of grandparents. As the father of four children and the grandparent of two, I am interested in children's safety and the pressures that they are under at school. Can the hon. Gentleman tell me precisely what he means when he says that people are teaching homosexual relationships in schools and that children need to be protected? Can he give me any instance of a child being in danger and needing protection? I seek this advice genuinely because the problem needs to be addressed seriously, but so far I have heard nothing except vague supposition.

Mr. Greenway: In Ealing the schools have been invited to put on their notice boards invitations to children to ring gay and lesbian lines. That is wrong, because it is an incitement to children.

I wish to bring my brief remarks to a close. Not many months ago Ealing council's education committee sent a letter home with children as young as five—some as young as four—in which was discussed the teaching that homosexual relationships were as valid as heterosexual relationships. Children of five, six and seven—or of any age — who carry about such material are carrying material which most of them would find offensive if they read it and which their parents certainly find infuriating. Some parents made bonfires of those letters. That is what they thought of them.

I have mentioned the churches. The Roman Catholic, Jewish, Sikh, Moslem and Hindu religions are absolutely clear in their teaching on this matter. They teach that homosexuality is wrong and it is wrong to promote homosexuality among children. Children must be protected. The Church of England——

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Tell the vicars that.

Mr. Greenway: That is a sad comment and regrettably there is a lot in it.

The Church of England has said that homosexual relationships fall short of the ideal. It must be the business of Parliament to protect our children and I will always stand by any measure that protects children. I support the Government strongly in this matter.

9 pm

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford): I believe that local government has no part to play in promoting any particular form of sexuality. I think that that is readily understood by councillors, local government officers and teachers. Therefore, clause 27 is unnecessary and should never have been tabled. If the word "promotion" has been or could be strictly defined, subsection (1) might have been innocuous and a mere reflection of the status quo, but it is clear from the proceedings in Committee that the Government are seeking to provide a catch-all prohibition that amounts to the denial of the reality of people's differing sexual orientation and differing social organisation.

We should not be dealing with people's personal objections to other people's lifestyles or with any distaste,

[Ms. Joan Ruddock]

however acutely that may afflict hon. Members. We are part of a legislature which is supposed—I suggest—to uphold the freedom and dignity of the individual. That is a matter of the most fundamental human rights—the rights of the individual to express within the laws of the land his or her individual sexuality and still be recognised as an equal citizen. The charge levelled against local authorities is that they have recognised the existence of a minority and have devoted a tiny part of their resources to meeting the needs of that minority.

Among those needs is the right of homosexual young people and adults to be recognised by society as they are — as human beings, with feelings, relationships and families. Recognition of lesbians and gay men is not a threat to those of us in the heterosexual majority. On the contrary, such is the all-persuasive and all-pervasive culture of heterosexuality in advertising and the media that it is homosexuals who have struggled habitually to become heterosexuals. They do not succeed, of course, but their attempt to meet society's expectations leads many, particularly the young, to despair and even to suicide attempts.

Are we now to legislate to deny young people any explanation of the existence of homosexuality among perhaps 10 per cent. of the population? Are we to deny that the child born to a homosexual mother or father—and there are many of the latter—has family relationships? That is the road to bigotry and oppression.

I want to refer briefly to the reason why I tabled amendment No. 47 which has not been selected. It refers specifically to care counselling and health education on AIDS and other diseases. As hon. Members are aware, there is no treatment for AIDS, but there is a highly respected and growing practice of care counselling which is of enormous value to those infected with the AIDS virus. Furthermore, health education and the prevention of AIDS depends on co-operation with gay and lesbian groups which, in turn, can function effectively only if funding is continued. It also depends on the distribution of explicit information which undoubtedly offends some Conservative Members.

I should have preferred the wording in amendment No. 47 to be accepted. As it has not been, I specifically ask the Minister to tell us whether he believes that the points that I have made and the provisions to which I have referred and which were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) are covered by the Government amendments.

Mr. Howard: I will deal with the hon. Lady's point fully in my reply. However, the answer to the specific point that she has raised is yes. We take the view that the form of the amendment that she proposed would actually be more limited in the extent to which it would enable local authorities to provide assistance in relation to such diseases than the amendment that I moved in Committee.

Ms. Ruddock: I am grateful to the Minister. I trust that he recalls that I referred specifically to the need for effective gay and lesbian organisations to collaborate in the process, and to the consequent need for their funding to be continued.

I am satisfied that amendment No. 48 is covered by those standing in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland.

Finally, let me illustrate the problems that the Government have introduced in clause 27. My constituency lies within the London borough of Lewisham, which has a thoroughgoing equal opportunities policy. In a recent newsletter, the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) stated that the borough had spent £3,500 on promoting homosexuality.

Of what, hon. Members may ask, does that promotion consist? The borough has set up a consultative working party that has not voted to spend any money. It has funded two centres, one specifically to help young people with problems over sexual roles, and the other to help any person with problems related to his or her homosexuality. Without the addition of amendments Nos. 37 and 38 to clause 27, that small amount of help would be denied to the constituents—and ratepayers—of Lewisham.

Since last week, I have received about 50 letters from my constituents, who are deeply concerned about the provisions of clause 27, and the repression and attacks that they believe will follow if the clause is passed unamended. However, there are undoubtedly many more people in my constituency who believe the ugly propaganda that has emanated from the Conservative Benches, and will not welcome what I have said. Indeed, local Conservative Members may even seek to exploit it.

I know where my duty lies tonight, and where I believe the duty of the House also lies. It is a question of fundamental civil liberties, which bears heavily upon us. I am sure that hon. Members do not need to be reminded that it is in the treatment of its minorities that the real test lies of any nation's commitment to freedom and human rights. I hope that the Government will reconsider.

Mr. Wilshire: When I arrived in the Chamber for the beginning of the debate, I was not sure whether it would be necessary for me to say anything. However, words have been put into my mouth, and motives put into my mind, by some of what has been said, and I want to put the record straight.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) suggested that I had claimed that a document that I produced in Committee, purely to prove the point that existing legislation was not adequate, had been either produced or used by a local authority. The record will show that I made no such claim.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) seemed to imply that my expressed belief that nothing in the new clause would be against homosexuals meant that if I said that I was against positive images of homosexuality, it followed automatically that I was in favour of negative images. I did not say that, and I do not say it now. Furthermore, the hon. Member for Copeland did not answer my question about the role of the third option — neutral presentation, and a neutral point of view.

As the mover of the clause in Committee, I felt that it was crucial for me to listen carefully to everything said here and elsewhere, and to read everthing that I had been recommended to read. My postbag is particularly instructive on the matter; I have received 12 letters from individuals, two of them supportive and 10 of them against. The significant point in the 10 letters opposing the clause was that three people said that they supported an attempt to prevent the encouragement of homosexuality, which was exactly what the new clause was doing.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The hon. Gentleman keeps referring to a neutral approach. The new section 2A(1)*(b)* set out in clause 27(1) is not a neutral approach because it prohibits the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality, which must be a negative approach.

Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is the duty of teachers to present to children the world and life as they are, and not to cover up the natural form of sexual and social life of at least 10 per cent. of the population of this country? Does he accept that, far too often, young children are presented, in school books and in pictures in school, with the vision of the normal, acceptable, happy family as comprising a married, white, middle-class man and women, with two prissy children who are clean, neat and tidy, yet the majority of children find that this does not relate to their household? Thereby, they are made to feel that they are outsiders and that they are inferior, which does great damage—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I say to the House that if we have disturbances from the Gallery I have the authority to clear it. I hope very much that that will not be necessary, but I say to the House—the whole House will know this—that the Gallery is invisible to us on the Floor, and I look for good behaviour not only in the House but in the Gallery.

Mr. Wilshire: To reply to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms. Gordon), I consider that part of the clause to be neutral. It seeks to prevent the promotion of an activity that should not be promoted in schools.

The points that have been made and the matters that I have heard and read about can best be summarised by saying that they seek to suggest three things—first, that there is not a problem; secondly, that there should be no restraint on the presentation of factual information; and, thirdly, that the new clause is an attack on homosexuals. People who say that are wrong on each count.

People who say that there is no problem fly in the face of the evidence — I presented that evidence to the Committee and it stands on the record. People who say that there are few local authorities involved and we should not be concerned—we heard that earlier—and that if there are only one or two local authorities concerned we should ignore them are talking nonsense; one is too many, and I make no apology for being concerned about one.

The other argument that people use when saying that there is no problem is that even if these things are happening they cannot have any effect. Two central arguments are used by people promoting homosexuality: first, that people cannot be made to be homosexual and, secondly, that homosexuality cannot be changed. I have tried to look at the evidence for and against. There is a small amount of evidence to back up those claims and an equally small amount of evidence that they are not true. We should not allow to go unchallenged claims about matters that are opinions as though they are facts.

There are those who say that there should be no restraint on the promotion of homosexuality or on its factual presentation. One of the letters that I received says:

"If it is legal it can be promoted."

We have heard claims that any restraint in this area is an attack on civil liberties. If that argument is followed, it will lead to an attitude of "anything goes" in this country. If it is right to encourage homosexuality, one might ask why it is not right to encourage racial hatred. I think that neither should be encouraged. The other argument——

9.15 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman has said — *[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen are interested, no it is not a badge of Lenin, it is a Sandinista badge — support your friendly Sandinistas.

Will the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) repeat what he said? Did he actually say that promoting racial hatred could be as justifiable as promoting homosexuality? Does he think that homosexuality and racial hatred are equivalent?

Mr. Wilshire: No, I said that it was equally wrong to promote either of them. All I was saying is that there are those who seek to adduce the argument that there should be no restraint and that anything goes. I do not believe that. I believe that both are equally wrong and wish that to be absolutely clear on the record.

The final argument advanced against the clause is that it is an attack on homosexuals. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) quoted what I said in Committee, and I stand by it. The clause is not a criticism of homosexuals, an attack on private behaviour or a restraint on giving people help, for whatever reason, if they require it. The hon. Member for Copeland asked me why, if I thought that, I would not vote for the amendments. The reason is simply that nothing in the clause contradicts any of the things that I said. Therefore, the amendments are not necessary.

Having listened to everything that has been said and having read everything that has been sent to me, I am absolutely clear in my mind that the things that the clause seeks to prevent are happening, that they create a problem and that there must be a limit on what people can do when they seek to encourage others to behave in a particular way. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wilshire: There is absolutely no need for me to stand here and apologise for seeking to prevent local government from doing something that I know that it should not be doing. I see no need to apologise for making it less likely that people are confronted by homosexual propaganda. I see no reason to apologise for standing here and defending the family. The overwhelming majority of the people whom I represent would expect me to do no less.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I support the amendments of my hon. Friends and those tabled by the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I rise also to express my horror at clause 27 and to express my profound disquiet that the House and the Government have come to such a pass that sentiments of such intolerance, which is deeply damaging to the individual liberties of millions of citizens can appear before us.

Sad to say, the Amendment Paper does not permit us to remove the clause in its entirety; would that it did. However, let us seek to amend it in the manner proposed so that at least some civilised values can be retained.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

First, I should like to say something about the practical fallacies of clause 27. What on earth, for example, do its originators mean by "promoting"? I shall give four examples. James Baldwin, one of the greatest writers of this century, who died about two weeks ago, wrote two books, "Giovanni's Room" and "Another Country", which undoubtedly celebrate the fact of homosexuality and the relationships of homosexuals. They also explore the torment that is faced by many because of the social pressures that are forced upon them as homosexuals. If a local authority places those books in a public library, will it be regarded by the courts as promoting homosexuality?

Secondly, if a pub or club that caters for a principally gay clientele applies for a music licence and the local authority grants that licence, will that local authority be regarded by the courts as promoting homosexuality?

Thirdly, if concerned or worried teenagers seek help or guidance from a teacher, or, indeed, see the advertisements for Gay Switchboard or Lesbian Line which the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is so unhappy at seeing on a school noticeboard, and seek guidance about their fears, their sexuality or what they have come to learn about their parents' sexuality, is the giving of guidance, counselling and advice to such a worried or concerned teenager to be regarded as promoting homosexuality?

Fourthly, if the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Merton, which are not controlled by the Labour party, fund, as they do respectively, the Gay Self-Defence Group and the Wimbledon Area Gay Society, are they promoting homosexuality as well?

The originators of the clause have failed to recognise that there is a crucial difference between what they say they want to prohibit and what the actual impact of the clause will or can be. They say that they want only to prohibit the act, as they put it, of encouraging people to be homosexual. It is an absurd notion in any case. We are what we are. It is impossible to force or encourage someone into a different sexuality from that which pertains to them. What is needed is not to be involved in changing, persuading, forcing, encouraging people into different sexualities. What is important is to enable people to understand the sexuality that they have, and that cannot be changed.

Furthermore, I know of no instance where an employee of a local authority has encouraged any person or child to be homosexual. I know that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), in a now celebrated radio discussion last week, said that she could not give any examples of such encouragement because she had not brought her file with her to the studios.

Dame Jill Knight: It might be a good thing if the hon. Gentleman spoke to one or two of his colleagues who have taken the trouble to write to me to ask for the information, which I gave them. I shall gladly give it to the hon. Gentleman now. The local authorities concerned are Haringey, Brent, Lambeth, Manchester, Ealing and there are others. There is overwhelming evidence, not least in the strong objection of parents in those local authorities, of what has been done to their children.

Mr. Smith: I am afraid that I have to repeat my question. I am seeking actual examples where employees of a local authority have encouraged any individual person or child to be homosexual. I am afraid that a generalised list of local authorities is all that we have had so far from the Conservative Benches. That sort of generalised hearsay is not sufficient to base a fundamental attack on civil liberties.

Mr. Wilshire: If an example is required, I shall repeat what I said in Committee. One of the books that was being bandied about in radio discussions was "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin". As far as I can see, there are some facts about that book which need to be repeated. First, the publishers of that book were grant-aided by the GLC, with ratepayers' money. Any hon. Member may refute that if he wishes to do so, but, as far as I can see, ratepayers' money was made available to that publisher, which I believe to be encouragement of the promotion of the book.

The other piece of evidence is that this book was stocked in an ILEA teacher centre. Presumably one only stocks books in a centre in case teachers wish to use them. Those are the two pieces of evidence.

Mr. Smith: The hon. Gentleman has shown the fallacy of his argument in what he has said, because that book was never put in front of a pupil or used in a classroom in an ILEA school.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): My hon. Friend was not present for the freedom of the press debate the other week in which we discussed the matters raised by him and by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). They were known to be and had been found to be lies by newspapers. Those lies have now been picked up by certain people who have used them to create hatred and fear. Does it not bring into disrepute hon. Members who peddle those lies in that way?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is right. It might help our debates on these sensitive and important matters if we based our arguments on facts rather than on general statements and assumptions which have appeared in the popular press and are immediately taken by some Conservative Members to be the truth, which they are not.

The originators of the clause have said that they wish to prevent encouragement, but they have introduced a clause which will do much more than simply prevent such encouragement, which does not in fact occur and is, in any case, impossible. The clause will do much more.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: Time is limited, so I must proceed. Any form of advice or counselling, or work for, or provision of services to, the lesbian or gay community will, in the minds of local authorities, come to be seen to be prohibited.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I must proceed, as many of my colleagues wish to contribute to the debate. The difference between the way in which the originators of the clause say that they want it to be applied and the likely impact of the clause reveals the real motives of those who have introduced it. Those motives have now come into the open. Both in Committee and on the Floor of the House, some things have become sayable which were not sayable two or three years ago, and that worries me profoundly. That is the real tragedy of the clause and the emotions that underlie it.

I believe that there are two motives. The first is the use of anti-gay sentiment for political ends. I shall say no more about that, because it is one of the most disreputable political activities in which anyone could indulge.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend.

The second motive is a desire to change the climate so that to be gay or lesbian is to feel and to be treated as a second-class citizen. The climate has changed. There is more intolerance now than there was five or 10 years ago. The House cannot have failed to notice that last Saturday there was an arson attack on the offices of the *Capital Gay* newspaper, or that, during that same—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I heard the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) say that it was quite right that *Capital Gay* should have been fire——

9.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. *[Interruption.]* Order. Hon. Members should not behave in the House like that. *[Interruption.]* Order. I heard nothing — *[Interruption.]* Order. Was it unparliamentary?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: I am quite prepared to affirm that it is quite right that there should be an intolerance of evil.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us keep the temperature of the debate down. The whole House has strong feelings both ways on these matters. I call Mr. Chris Smith.

Mr. Smith: Neither should it go unnoticed that, during the same weekend, teargas bombs were thrown into a crowded pub in Rochester. Nor should it go unnoticed that the number of queer-bashing attacks on gay men and lesbians has dramatically increased during the past year. I invite Conservative Members to condemn that sort of violence in exactly the same ringing tones in which they have condemned other forms of violence.

Mr. Wilshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I shall not give way. I must proceed.

Will Conservative Members go further—perhaps the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) may be able to answer this question — and accept that, in a democratic society, all citizens should find equal acceptance and that second-class citizenship and second-class sexuality have no place in our sense of decent values?

There is another underlying motive behind clause 27. In some ways, it is even more disturbing. It was revealed in a letter from the hon. Member for Spelthorne to *The Guardian* on Saturday. He wrote:

"may I answer the question ('will they be populist, or principled?') posed in your leading article . . . My actions were motivated wholly by the principle of supporting normality."

Does he for a moment realise the profoundly undemocratic and anti-libertarian nature of such a concept as promoted or encouraged normality? I thought that only Soviet-style countries went in for uniformity of that kind. How uneasily does that concept sit with the democratic values that this House, of all Houses, is supposed to uphold.

Mr. Wilshire: I shall be interested to hear how democracy or being undemocratic links with being in favour of supporting the majority. I should have thought that democracy and majority go together.

Mr. Smith: Long ago, I was taught that democracy is as much about the equal rights of minorities as it is about reflecting the decisions of a majority. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman might do well to ponder for a moment the declaration of democratic values that was issued on 8 June 1984 by the heads of state and leaders of Government of the Group of Seven major democratic industrialised countries. It was signed by President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. At its outset, the declaration of democratic values, rightly and fundamentally, states:

"We believe in a rule of law which respects and protects without fear or favour the rights and liberties of every citizen, and provides the setting in which the human spirit can develop in freedom and diversity."

It is the protection of diversity that the House, our democratic values and the debate are all about. It is the protection of diversity that clause 27 and the motives that underpin it seek to undermine. I plead with Conservative Members that they should not go in for the all-too-easy, all-too-prevalent sport of gay bashing which is on the increase. Instead, they should acknowledge that true decency and morality exist in recognising and respecting the dignity of all citizens, no matter who or what they are. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I give one more warning about disturbances from the Strangers Gallery? It may not be generally known that clapping from the Strangers Gallery or even from the Benches is not permitted. If we have any further disturbances, I shall, with the deepest reluctance, clear the Strangers Gallery.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): What I find particularly offensive is that an issue that affects between 2 million and 5 million citizens, depending on the number of lesbians and gay men, is being tacked on to one squalid little clause and bounced through in a Bill in the space of a few days. If Conservative Members wish to raise the rights of lesbians and gay men in society, it should be done through a major piece of legislation that is properly debated throughout the land.

Conservative Members are responding to a wave of hysteria and bigotry that has been whipped up by the popular press. It has been absolutely disgraceful. Some people have the misfortune to believe what they read in the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail* and *The Sun*. They have come to accept that in some areas children are being taught how to be lesbians. It is easy for those outside who live with the day-to-day prejudice against lesbians and gay men to laugh it off, but that pernicious lie has bitten deep into the popular conscience.

Nowhere have the hysteria and bigotry been whipped up more than on the issue of the book "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin". It filled acres of newsprint. What was the reality? One copy of one book in one teachers' centre that one teacher had taken out to read became the centre of a wave of hysteria that has turned it into a best seller. The people who published the book will probably want to make a donation to the popular press for advertising it. Should such nonsense be the basis of legislation?

[Mr. Ken Livingstone]

We are asked to believe that when the Minister replies he will clarify what "promotion" means. That will be nice. It will also be totally irrelevant. What the Minister thinks will not matter: it is what the judges think that matters. I had the misfortune to be the leader of the GLC when the judges decided that transport legislation which had been interpreted over a decade as allowing a subsidy to be paid, should be reinterpreted to mean that the service had to be run at a profit. We should not accept that it is up to the judges to define what we mean. We have a duty as legislators to pass legislation that is not open to misinterpretation.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Livingstone: Let me put the reality of what we face here. I shall not give way. Conservative Members have all the time in the world to make reasoned contributions.

I have here a letter from people who are employed indirectly by the Government. They are employed on project SIGMA, which is an attempt to discover the extent of the spread of AIDS among gay and bisexual men, and which is funded by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Medical Research Council, which is also Government funded. In a letter to the leader of the Labour party and myself they say:

"We are specifically concerned about the . . . amendment to the Local Government Bill and generally alarmed by the growing atmosphere of violent anti-gay feeling of which it is a symptom and to whose exacerbation it is bound to contribute. We feel that the idea it invokes of 'promotion' is either so narrow as to render the amendment unnecessary or so wide as to make it a most potent threat to civil liberty and freedom of speech. We fear its effects on our work, our jobs and our lives."

Those are the feelings of people who are working for the Government in trying to tackle the crisis of AIDS. That letter illustrates what they fear the amendment will cause.

I also wish to deal with the reality of life for lesbians and gay men and to base it upon a survey that was the subject of massive attack by many Conservative Members. That survey was the result of a grant given to the Gay Teenage Group by the GLC to examine the problems of gay teenagers in London. That group conducted a major, in-depth survey of over 400 young homosexuals between the ages of 15 and 21. Its conclusions were published, but disappeared in the wave of other press interest in the aftermath of the election in 1983. Its conclusions were horrifying. It was not propaganda, but the result of scientific analysis of what happens to young lesbians and gay men living in the city.

That survey showed that three out of five had been verbally abused, that one in five had been beaten up, that one in 12 had been sent to a psychiatrist, that one in 10 had been thrown out of their homes because of their sexuality and that one in 10 had been sent to a doctor in the hope that the doctor would cure them. However, the most horrifying statistic was that one in five of those young lesbians and gay men had attempted to commit suicide because of the anguish, loneliness and despair that they felt.

All Conservative Members must ask themselves whether the Bill will increase that despair, or reduce it. Will the amendment encourage suicide, or reduce it? Will the amendment increase fear, or attempt to reduce that fear? I do not believe that anyone can have any doubt. Even if the language of the amendment had been neutral, the speeches that have been made in support of it have made its intent quite clear. Let us consider where young people turn to for advice. We are told that Conservatives are worried about the effects on children. Society is not geared to help someone aged 13 or 14 who realises that he or she is gay or lesbian. Whom do they turn to for advice? The survey conducted by the Gay Teenage Group showed that 42 per cent. of children who turned to their parents were rejected, were told that they were suffering from some sort of disease and were virtually excluded from the family. Parents are unable to cope with that situation.

The survey revealed that at school 25 per cent. of young homosexuals felt isolated, that 21 per cent. suffered verbal abuse, that 12 per cent. were beaten up and that 7 per cent. felt ostracised. How will the amendment tackle that?

We need to ask how we are to protect chidren, but we must also ask from whom we are protecting them. I was a member of the Inner London education authority for 13 years. Every example of child abuse in our schools was reported to the chairman of the schools committee, and in every example we were dealing with a heterosexual male teacher sexually assaulting girls—*[Interruption.]* That is the reality that we face.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you advise the House whether we have to sit here trying to do our business, listening to demonstrations from the Gallery, or will you do what you said you would do and clear the Gallery if there is any further applause?

9.45 pm

Mr. Speaker: I repeat what I said a moment ago. It would be with the greatest reluctance that I cleared the Gallery, because our debates here are open to the public and should be heard. As I have already said, this debate has been conducted in very good order on the Floor of the House. Equally, those in the Gallery must conduct themselves in good order. Finally, therefore, I say that if there is another disturbance, I shall have to clear the Gallery.

Mr. Livingstone: The survey showed that children who were homosexual felt that they had had no assistance at school. So talk of promotion is nonsense.

The figures that I gave for ILEA do not stand out from others, either. The FBI conducted a major survey more than a decade ago in America. Its conclusion was that well over 90 per cent. of all forms of child abuse were of a heterosexual nature. If we are worried about children, why, I wonder, are we not making the same efforts to tackle that? Why are we pandering to popular prejudice that comes in on the back of a wave of homophobia generated by the media?

I shall take one quotation from the study by the Gay Teenage Group, which shows what the problem is for a young man who discovers that he is gay:

"I remember an incident in the third year when some lad asked me if I was queer. I denied it of course and I immediately withdrew into my shell even further. I tried suicide with a bottle of"

pills

"a couple of nights later. It didn't work of course. It just made me ill for about a week. Nobody realised what I'd done and I didn't tell them."

That is the reality that we face.

Much of what has been said has been deeply offensive to millions of lesbians and gay men in this country. It is particularly obscene to hear their relationships dismissed as pretending. I know several lesbian mothers who have struggled to come to terms with the discovery of their lesbianism after marrying and having had children. They have had to face the problems of the divorce that follows, and have had to fight to keep their children, because they loved them. In many of those instances I have seen judges take a narrow-minded and bigoted view.

To dismiss those relationships as pretence is incredibly unhelpful to the thousands of women who struggle to continue to be able to raise and care for their children. I have no doubt that the attacks on *Capital Gay* was a result of the climate to which the clause contributes. If the clause is carried, it will open the way to a load of homophobia and litigious fanatics trying to prevent open and honest discussion of people's real sexuality.

If anyone feels that there is promotion, I ask him to give us examples. I am tired of debating with Conservative Members in radio and television studios and public meetings. When I ask them for examples of promotion, they always say that they have left them in the pile at home, or that they saw them in the paper. That is not an adequate basis for legislation. One does not legislate on the basis of gossip such as that——

Mr. Couchman *rose——*

Mr. Livingstone: I shall not give way.

Mr. Couchman *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Couchman *rose——*

Mr. Livingstone: I invite the hon. Gentleman to make a speech when I have finished mine.

There may be Conservative Members who think that the fears of members of the public who have been lobbying them in the House today are unfounded. I hope that they are right. Only 51 years ago Reichsführer Himmler issued the following decree. I shall read its words, and then we shall see if Conservative Members laugh:

"Just as we today have gone back to the ancient German view on the question of marriages mixing different races, so too in our judgment of homosexuality — a symptom of degeneracy which could destroy our race — we must return to the guiding Nordic principle, extermination of degenerates."

Many members of the public believe that the clause is one small step on a path that leads to that sort of end result.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I shall be brief because last week in Committee the longer the debate went on, the more concerned I became about the new clause. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give the hon. Gentleman a fair hearing.

Mr. Pike: It was quite clear that the new clause added to the Bill at that stage was wide open to a variety of interpretations and represented a dangerous direction in which to move. The words "promote" and "acceptability" are wide open to interpretation and the signs from Conservative Members about the way in which they believe the clause should be interpreted will cause genuine fear about the direction in which we are moving.

The Government gave their support to the new clause at a late stage because they overreacted to newspaper publicity about the actions of a small number of councils. In many cases those councils have been misrepresented. Even if the allegations were true, the money spent in that way is a tiny fraction of the money that is spent by local government in the areas concerned.

It is quite clear that homosexuality cannot be promoted. People do not choose to be homosexual: either they are or they are not. That is important and should be recognised by the Government. It is wrong to say that if Wandsworth council decided tomorrow to advertise in the "Wandsworth Guardian" and to put on the hoardings that one sees when one crosses Battersea bridge the slogan, "Be gay today is the better way", thousands of people in Wandsworth would accept that recommendation and become homosexual overnight. If the Government are not prepared to accept the amendments they should think again about the full implications of the wording of clause 27. Even our amendments do not remove all the fears about the way in which this clause could be interpreted.

In debate I rarely refer to letters from constituents, but I should like to quote from two letters. For obvious reasons, I shall not give the names and addresses. The first letter is from a constituent whom I know well. He holds a prominent position in the area, and in the initial part of his letter he expresses the fears about the new clause that was added to the Bill last week. He says:

"My brother is gay and I am familiar with the . . . isolation and discrimination he suffers as a result. Many local authorities fund gay helplines, centres etc. as a means of supporting, helping, reaching out to these isolated and sometimes frightened people. This work is valuable as it can bring gay people together to help themselves understand their situation and develop ways of tackling their problems. It is imperative that this work continues to support this minority.

Some may feel gays are 'promoting' homosexuality. I do not believe this is the case. They are not trying to persuade anyone to become gay but they need to publicise their existence and their activities because they are trying to reach other isolated and frightened gay people. Homosexuality is a fact of life . . . we should support the needs of a minority struggling against oppression and discrimination . . . and continue to help them organise in their areas."

As my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said, we are not talking about an insignificant number of people. We are talking about a significant percentage of the population who are homosexual and we must recognise that fact and assess it.

The second letter is from another constituent who is a college lecturer. The letter says:

"I am a lecturer at a local College of Further Education and am constantly promoting discussion among my students about many issues, and always strive to break down prejudices and illconceived notions. If this Bill becomes law I will be prohibited from doing what I see as a vital part of my job, as any positive statements made about lesbians or gay men could be seen to be promoting homosexuality. I would certainly be unwilling to discuss the subject if I were obliged by law to dismiss it as a deviation. As a mother of two teenage girls I would also hope that if the subject was raised in their school that it would be dealt with in a manner that did not encourage bigoted attitudes. This clause would preclude that possibility. This clause means that a substantial minority of our community will be subject to worse oppression than at present and is to my mind a significant infringement of their human rights and civil liberties."

I believe that those two letters very much summarise why we should accept the amendments. I sincerely hope that the Government will think again about the way in which clause 27 may be interpreted.

[Mr. Pike]

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) referred in an intervention to the protection of our children at school. We believe that our children at school have the right to be protected, but the record clearly shows that children suffer more of a threat from heterosexual oppression at school than from homosexual oppression, whether it be lesbian or gay. Those are the facts. If we want to deal with protection of our children, it must be dealt with in another way.

It seems remarkable that the new clause should have been added to the Local Government Bill, not to an education Bill, where its implications will apply to state schools, not private schools. Does that mean that it is all right to promote homosexuality in a private school? The Government must answer that.

I hope that the Minister, who I believe is a reasonable man, will recognise that the Government have moved with haste and that they must give more consideration to the legislation. If they are not prepared to accept the amendments, I hope that the Minister will give assurances that clause 27 will be looked at very closely in the House of Lords; that when it comes back to the House we will see changes to it which will make it acceptable; and that the Government will not take such a strong line, which would be a retrograde and regrettable step.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I should like to say a few words, which I think are in order, following the speech by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). I regret that he chose to raise the emotional level of the debate when we are debating something of great concern to many parents and people. For many years I, like him, was a member of the Inner London education authority, but I was also a professional teacher, and latterly an education officer. I came across examples of homosexual teachers who abused their position in schools in the London boroughs of Redbridge and Havering. I shall not give further details, but that took place. Those teachers, in the same way as heterosexual teachers who abuse children, had action taken against them by the authorities to prevent a reccurence, because a teacher is in a position of trust and every child must be protected.

There is concern that the Labour party has moved away from its position when the matter was debated in Committee, when the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said that Labour Members would not oppose the first part of the new clause, yet now it appears that they are supporting a radical change to clause 27. I am concerned that they take that attitude when there is grave concern. It cannot be denied that ILEA has as part of its resources guide materials that are considered suitable for use in secondary schools, colleges of further education, the youth service and adult education institutes that positively encourage homosexuality. The extracts referred to from "The Milkman's on his Way" show positive support for homosexuality as a lifestyle.

We do not seek to deny that there are many homosexuals in the country. I do not want to preach, because it is invidious to do so, but an equally valid view is held by Christians, who hold to the teachings in the Old and New Testaments and believe that the homosexual act is intrinsically immoral and evil. That is a respectable view, even if Opposition Members do not accept it. We should not be browbeaten into accepting the argument that we should not seek to promote what most people believe to be the norm in our society, which is a heterosexual loving relationship. I am sorry if Opposition Members believe that the clause represents an attack on homosexuals in any way. It is intended as an attempt to ensure that what most people in this country—

It being Ten o'clock the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Local Government Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Bill as amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Bennett: Most people in this country believe that our schools should not be used as vehicles for proselytising homosexuality. That is what the clause seeks to prevent. It is a worthy clause and I hope that, in a spirit of moderation, the House will accept it.

Mr. Howard: First, may I respond unreservedly to the invitation issued by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) to condemn the incidents of violence to which he referred. Of course those incidents were outrageous and intolerable, and of course I condemn them without qualification.

Those of us who served on the Standing Committee on the Bill will have been surprised by the difference in tone that has distinguished this debate from the discussion of the clause in Committee. It is a fact that when the matter was debated in Committee the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who is the Opposition spokesman, declared his intention to vote for the clause. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Yes, the hon. Gentleman did. The hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike), both of whom have denounced the clause in passionate speeches today, did not vote against it in Committee. In fact, it was accepted by the Committee without a Division. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

Dr. Cunningham: Just so that we may have on the record all the facts about what transpired in Committee, perhaps the Minister will be good enough to acknowledge that I said on behalf of the Labour party that we would table amendments to the clause on Report. That is what we have done.

Mr. Howard: I was coming to that. It is true that the hon. Gentleman said that amendments would be tabled —there is no secret about that—and we shall consider those amendments. I shall explain to the House why I shall advise my right hon. and hon. Friends not to vote for the amendments. There is an important difference between accepting a clause without Division while saying that amendments would be tabled on Report, and the kind of attitude that has been expressed on the Floor of the House this evening.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Just so that I can be very sure that the Minister does not mischievously misrepresent my view or that of my party, may I remind him of the very words with which I ended my speech and ask him to accept that that was, and remains, our position? I said:

"It is reasonable that we should have a clause entitled 'prohibition on promoting homosexuality by teaching or by publishing material' and if the clause were limited to that I would support it. But it is not limited to that, so I shall not support it."

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman has made his position clear. However, I repeat that there is a difference between a calm and rational discussion of the scope and effect of amendments which relate to the precise scope of a clause of this kind and the sort of passionate root and branch denunciation of any attempt to legislate on these matters that we have heard from the Opposition this evening.

When I began my observations in Committee I moved an amendment to the clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). I began by devoting myself to a speech made by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts). He had made a very reasonable speech, in which he said:

"If the new clause says that local authorities should not promote homosexuality, I shall support it . . . If it means that the promotion of sexuality of any kind should not be promoted in school, I shall support it."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 8 December 1987; c. 1207-18.]

He went on to express a number of reservations about the clause. When I began my remarks I said that I hoped that I would succeed in satisfying the hon. Gentleman's reservations so that he could vote for the clause then before the Committee. I hope this evening—although I confess with somewhat less optimism than I had in Committee—by reasoned discussion of the effect of the amendments tabled to the clause, to show the House that some of the attacks on the clause and the alarms expressed in relation to it, and the fears, anxieties and reservations that have been voiced by Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), are misplaced.

I was expressly invited by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury and one or two other Opposition Members to cite examples and I shall start with that. I had not intended to use examples, because the examples were referred to in Committee and are there for all to read. However, doubts have been expressed about whether there is any mischief that must be dealt with in legislation. I shall confine myself to two examples of material that has emanated from the London borough of Haringey.

Amongst other things, the London borough of Haringey has published a leaflet containing an approved reading list. One book on the list calls for a ban on the wearing of wedding rings by teachers and on teachers talking to their pupils about their husbands and wives. Another book entitled "Young, gay and proud" is recommended as suitable reading for children aged 13 and older. The leaflet describes it as "very helpful to everyone." It describes homosexual acts in considerable detail. It was available in Committee, and I said that I could not believe that any Member of the Committee would regard that material as suitable reading for children aged 13.

I confine myself this evening to those two examples, and I remind the House against that background of the two key elements in clause 27. First, the clause is entirely concerned with the activities of local authorities. Secondly, it is concerned with the promotion by a local authority, or by persons assisted by it, of homosexuality, and the promotion of the teaching in schools that homosexuality is acceptable as a pretended family relationship. Nothing in clause 27 will put a homosexual at a disadvantage compared with any other person.

The provisions in subsection 2A(1) (b) are concerned with the promotion by local authorities of teaching of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship, and the need for that subsection has been questioned. However, we think that it is necessary. We do not think that it is damaging. It is the influence of local authorities on what goes on in schools that has given rise to much, if not most, of the public concern about the promotion of homosexuality by local authorities, and we wish to make it clear that the promotion of teaching in schools of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship is not to be permitted.

I endeavoured to explain to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and others the precise purpose of the subsection when the clause was first debated in Committee.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Minister explain to the House in detail why, only a year ago, Lord Skelmersdale — on behalf of the Minister's Department — rejected such legislation precisely because of the inclusion of the word "acceptability", and why his right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), a former Minister in the Department, was saying much the same thing on behalf of the Government? What has changed since then?

Mr. Howard: I shall deal with that point in due course, but I want now to deal with the amendment in detail.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): Just before the general election there was a similar debate in the House, when I supported what is now in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) was present on the Friday morning when I made it perfectly clear that my view was exactly the same as that of the Minister and other Conservative Members who are in the Chamber now.

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Howard: I shall give way in a moment — although perhaps I should sit down so that my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) can give way to the hon. Gentleman.

My right hon. Friend is effectively right in what he says. However, if the hon. Member for Copeland wishes to continue with his point, I shall give way.

Dr. Cunningham: It is a matter of record in the *Official Report* that the right hon. Member for Brent, North, speaking for the Government of the time, said that there were reservations and that the proposals were "premature".

Sir Rhodes Boyson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Minister will have to give way to the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson).

Mr. Howard: I give way to my right hon. Friend, but I should like then to get on with discussing the amendments.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: I am always delighted when the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has my speeches besides him. Nothing could be better reading at any time. I do not have it with me, but in the speech to which the hon. Gentleman referred I was talking about the Government's previous attitude. In May, when we debated the Local Government Act 1986 (Amendment) Bill, I defined exactly what our attitude was then. The hon.

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

Member for Copeland is talking in the past tense. I supported what I had said, and it was put to a vote that morning.

Mr. Howard: I endeavoured to explain to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and others in Committee, when the clause was first debated, that the precise purpose of the new section 2A was to put into legislative form the principle set out in the recent Department of Education and Science circular on sex education that homosexuality should not be portrayed as the norm. It is not right for pupils to be taught, in any school, that homosexuality is the norm. It is even less acceptable for local authorities to promote such teaching.

10.15 pm

Debating the section word by word, armed with a dictionary, does not help. The words comprise a coherent phrase, with several elements, and they encapsulate, in a way that the courts will be able to interpret according to the circumstances of each case, the mischief that we are addressing.

I recognise that there may be a need for teachers to touch on the subject of homosexuality in the classroom.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister define, for those of us who are not au fait with English educational definitions, what is meant by maintained schools? Does it exclude Eton, Harrow, Rugby or Winchester, from which Conservative Members come? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) allow his hon. Friend to ask his question?

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister say, with regard to schools that come under the Education (Scotland) Act 1981, what the effect will be on Gordonstoun, which is not an unknown school for members of the royal family? Will these practices be condemned, or will they go unquestioned in those schools?

Mr. Howard: I dealt with this matter in Committee. The Bill deals with local authorities, and clause 27 deals with the actions of local authorities and local education authorities. I said that if a case were made out for it to be extended in the way that the hon. Gentleman has suggested that would be considered by the Government.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Howard: No, I must explain the Government's attitude to the amendments.

In the Government's view, objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom, in the way that I suggested a short time ago, would be perfectly proper, because it is not promotion of homosexuality. Therefore, it is not necessary to qualify the prohibition in the way proposed in amendment No. 32. Nor is it necessary to make a clarification of the kind proposed by the hon. Member for Copeland in amendment No. 38. To suggest that pupils must continue to be given the advice, information and counselling that they need about homosexuality is different from being taught that homosexuality is acceptable as a pretended family relationship.

There is nothing in clause 27 that will prevent the legitimate provision of information, advice or unbiased counselling of pupils, but activities conducted by local authorities in a biased way or in a way that presents as a norm a sexual orientation that is not the norm would be stopped by clause 27. We believe that to be right.

I dealt earlier with amendment No. 47, which was proposed by the hon. Member for Deptford. Care, counselling and health education on AIDS and other diseases are part of the treatment or the prevention of the spread of disease. Therefore, I do not propose to advise my hon. Friends to accept the amendment, as it is unnecessary. As I said, it is more limited in its scope than the present provisions of the clause.

We are all against discrimination. We all want to protect civil rights. However, I ask the House to look more closely at amendment No. 37. On closer examination, it would provide a Trojan horse which, in the guise of something to which we all subscribe, would remove much of the effect of the clause proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), which was accepted in Committee, not only by the Government, but, as I said earlier, by the Opposition. I accept that using the clause as a Trojan horse may not be the intention of the hon. Member for Copeland, but I am less sure about some of his hon. Friends.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If the Minister will not accept the amendment, will he give an assurance that the clause will not, and indeed could not, be interpreted to say that local authorities were promoting homosexuality by licensing clubs, bars or venues used mainly by gay clientele?

Mr. Howard: That was one of the questions asked by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, who put it in the context of a music licence. Local authorities have a duty to grant music licences and to consider properly applications for music licences in accordance with the law. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that, in our understanding of the matter, the clause would not, in any way, affect the carrying out by local authorities of those duties.

I return to amendment No. 37, which is concerned not with discrimination by local authorities but with the attempts of local authorities to discourage discrimination by others. The amendment, therefore, becomes a busybody's charter. It deals, not with local authorities' own decisions, but with meddling with other people's conduct of their own business. More important, I draw the attention of the House to the phrase, "the doing of anything", which is a wide phrase. It can cover the promotion of homosexuality. In other words, the amendment is saying that a local authority can promote homsexuality if its purpose in doing so is to discourage discrimination or to protect civil rights.

Let us consider some of the things that some local authorities have considered doing, or might consider doing, with those intentions. We need look no further than the report of the annual conference of the Labour party in 1985. In 1985 the Labour party conference voted

"to call upon Labour local authorities to adopt practices and policies to prevent discrimination against lesbians and gay men".

What did the Labour party recommend under that heading? We need to look no further than the third item, which states:

"to support financially and otherwise special lesbian and gay 'phone lines, centres and youth groups".

I draw the attention of the House to the last two words, "youth groups". There could be no clearer notice of what

we can expect to see some local authorities continuing to do if we accept the amendment. The Labour party conference voted to support homosexual youth groups and to prevent discrimination against homosexuals. Therefore, the amendment would be a licence for local authorities to continue precisely the sort of activities against which the clause is directed. In the Government's view, if the Opposition's amendment were concerned directly with discrimination by local authorities, it would be unnecessary. As it stands, clause 27 will not provide any justification for a local authority discriminating against homosexuals. However, given the way in which the amendment is drafted, it would enable local authorities to circumvent the provisions of the clause and to permit the practices that have caused so much public concern.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) has dealt with the point that was raised by the hon. Member for Copeland and my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) about what happened a year ago. The fact is that those matters have given rise to widespread public concern. We have sought to deal with them in a way that reflects that concern, but still provides necessary safeguards. For those reasons, I advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the amendments and the new clauses that have been tabled by Opposition Members.

Dr. Cunningham: The first thing that I want to do is to reject as contemptible the Minister's sickening and, I suspect, deliberate, misrepresentations of the Labour party's position. As I made clear in Committee and again tonight, it is not and never has been the responsibility or the duty of a local authority or a local education authority to promote homosexuality, and it has never been Labour party policy that they should do so, either. The Minister has now heard me say that three times—twice tonight and once in Committee—so I can only conclude that his misrepresentations of the Labour party's position is deliberate and for the basest of political motives.

Mr. Howard: I made no comment about Labour party policy. All I did was to quote a resolution which was passed by the Labour party conference in 1985. Does the hon. Gentleman deny that that resolution was passed at that conference?

Dr. Cunningham: The Minister's slick barrack-room-lawyer approach—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I shall. The Minister is not doing anything for his reputation outside the House.

The Minister is not so clever as to have noticed that we deliberately moved amendments which did not remove the part of the clause which made it clear that a local authority shall not promote homosexuality. We deliberately did not seek to change that part of the clause—that is what is so dishonest about the Minister's misrepresentation of the circumstances. We could easily have done so but we did not because that is not our policy position.

I also reject what the Minister said about the, to use his words, "Trojan horse" amendments. No such intention or decent and proper interpretation can be put on the purpose or nature of the amendments that we tabled and on which we shall vote.

I regret to say that the performance not only of the Minister but of a number of his hon. Friends has done nothing to enhance the reputation of the House — nothing at all. He knows as well as we do that we are talking about the realities of our society—not only of society outside the House, but inside the House, including the Conservative Benches. He knows that very well, and I dare say that a number of his hon. Friends feel as sick as we do at his performance.

Mr. Tony Banks: I must confess immediately that I do not think that I have ever felt so frightened in the House as I do now. *[Interruption.]* That is the reason. If this clause goes through, the House will have taken a dangerous step down the road of intolerance.

There is no doubt in my mind that the clause is a bigots' charter. I know that many hon. Members on both sides of the House are frightened about the implications of the clause, and many will not have the courage to stand up and say so clearly.

I am not gay, but I know one thing, and it is that, if I were, I hope that I would be able to stand up and say so without any fear of intimidation or threat, either from within the House or from outside in society generally. There are many gay hon. Members on both sides of the House who, I am afraid, do not have that courage. It is not their fault. The intimidatory nature of society prevents them from saying that homosexuality is a perfectly normal state for any human being, if that person is homosexual. That is the important point. The clause talks about promoting homosexuality. Hon. Members know that one cannot promote homosexuality. It is a way of life, and it is one that many millions of our fellow citizens actually enjoy, or try to enjoy, but they face discrimination at all levels in society. Seeing what is going on in the House tonight, they will undoubtedly be far more afraid, if the clause goes through, than they were before.

10.30 pm

I see this as unalloyed Fascism. In many ways, I perhaps feel what somebody who was aware of what was going on in Germany in the early 1930s would have felt. It is the beginning of a nasty, insidious movement with which the Tory Government are now prepared to go along.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) read a statement that I hope many hon. Members found chilling. Conservative Members remember exactly what the Nazis did to homosexuals. They did to them what they did to Jews, gipsies and Communists. They herded them into concentration camps and liquidated them. I am not suggesting that a majority of Conservative Members would actually want to open up concentration camps, but I suspect that a significant minority would, and that is why the clause is so dangerous.

I should like to ask the Minister one specific question. He did not actually answer any of the points made by Opposition Members. The Minister knows that, if the Bill is passed, at some stage lawyers and judges will have to interpret what "promotion" means. The Minister has not given a lead. He could give a lead. Of course, judges cannot read *Hansard* to see what was in a Minister's mind when he made a speech and moved a certain clause. They can interpret legislation only as it is written. The Minister knows that this is too widespread — too diffuse — to make it possible to have an intelligent interpretation of the word "promote".

Let me ask the Minister a specific question about the arts. The clause adds censorship and attacks freedom in the same way in which it attacks civil rights. For example, all gay theatre companies are touring companies. They

[Mr. Tony Banks]

perform in local authority theatres or local authority-funded theatres. For example, Gay Sweatshop Theatre Company is the leading gay theatre in this country. *[Interruption.]* That sort of babble only confirms my worst suspicions of today's Conservative party. Its members are intolerant, bigoted, and they are not even prepared to sit and listen without hissing and making animal-type noises. That is an insult to animals. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has been a long debate. I sense that the House wants to come to a conclusion.

Mr. Banks: Let me ask the Minister a question. During the past year, Gay Sweatshop has played in local authority theatres in Liverpool, Stockton, Reading, Birmingham, Camden, Oxford, Bristol, Manchester and York. What happens when its members perform in one of those theatres? Will the local authority — *[Interruption.]* Obviously, my comments amuse the Crawley food mountain. I hope that the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) will listen carefully to what I say.

Will that local authority be challenged in the courts for funding a gay theatre group or allowing a gay theatre group to put on a performance in a theatre? Will the Minister make that absolutely clear?

The clause is dangerous. It is Fascist in its intent. Many Conservative Members are too stupid to realise that, too frightened to get up and say so, or too evil and should not be Members of the House.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I want to ask the Minister a straight question; I will sit down if he will do me the courtesy of answering it. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that we shall have a great deal of trouble because of the word "promotion". If a teacher who is homosexual or lesbian tells the children in the class that he or she is thus, will that in the mind of the Minister be regarded as promoting homosexuality?

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Howard: Of course, I will answer the question. The answer is what anyone who had considered the clause carefully and thought about what it means would expect. The answer would depend on the circumstances and the context in which that was said. If Opposition Members do not see that in some circumstances and in some contexts that could amount to the promotion of homosexuality and is not something which should be dealt with in this way, that reveals more than anything else about the need for the legislation.

Miss Lestor: I am grateful to the Minister. It is because I knew that he could not say a straight yes or no that the use of the word "promotion" is so dangerous. There are Conservative Members who believe—and I have heard them say so — that people who are lesbians or homosexuals should not be allowed in our schools. That is one danger of the Bill.

Hon. Members are missing some important points. I spent 18 months when I was not a Member of the House studying child sexual abuse. During that time many adults aged 40 to 50 came to me and said that as children and young people they had been sexually abused, not by school teachers but mostly by married men hiding themselves and their inclinations within the cloak of the family. They had been abused by their fathers, uncles and near relatives. They had never told anyone before because they thought they would not be believed, because they were ashamed or because they felt degraded. Those people are now beginning to come forward. We know that one in 10 children suffer some form of sexual abuse.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): We do not know that.

Miss Lestor: Just a moment. According to the MORI poll and other polls that have been done a minority of that one in 10 suffer sexual abuse within the family or from somebody known well to them. That is why we have encouraged school teachers, health visitors and others to open up the whole subject within schools and to encourage young people who are thus abused, who are confused and frightened by their experiences, and who are not sure what their sexuality is because of those experiences, to come forward and talk about it and to be counselled. We have encouraged other young people who are confused about their sexuality for different reasons also to come forward.

If the clause is passed without amendment many teachers will be worried about the role that they can adopt when dealing with young people. At some stage it is likely that someone will have to say to a young person, "You will have to accept your homosexuality. That is what you are." Teachers are nervous that they will not be allowed to say that.

We have opened up the problem of sexual abuse, we have encouraged young people to come forward at school with their problems and we have brought specialists into schools to talk to children about the subject. I believe that the word "promotion" will lead us back to the path of darkness and despair that was suffered by the 50-year-olds that I have met. I believe that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) should be ashamed of herself for sanctioning arson——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said that intolerance is growing and I said, "Quite right." I believe that intolerance of evil should grow.

Mr. Corbyn: I realise that the House is coming to the end of a long debate. However, I believe that there is an extremely serious subject and it is right that any hon. Member who wishes to make a contribution should do so. We should also seek to put forward some of the views that have been made known to us in the past few days.

My constituency has a number of lesbian and gay organisations and the local authority is prepared to put forward policies opposing any form of discrimination on the ground of sexuality. For the past five years, it has been hounded by the local and national press for that policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) — a very courageous and brave Member — came out on this subject and was hounded unmercifully by the gutter press and by political parties that are unfortunately represented on the Opposition and Government Benches. I am proud to say that, in the past five election campaigns, the people of Islington have been prepared to reject the path of bigotry. In June, my hon. Friend was re-elected with an increased majority.

Since the clause emerged — it did so suddenly last week — I have received — in common with other hon.

Members, I am sure — a large number of anguished letters and distressed phone calls from people — previously frightened—who had been prepared to come out as gay and lesbian. They suddenly saw that, in the clause, the light of oppression burnt fiercely. They realised that they would be in physical danger. They have witnessed the attacks on gay book shops and gay clubs and have witnessed the degree of Fascism that is aroused by such clauses moved by Conservative Members.

It was no accident that last summer, an Asian shop in Hackney was burnt down the day after *The Sun* claimed that Tamils arriving in Britain were about to swamp our society. It was no accident that, given the press publicity of the past few days, a gay organisation was attacked last weekend.

During the weekend I had phone calls and letters from many people who were concerned that politicians should stand up against the filthy tide initiated by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) who introduced the clause. On Sunday there was a special meeting of the London Labour party that I have the honour to serve as vice chair. I am pleased to say that that region—in the past it has attracted some odium from the press for supporting the policy of positive images regarding gay and lesbians—reiterated that policy and reaffirmed its position. It called for opposition to all that has been included in the clause.

Most Conservative Members are listening carefully to what I am saying, because they are beginning to realise that if the clause is passed unamended, we shall be introducing into our society a degree of censorship that will be a legal minefield for years to come. Such censorship will create fear in librarians, theatre managers, film directors, writers, publishers and booksellers, as well as in all sorts of other people who want the freedom to disseminate information and views. The House — a democratically elected assembly — will be giving the green light to a degree of intolerance that should not be accepted, here or anywhere else.

10.45 pm

I ask hon. Members to think for a moment before they vote. They know about the way in which the media have manipulated this issue, about the self-fulfilling prophecies and lies peddled by the Murdoch press and others, and about the fears about the alleged promotion of homosexuality in schools, of which there is not one shred of evidence. They know how, a week later, a telephone opinion poll is presented, claiming to support the views that have already been put forward by that same press. The House has a duty to protect the rights of people in our society, whatever their sexuality and opinions on these matters. If we approve the clause, we shall be doing precisely the opposite; so I appeal to the House to reject the clause, which is the start of a slippery slope to an intolerant and discriminatory atmosphere in this and so many other areas of our national and local life, and in society as a whole.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): It cannot be correct or responsible for the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) to say that it is quite right that intolerance should be growing. It can never be an appropriate attitude for hon. Members to applaud the growth of intolerance. We know whither fears and intolerance lead.

This is an illiberal, intolerant Bill. It is based on a complete misapprehension of what goes on in schools and of the policies of some local authorities. It is based, in short, on recycled Conservative election smears. It will lead to an increase in human misery. It is irresponsibly widely drafted, and will cause all sorts of problems in the interpretation for local authorities throughout the country.

The tone and attitude of Conservative Members does them no credit. The intolerance behind the Bill should give every responsible Member cause for fear and alarm. I urge every hon. Member to look to his principles and conscience and to vote down the clause by voting for the amendment.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Like you, Mr. Speaker, some time ago, I, too, sense that the House would like to move to a resolution of the issue. I certainly do not want to detain the House, but I hope that hon. Members will allow me a few moments to identify some of the main themes of the debate over the past two and a half hours, for the benefit of those who did not hear them.

It is regrettable that a matter of this importance has come before us after only a short Committee hearing of about two hours, followed by this two-and-a-half-hour debate. As someone said earlier, there is a suspicion that the House is being bounced into coming to a conclusion on this issue, and that is a matter for regret.

This is difficult and emotional ground for the House and it is difficult to get the checks and balances right. We must, for example, be prudent about the language that we use and we must be careful to eschew bogey men, caricatures and prejudice on both sides of the argument. The debate has been important, but I am saddened at the fact that we have not had more thoughtful consideration of the underlying implications of the clause.

We are essentially discussing civil liberties and civil rights more than we are discussing any particular sexual orientation. The Government have put forward the proposition that the Bill is necessary to deal with alleged irresponsible actions by local authorities and to protect children. I hope that the Minister will look carefully at the arguments advanced by the Opposition parties. In particular, I draw his attention to the courageous and powerful speech by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). His speech will repay careful study.

In particular, the Minister has not answered any of the questions that have been asked in the debate, and especially the question about why the Government have changed their position from what it was 12 months ago. The evidence is that they have changed, but the Minister gave no reason why that should have happened. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury asked about a series of examples of the kind of behaviour that may or may not be caught by the provisions of clause 27. The Minister gave no satisfactory answer to that; nor did he give a satisfactory answer to the question put to him by the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor).

The interpretation of words in the clause such as "promotion" and "pretended families" is still an outstanding question and I hope that members in the other place will look carefully at that. If the Minister had given an assurance on those important points and if Conservative Members had responded to the debate on the

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

amendment in a more positive way, we would have been prepared to withdraw amendment No. 32. That amendment merely seeks to provide that authorities

"may undertake sex education in the course of which an awareness of different sexual orientations may be taught by the local authority".

It is crucial that that amendment be made in order to avoid difficulties and confusion that the debate has anticipated. The Minister has given no assurances upon which we can rely. Therefore, I invite the House to vote positively in favour of amendment No. 32.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 309.

Division No. 116] **[10.52 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamble, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*

Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 37, in page 27, line 39, at end insert—

'(2A) Nothing in sub-section (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of discouraging discrimination against any homosexual person, or designed to protect the civil rights of any such person.'. — *[Dr. Cunningham.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 222, Noes 309.

Division No. 117] **[11.04 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann

Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael

Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Richard Ryder.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 38, in page 27, line 39, at end insert—

'(2A) Nothing in subsection (1) above shall be taken to prohibit the doing of anything for the purpose of providing information, counselling or advice to any pupil at a school or other educational establishment maintained by the authority as to his personal or social development or any family relationship which can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect that development.'.—*[Dr. Cunningham.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 208, Noes 306.

Division No. 118] **[11.13 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*

Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony

Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen,
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 31

Arrangements under Employment and Training Act 1973

Amendments made: No. 26, in page 28, line 39, at end insert:

'(ab) a body corporate established by an order under section 67 of that Act".'.

No. 27, in page 28, line 41, leave out

'concerned, on the day the authority'

and insert

'or body concerned, on the day the authority or body'.—*[Mr. Chope.]*

Local Government Bill

Order for Third Reading read.

11.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

This was the first Bill to receive a Second Reading in this Parliament. It will not be the first to receive its Third Reading and that is because we had 100 hours deliberating it in detail in Committee in 29 sittings. That was a thorough consideration of the Bill.

The two main provisions of the Bill concern compulsory competitive tendering and the outlawing of anti-competitive contract compliance clauses. It is significant that both those subjects were the subject of early day motions supported by many of my hon. Friends in the previous Parliament.

It is the Government's established policy to ensure that we obtain better value for money in local government. The Bill will facilitate that and it deserves the strong and enthusiastic support of the House.

11.29 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): This may not be the first Bill to receive its Third Reading in this Parliament —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Cunningham: However—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I suspend the sitting for five minutes while the Strangers' Gallery is cleared.

Sitting suspended at 11.30 pm.

11.35 pm

Mr. Speaker *resumed the Chair.*

Dr. Cunningham: The Under-Secretary of State said that this was the first Bill to complete its stages in the House this session. There will be few Bills more obnoxious than this one. It takes powers away from local authorities, it curbs their rights to use the media, it supports the Fascist apartheid regime in South Africa. *[Interruption.]* The Bill specifically brings aid and comfort to the apartheid regime in South Africa. It has the unique distinction of undermining civil rights abroad and doing exactly the same at home. Few Bills going through the House have that unique obnoxious facet. We are totally opposed to all its aspects, and we will divide the House on Third Reading.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I endorse what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said. there are four parts to the Bill, all of which are equally unacceptable to these Benches. We oppose competitive tendering being compulsorily imposed on local government, not because it is bad, but because the Government are compelling local authorities to do it according to the Government's wish. Hon. Members are not alone in opposing that aspect of the Bill, because competitive tendering is opposed by all the organisations of local government outside the House. It is also opposed by the Audit Commission, by academics and around the land.

The Minister said in relation to previous debates this evening that we are all against discrimination, yet it is clear in part II that the Government are prepared to countenance discrimination at home in relation to those with disabilities, ethnic minorities and women, and abroad particularly in relation to South Africa. By preventing local authorities from taking a moral stand on South Africa the Government have declared their true intentions and true colours and their willingness to sustain that regime.

On housing, the Government are preventing schemes that should have been able to go ahead, and they are preventing local authorities from being able to sell properties to housing associations at a reasonable price.

In the last part of the Bill the Government are adding to restrictions on local authority publicity, for which they have given no justification. Tonight they have evidenced their clear prejudice on matters of discrimination in relation to homosexuals and homosexuality, and, to cap it all, they are even to abolish the dog licence.

The Bill should be rejected. It enshrines more selfishness in the law of the land and confirms the dogma and prejudice for which the Government will be particularly remembered. Their morality is not the morality of the Opposition or of the country. The Bill must be resisted, and I hope that it will be defeated before it completes its passage through the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 308, Noes 215.

Division No. 119] **[11.40 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Budgen, Nicholas
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Burns, Simon
Allason, Rupert	Burt, Alistair
Amess, David	Butler, Chris
Amos, Alan	Butterfill, John
Arbuthnot, James	Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*	Carrington, Matthew
Ashby, David	Carttiss, Michael
Aspinwall, Jack	Cash, William
Atkins, Robert	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Atkinson, David	Chope, Christopher
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Baldry, Tony	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Batiste, Spencer	Colvin, Michael
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Conway, Derek
Bellingham, Henry	Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Bendall, Vivian	Cope, John
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*	Cormack, Patrick
Benyon, W.	Couchman, James
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cran, James
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Body, Sir Richard	Day, Stephen
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Devlin, Tim
Boswell, Tim	Dickens, Geoffrey
Bottomley, Peter	Dorrell, Stephen
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*	Dover, Den
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dunn, Bob
Bowis, John	Durant, Tony
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes	Eggar, Tim
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Emery, Sir Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Brazier, Julian	Fallon, Michael
Bright, Graham	Farr, Sir John
Brooke, Hon Peter	Fenner, Dame Peggy
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*	Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*	Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*	Fookes, Miss Janet
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick	Forman, Nigel

Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas

Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Rate Support Grant (Wales)

11.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): I beg to move,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1988-89 (House of Commons Paper No. 142), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Mr. Speaker: It will be convenient for the House if we also discuss the following motions:

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 158), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 159), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

Mr. Walker: Hon. Members will have had an opportunity to examine the reports and my statement to the House——

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Strangers Gallery has been cleared, but hordes of Welsh people would have been in the Gallery to listen to this debate on this important order. Therefore, I wonder whether the Gallery could be reopened so that the Welsh people can listen to the debate, or whether you would consider it wiser to adjourn until 1 o'clock tomorrow afternoon. We could have a debate for one and a half hours and then start Wednesday's proceedings at half-past 2. Perhaps we would then have a better response. Obviously my peroration must wait for another occasion because all my constituents have been turfed out of the Gallery.

Mr. Speaker: I can give the hon. Gentleman some comfort. I have already asked the Serjeant at Arms to reopen the Strangers Gallery. I am sure that when the hon. Gentleman gets up to make his brief contribution to the debate the Gallery will fill.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that we are all relieved that what will become a Gallery crowded with the constituents of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) will be able to witness the debate.

Hon. Members have had an opportunity to examine the reports and my statement to the House last week, which summarised my decisions. They will know that for 1988-89 I have provided for fair and realistic increases in all the key components of the settlement—increases which exceed the projected increase in costs for the economy as a whole. In retaining broadly the same block grant mechanism as last year, I have also introduced a high degree of stability to the rate support grant system. Consequently, on the basis of this settlement, councils will have a sound basis for planning and developing their services over the coming year.

It is, I know, inevitable that Opposition Members will say that the settlement is not good enough; they always do. It would be remarkable if they did not. But the record speaks for itself. The level of local government current expenditure since 1979-80 has increased in real terms by £152 million, or 11 per cent. During the years when Opposition Members controlled the purse strings, it fell in real terms by £58 million, or 4 per cent. Grant, too, has been set at the generous level of £1,256 million—about £1,200 per household.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman has his figures at his fingertips. Exactly how much money has been taken from Wales in rate support grant since 1979? Knowing that will enable us to put in proportion all the other figures that he gives. If he gives us the whole figure, without equivocation, that will assist us and the debate.

Mr. Walker: I shall certainly be happy to refer to those exact figures. I shall also give the right hon. Gentleman the figures for the reduction in grant that took place when he was a member of the Cabinet. The two sets of figures will compare well. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be proud of what he achieved during that period. I shall be pleased to give him both sets of figures in my final remarks. When the right hon. Gentleman was in the Cabinet, local government expenditure fell in real terms.

Mr. Foot: Would the right hon. Gentleman be good enough to give me the figure I asked for? Any other figures that he likes to bring up are OK with me, but how much has been taken from Wales since 1979?

Mr. Walker: We have not taken anything. Although the percentages have come down in cash terms, I shall be happy to give the right hon. Gentleman the figures, in real terms, that he wants. I hope he is proud of the figures I have just given — local government expenditure fell in real terms when he was a member of the Cabinet, and has risen in real terms during the time that I have been a member of the Cabinet. I hope he will reflect carefully on that.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Has my right hon. Friend seen the figures for total public expenditure in Wales, which show that we receive £108 per head, compared with £94 per head in England?

Mr. Walker: That is true on any figures or comparisons.

This, however, is not just a debate about numbers or the technicalities of the present rate support grant system. It is a debate about local government in Wales, about the provision of services, about the efficiency and effectiveness of those services, about the responsibilities which councils have to safeguard the interests of ratepayers by budgeting responsibly and about the need for local authorities to be sure that the importance of their role is recognised and supported by the Government and this House.

I must say that I have been impressed and encouraged in discussions with the leaders of Welsh local authorities, and in particular with their representatives at meetings of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, by their sense of purpose and determination to ensure that the services they provide reflect the needs of their communities. That does not mean that expenditure on those services must increase before they can develop further. The authorities know that they have a duty to secure efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. They also know that they have a responsibility to exercise sound stewardship over the use of the resources which they spend on behalf of their electorate. There is an overall budget of £1,894 million, which amounts to £1,800 per household in Wales. When we reflect that that is so, we might also bear in mind that the domestic household rate contribution is, on average, £300. We must recognise that this is an important part of their role.

I am confident that in responding to this settlement all councils will recognise that it will give them real and tangible support in providing the services that are essential to their communities and to Wales. In doing so, it is important that councils should plan those services and set their budgets in a way that is sensitive to the needs of their domestic and business ratepayers and complementary to the work that is being done to encourage and foster economic development in Wales.

Local authorities have a unique and important role in the ongoing process of economic regeneration, but expenditure by councils on important infrastructure work will not be as beneficial to their communities if rates are increased by an unreasonable amount.

Sir John Stradling Thomas (Monmouth): Will my right hon. Friend publish his projections for local authority rate rises for 1988-89 for spending in line with the settlement? That would be helpful to all concerned.

Mr. Walker: I shall make those figures available. I shall see that they are placed in the Library.

Sir Raymond Gower (Vale of Glamorgan): Will they give details of the effect on each authority?

Mr. Walker: They will reflect on each county and district authority. It is important that central and local government and the people of Wales work together in partnership to foster the interests of the whole Principality. I am especially conscious of the special needs of areas such as the south Wales valleys. I have already said that I shall bring forward in the new year my proposals for tackling the problems of the valleys. The local authorities concerned will have a vital role to play. In moving towards a new local government finance system, it is highly desirable that all concerned should be satisfied that the method for establishing the expenditure needs of local councils is sound.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): About three paragraphs ago, as the Minister struggled through his brief, he said that there would be a valleys initiative,. Do the rate support grant figures include the valleys initiative, or will that initiative be additional?

Mr. Walker: I am preparing a range of measures for the valleys, some of which will involve local government. If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures that we published about the rating effects of these proposals for the valleys, he will see that the valleys have done fairly well out of this settlement. I repeat that there will be a range of measures, some of which will be unconnected with the rate support grant. I know that the hon. Gentleman will welcome those other aspects with great enthusiasm.

The present arrangements have been developed over the years in conjunction with the local authority associations and generally provide an equitable basis for distributing grant. They take due account of factors which reflect differing needs throughout the Principality, including those of councils in sparsely populated areas and of councils in urban areas, including the valleys. In dealing with any system of this kind, there is always political pressure for changes to be made to secure a better result for a particular council. There is always room for improvement to reflect genuine changes in circumstances and I have asked my officials, in conjunction with the local authority associations, to continue to review the existing arrangements with this in mind. This settlement is both fair and realistic.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The right hon. Gentleman says that the settlement is fair and realistic and he has used the word "sensitivity". May I refer him to the problems in Wales, and especially those in Clwyd and in my constituency, about the provisions of speech therapy services? I have met many parents who are very worried about the lack of speech therapists. Given the massive budget that he has outlined, would he be prepared to look especially at the worries of parents who say that there are insufficient speech therapists in Clwyd and in my constituency?

Mr. Walker: I understand the anxieties in that respect. In the specific and supplementary grant estimates and in the provisions on education and the like, perhaps additional activity on that can be generated. I am interested in the subject because for some time I have been a trustee of a trust for charitable work for the dyslexic child. I am aware of the real problems connected with speech disadvantage and of the important work done by speech therapists.

As I say, this settlement is both fair and realistic and should enable local authorities to play a crucial and exciting role in conjunction with central Government in Wales. It reflects my firm commitment and support to local government, and it gives local authorities the means to continue to play an important role in Welsh life. I am sure that local authorities in Wales will respond to this opportunity in a responsible way, by setting budgets and rates at a reasonable level. If they spend in line with the settlement, rates should rise on average by no more than 1·3 per cent.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that in order to get the desired rate effect it will be necessary for the wage increases negotiated for both manual and white collar workers to be largely absorbed by efficiency increases? Will that mean that there will have to be redundancies and loss of jobs to balance the figures, to get the rate increases to which he referred?

Mr. Walker: When I have spoken to the local authorities, they have argued that the increases will enable them to obtain greater productivity and improve efficiency. They cannot have it both ways. The hon. Gentleman is right in saying that improved efficiency may cause a change in the nature of employment, but it would be an absurd local authority which said that it would go in for more inefficiency in expenditure in order to employ more people on an inefficient basis. It is important that high standards of efficiency are obtained in local government. I believe that local authorities accept that. If the high wage increases do not bring an improvement in productivity, there is a considerable argument that the adverse effect on jobs of inflationary wage increases without an improvement in productivity could be considerable, particularly in the Principality. I hope that in future negotiations consideration will be given to the impact of those negotiations. The settlement should commend itself to the House.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It is my wish for as many Back Bench colleagues as possible to take part in the limited debate, and, as I stated most of my objections, which remain unchanged, during the Minister's statement, I will try to be brief so as to facilitate other contributions.

The Secretary of State will appreciate that the debate has come close on the tail of the statement—literally one week later. The local authorities are still assessing the impact, but the Minister will be aware that, on behalf of the counties, Mr. Tettenborn has gone on record as saying that, as we forecast last week, his projection is that the settlement will cause a combination of rate rises and service cuts. The district councils have forecast that about 15 of the 37 districts will have rates increases in excess of 10 per cent. — higher than the Secretary of State's forecast. Only today they suggested that the average rise will be somewhere between 7 and 9 per cent., which is substantially higher than the going rate and, again, substantially higher than the Secretary of State has suggested.

I said in my response to the Secretary of State's statement that local authorities tend to have a better track record of forecasting than the Welsh Office. Only last year my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) forecast to the Minister's predecessor that the increases would be between 10 and 20 per cent. He was assured categorically by the then Secretary of State that in no case—not just in a few cases—would the rate bill in districts increase by anything like 10 to 20 per cent., yet 10 districts exceeded 10 per cent. and two districts exceeded 20 per cent.—21 per cent. in Dynevor and 26 per cent. in Colwyn.

The Secretary of State has made the point that successive spokesmen at the Dispatch Box have made. We look to local authorities to achieve savings through efficiency. No one objects to greater efficiency, but one must recognise that it is not an unlimited path which can be followed. It is not possible to go on deducting hypothetical sums year after year and expecting councils to meet those deductions through extra efficiency.

Let me demonstrate that assertion in the simplest way. About 70 per cent. of local authorities' costs are labour costs, and to achieve increased efficiency they would need reorganisation, mechanisation or computerisation. The essence of all three courses, which are managerial decisions, is that capital investment is needed. Only a week before the Secretary of State made a statement whose terms were contingent on increased capital investment to allow increased efficiency, he came forward with a capital programme that actually cut the capital allocation by £10 million.

The Secretary of State cannot have it all ways. If he wills efficiency, he must equally will the means to enable councils to make the investment to make greater efficiency possible. There are limits to how much one can achieve by the simple process of axing manpower without putting in place services of a different kind—computerised and so on—to ensure that the services necessary to our people can be sustained.

We hear about all manner of algebraic formulae when we discuss the rate support grant. However, the critical formula — what matters to our people in Wales — remains the sum that is available to spend in relation to the present quality of services and the quality of services to which they are entitled to aspire. As I said last week, it is no good using the slick Treasury formula of real increases based on simple cost-of-living assessments. According to the Chancellor, the cost of living will increase by 4·5 per cent. in the next year. That is his prophesy, not ours. That means that the average family needs an extra 4·5 per cent. to stand still. There is a tendency to assume that the cost-of-living index is a universally applicable yardstick of cost increases. Let us remember that when we

talk of real increases, we are talking about increases in the cost of living geared to the average spending pattern of the average family. But we are talking about nothing of the kind tonight; we are talking about labour-intensive services in county and district councils.

The Secretary of State knows — his officials, in conjunction with council officials agreed this — that to meet higher cost increases £60 million more than he has allowed for would be needed to enable councils simply to sustain the quality of services that they offer at the moment. Most hon. Members will recognise that it is too much to expect local authorities to deliver that £60 million through extra efficiency this year. That would not have been possible even if the capital investment had been made available to local authorities to enable them to install new systems; in fact, that capital investment has been denied them.

It is important that the people of Wales do not allow the Government to use the counties and districts as their bodyshield to take the blame for the cuts that they have imposed. Will the Secretary of State confirm to the people of Wales that the councils have been placed over a barrel by the combination of his statement last week with the penalty system that the Government are operating concurrently? Will he make it clear to those who say that, despite the £60 million shortfall, there need be no cuts in services, that under this vindictive penalty system — the so-called negative marginal grant system — if councils tried to spend ratepayers' money to make up the shortfall that he announced last week, they would need to raise not just £60 million but a further £30 million to make up for the fine that would be imposed on them by the Government in the form of cuts in their grants? In fact, to make up the shortfall imposed by the Government, they would need to raise £90 million extra from the ratepayers and that would mean an extra 30p on the rates.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I am struck by the right hon. Gentleman's conversion to the benefits of efficiency. He then suggested that cuts were being made in services. How can he square those two points with the third fact that is emerging of a significant increase in staffing levels in Welsh local authorities that is predicted to continue? How can he square those three points?

Mr. Williams: I invite the hon. Gentleman to participate in the debate that will take place tomorrow and on Thursday on the Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill. He will find that, as a result of the poll tax being introduced by the Conservative party, it will be essential — as I hope to show tomorrow — for local authorities to recruit on a substantial scale to meet the requirements that the Government will be imposing on them by changing rating systems.

A week ago I suggested to the Secretary of State that as the extra spend allowed in Wales this year is only 5·3 per cent. compared with 7 per cent. in England, that means that our authorities are losing a possible £27 million of spending power because they will not have the same 7 per cent. formula. The Secretary of State shook his head last week in disapproval and he shakes his head again tonight. He did not give a detailed answer to that point. If that is wrong, it should be exposed and explained. However, I understand that there will be a £27 million shortfall and I should welcome an explanation from the Secretary of State about that. I recognise the problems of making a statement, but last week hon. Members asked about 24 questions during the statement and the Secretary of State addressed only eight of them.

During the statement I stressed that the Government grant as a proportion of expenditure has fallen this year from 66·7 per cent. to 66·3 per cent. That is a cut of only £6 million, but it is another cut. However, the Secretary of State was unable to answer the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) about the loss to Wales. When we consider the percentage of grant that was paid in 1978-79, we see that the cumulative loss to Wales has been £750 million. As I said, it is not just that we have lost £750 million. That money has to be raised from the ratepayers to sustain services and is not available for other necessary spending in Wales.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that central Government spending on education in Wales has decreased by 10 per cent. since 1979 while spending by local government has increased by 44 per cent.? Local government has to make up the shortfall that we see in crumbling buildings, the shortage of books and the many services to which parents have to contribute.

Mr. Williams: Exactly. As my hon. Friend has said, it comes back to the families, households, parents and children. The £750 million cut on a household basis means that every household in Wales has lost more than £700 worth of Government grant since the Government came to office and began to cut back their percentage of RSG.

That is happening in an area of Britain with the lowest household income, an area with 42 per cent. of its households — households, not individuals — on annual incomes of less than £4,000 a year. The Government have taken the equivalent of £700 from each of those households. Considering the way in which Wales has been deprived in the past, why on earth did the Secretary of State have to deprive us further?

12.20 am

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I start from a premise that is not so dissimilar from that of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) — it was a pleasant change to hear him in a more measured mood tonight — though I come to very different conclusions from him.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the settlement that he has achieved for Wales. It is substantially better than the one that England has had, and I know that much of his success has been due to the way in which he fought his corner in the Cabinet, as did his predecessor, my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell. My right hon. Friend has been the more able to get a good result because of the sensible and co-operative attitude adopted by Welsh local authorities at virtually every level. What is more, they have responded to my right hon. Friend's clear readiness to work in partnership with them.

My right hon. Friend brings to his job an even greater readiness than did his predecessor to recognise the indispensable part that public funding can play in attracting private investment and the part that a fair level of rate support grant can play in enabling local authorities to do their job better, though I recognise that there is a valid argument between the two sides of the House about what constitutes "a fair level". Thanks also to my right

[Sir Anthony Meyer]

hon. Friend, Wales has largely avoided the constant acrimony that has bedevilled relations between central and local government in England.

There is always scope for more efficient management by local authorities. Nowhere is this more evident than in education, but here we come up against a difficulty that is partly of the Government's making. A lot of rather glib talk about parent power and the right to choose is making it far more difficult for local education authorities to carry through schemes which necessarily involve closing down some schools and changing the nature of others. These closures will always be fiercely fought by the parents concerned and by the local councillors on the education committee.

Furthermore, local authorities have a valid argument when they claim that their costs have gone up more than the rate of inflation, because their operations are highly labour-intensive and wage rates, which are nationally bargained and over which they exercise no control, have risen well ahead of inflation. And local authorities do not have the same possibility of streamlining their labour force as manufacturing industry enjoys. Indeed, there are now really serious shortages in several departments. The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) talked about speech therapists. In Clwyd we have a dramatic shortage of social workers in many areas of the county.

None of this is any reason for relaxing the pressure on local authorities to increase their efficiency, both by cutting costs and by finding ways of generating revenue, but it is important to recognise, as my right hon. Friend manifestly does, that there are instances where a capital allocation now, or a tapering subsidy, may enable a local authority to make worthwhile savings or produce substantial revenues later, and the RSG properly takes account of this possibility, and should go on doing so.

A case in point is the Bodelwyddan castle project, which my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) criticises so strongly. I make no complaint about that, and it is right that Clwyd county council should be kept under the most relentless scrutiny to ensure that the project is being carefully managed. None the less, this is a project that will do a great deal to enhance the tourist image of north Wales. Although it is within my constituency, the benefits from it, situated as it is alongside the A55 expressway, will fan out along the coast. It will provide the perfect stopping place for families travelling further west along the coast, as well as an ideal excursion for those spending their holidays in north-east Wales and day visitors to the area. In short, it will be of benefit to north Wales, even to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn.

12.25 am

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): The Secretary of State has tried to paint an optimistic picture of his rate support grant settlement for 1988-89. That is his privilege, but he should not expect other hon. Members to agree with his conclusions.

The right hon. Gentleman's spending plans affect many of our constituents in their daily lives. Three sectors are affected: first, there is the effect on services; secondly, there is the impact on capital expenditure; and, thirdly, there is the resulting effect on rates.

With regard to the effect on services, the education system is under stress, and the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) mentioned some of the effects of that. Social services in many local authorities are near to breaking point. If that is contrasted with the budget for the police force—which we all support—we see that it has received a larger slice of cake than some of the other sectors that need the resources.

In Powys the block grant has fallen as a proportion over the past 12 years by 15 per cent. In the past eight years it has fallen by 10 per cent. Labour costs account for two-thirds of all costs. The grant-related expenditure formula is not a fair measure statistically and it is centrally assessed, yet there is great variability in factors operating in Wales.

Wage settlements have impinged on expenditure. For example, manual workers' wages have increased by 10 per cent., wages for home helps by 18 per cent., and teachers' wages by between 8 and 9 per cent. When one compares the two thirds of local authority costs which are labour costs with the 4·3 per cent. increase in costs in the Secretary of State's statement—only 1 per cent. on top; in other words, a 5·3 per cent. increase—one finds that there is an immense gap between the increases in labour costs and the award made. In this light the award is seen to be not so generous, and it puts councils under pressure.

The block grant will remain at two-thirds of expenditure of local authorities in Wales. Approximately £5 million has been lopped off it this year. In July 1987 Powys was expecting to receive £200,000 more than it will receive under the award.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Does my hon. Friend agree that these figures show that yet again the Government have failed to have proper regard to the sparseness of the population of rural mid-Wales? As a result, we are facing cuts in education, which we can see in our schools, and cuts in hospital services.

Mr. Livsey: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Secretary of State should have a super-sparsity factor for areas of little population.

The effect of the settlement on capital expenditure programmes must not be ignored. The Secretary of State knows from my remarks in the Welsh Grand Committee my views on the inadequacies of the Welsh Office's roads programme. However, housing is one of the weakest points of Government policy in Wales. There was a drop in the housing capital allocation from £154 million to £145 million, which was a 10 per cent. drop in real terms. We heard about that matter from the Welsh Office of the Association of District Councils today.

Forecasts are based on a continuing buoyant level of council house sales. During the Secretary of State's statement last week, three of us asked why more council house receipts could not be spent at above the 15 per cent. level that is allowed. The Secretary of State did not respond to that question because, I believe, he does not believe in his own Government's policy.

Receipts from council house sales now play an important part in the financing of local government and are an accounting device. There should be a gradual phased allowance of more council receipts being spent on new housing stock. The figures before us depend on more council receipts, when so far in the current year the take of council receipts has fallen short of the Welsh Office's

own target. We believe that those council receipt targets cannot be increased. The scope is not there. Much of the stock has already been sold, and when one considers average incomes in Wales, one realises that the possibility of people buying their own council houses is now slight.

Finally, how will the Secretary of State's settlement affect the rates? Without question, they will increase and by more than any of us would like. The Government's penalties for that will not help. We accept that efficiency measures will play a part, but they cannot be expected to play all the part. The block grant percentage is continuously reducing, yet local authorities must still provide and maintain services. It is ratepayers who suffer. In my constituency in Powys the ratepayers' contribution to running the authority has increased by over 50 per cent. during the eight-year period during which the block grant has declined by over 10 per cent. The fact is that Government policy is having a direct bearing on rate increases, which affects the very people whom the Government least wish to penalise. As a former lecturer, one is tempted to write on the bottom of the report, "Must do better."

12.31 am

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I was struck by the contributions of the two opening speakers in the debate. Naturally, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State started with a measured, positive and realistic approach to the rate support settlement for 1988-89 and local council spending in general. It must have been persuasive, because seemingly in reply we had a measured, positive and realistic contribution from the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). Indeed, I was fascinated to note that he appeared to be going against all the previous arguments that we have heard from Opposition Members on the subject of local council spending. Fascinatingly, he turned that on its head and is now a convert to the cause of efficiency, but efficiency achieved by "extra investment". Again, that is the simple answer, "Throw more money at the problem and it will disappear.

I was disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman could not answer my intervention when I asked him to draw together his conversion to efficiency, his allegation about cuts and the fact that currently there is a significant increase in staffing in local government in Wales. I appreciate that I caught the right hon. Gentleman on the hop——

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the hon. Gentleman want the answer now?

Mr. Jones: I give way to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alan Williams: The hon. Gentleman must at least be aware that to cut 5,000 jobs in the Department of Health and Social Security the Government transferred responsibility for housing benefit and DHSS benefits to the local authorities. Therefore, the local authorities had to take on extra people to do the work. It was quite logical and inevitable.

Mr. Jones: I am afraid that once again the right hon. Gentleman has shot himself in the foot. He previously resorted to spurious claims about extra staffing for the community charge, but that is no justification for this current year, nor is there any need for any local council to employ any extra people or spend any extra money during 1988-89. He is now resorting to talking about history. I am talking about the current year and the extra staffing that is taking place at the moment.

My right hon. Friend made the point that, inevitably, Opposition Members will say that the settlement is not good enough. He could not have said a truer word. The stock approach that is always trotted out is that it is not enough. Even if the Opposition's demands are realised, the ultimate answer is that it is too little and too late.

Surely we have all come to curse the advent of the word processor, which churns out such stock answers one after the other. If we think more deeply about the matter, we note that local council expenditure has increased by 11 per cent. in real terms under this Government. The Opposition say that that is not enough, yet when they were in office it was even less. When that is related to the fact that under the previous Labour Administration local council spending in Wales fell in real terms by 4 per cent., their failure is compounded. Where is the admission from the Opposition? Where is the apology? But that is not a unique approach. There sit the representatives of the only Government ever to cut the Health Service. What answer do they have to that? They scream, "Cut, cut, cut, cut," in the hope that they will be believed, but they certainly will not be.

My right hon. Friend projected that rates should on average rise by no more than 1·3 per cent. if local councils follow through. I am not sure that I share his confidence if such is an authoritative prediction. Such a prediction would assume wise spending on all the important priorities of local councils. It would also assume a universal concern for the burden on the ratepayers.

The Labour group on Cardiff city council is already considering proposals for a double figure rates increase next April. Unfortunately, that will be approximately 10 times more than the projection mentioned by my right hon. Friend. In Cardiff we have an unbalanced council. I fear that the Labour group will be able to have its way on that exorbitant increase because it will be able to rely on its fellow Socialists in the LSD alliance, or whatever it will be called by that time.

Like the right hon. Member for Swansea, West I fear that that will be the case with many other councils in Wales. I advance just one reason for that. Next year will not be local election year. The local councils in Wales will not have to face the electorate and there will not be the same regard as in an election year.

I am afraid that I know the system all too well in Cardiff, because in the off years we have had peak increases of 26, 54, and 94·5 per cent. It is only because of the Government's success in reducing inflation that the last peak was as low as 26 per cent. However, sadly, that was about six times more than the going rate of inflation, when the previous peak of 94·5 per cent. was only about four times the growing rate of inflation.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's settlement. I congratulate him on what he has achieved in fighting his corner in Cabinet. We should all join him in imploring the local councils of Wales to follow through in achieving rate increases of no more than 1·3 per cent.

12.37 am

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): In the media release last week and his speech tonight, the Secretary of State said that the rate support grant settlement is fair, reasonable

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

and realistic. Indeed, he goes further than that. He refers to the Welsh local authorities as being better than their English or Scottish counterparts.

I only wish that the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) felt the same way about the local authorities in Wales. I suspect that he does not, because the majority of those local authorities are Labour controlled and they are still reasonable authorities, much better than any Conservative examples, because they do not exist in the Principality of Wales.

What is certain is that the local authorities in Wales, and district councils in particular, have for the past few years kept their rates and expenditure at a reasonable level and have effectively achieved the unachievable — maintaining services at a good level while having to comply with the sort of restrictions that we have seen over the past few years from the various rate support grant settlements. Much good it has done them. Their reward, year by year—and again this year—in the rate support grant settlements has been a decrease in the amount of grant that they have received.

The aggregate rate support grant settlement for the whole of Wales has been reduced by about £5 million, but the effect on individual Welsh local authorities has been even more severe. Five years ago, when Lord Crickhowell was Secretary of State for Wales, 60 per cent. of Torfaen's expenditure was met by the rate support grant settlement. In 1988-89 it is below 50 per cent.

The rate support grant settlement is unrealistic because it does not take into account the impact of inflation on local authorities. Moreover, it does not take into account the fact that 54 per cent. of the budget of many local authorities in Wales is swallowed up by items over which they have no control. Last year there was a 10·7 per cent. pay increase for manual workers and an increase of nearly 9 per cent. for craftsmen, but this year's rate support grant settlement provided for an inflation rate of only 5 per cent.

The Secretary of State says that local authorities in Wales should be reasonable and that they should impose rate increases of less than 2 per cent., yet the committee for the Welsh district councils has said within the last few days that if services are to be maintained at their present standard many Welsh local authorities will have to impose rate increases of over 10 per cent. Most of those local authorities are valley authorities that suffer the greatest amount of deprivation in Wales. Their rates will have to be increased by that amount just to ensure that the services that are so vital to the people who live in those areas are maintained—not even improved, as they should be.

The Secretary of State says that rents will have to be increased by over £1·60 a week and that the rate fund contribution to the housing revenue accounts of district councils must be reduced. Many of the pensioners' schemes in the valley communities and elsewhere rely on that income. If the Secretary of State so desired, he could, at a stroke, change the face of Welsh housing, which needs to be changed a great deal. He could release the money that is lying in the coffers of local authorities. The Secretary of State could build new houses with those capital receipts and provide homes for the homeless. I asked a question a few weeks ago about the number of people in Wales who are waiting for houses, and I was told by the Under-Secretary of State that those figures are not kept. How can the Secretary of State know how many houses are needed in Wales if he does not know how many people are waiting for houses? If the Secretary of State released that money for improvements and repairs, he would ease the burden on the housing revenue accounts, and rent increases would be unnecessary.

I was the chairman of my local authority's finance committee for eight years. The Conservative party was in office for seven of them. Throughout those seven years there was continuous underfunding of the services that are provided by Welsh local authorities. The rate support grant settlements are bedevilled by unfathomable figures and meaningless jargon. The poll tax will make no difference to what has happened in recent years. This rate support grant settlement is no credit to the Secretary of State for Wales. It sells Wales short.

12.45 am

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) made the point, although he may not have meant to, of the importance for local authorities to secure moderate wage increases. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should have strayed onto the subject of home improvement grants, considering the last Labour Government's appalling to disgraceful record on that issue. In just one year of this Government we spent more on home improvements than the previous Labour Government did in the whole of their term of office.

As my right hon. Friend is aware, two of the local authorities covered in whole or in part by my constituency, Delyn borough council and Clwyd county council, lose out in the settlement as a result of changes in grant-related expenditure. On the other hand, Rhuddlan borough council, part of which is in my constituency, gains significantly. Clwyd county council loses out primarily because of a reduction in the number of further education students. I spoke this afternoon to the county treasurer, Mr. Dalby, and I shall be raising in writing on his behalf several detailed, complex points with my right hon. Friend. Delyn borough council also loses out because of data changes to do with lower capital allocations and a large European regional development fund grant, but the council's chief executive is aware of and appreciates the reasons why.

As my right hon. Friend said in his opening remarks, the debate is not just about this particular rate support grant settlement; it is also about local government in Wales and the efficiency and effectiveness of local government services. I am fortunate to represent in whole or in part two reasonably good to outstanding local authorities, Rhuddlan borough council and Delyn borough council. I only wish that Clwyd county council would emulate them.

I know that a certain hon. Gentleman—perhaps two as they are sitting together, the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), who represent parts of Clwyd — would agree strongly with that remark.

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West) *rose*——

Mr. Raffan: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. Certainly the hon. Member for Wrexham in a previous rate support grant debate, went as far as to describe Clwyd county council as "rotten".

Mr. Martyn Jones: I remind the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) that Clwyd county council is run by a coalition of independents and Tories.

Mr. Raffan: We are well aware that the council is, sadly, run by its officers, it being a hung council. The hon. Member for Wrexham is nodding in agreement with me. Perhaps he can sort out the differences on the Opposition Benches; I hesitate to intrude in a family Labour party quarrel between the hon. Members for Wrexham and for Clwyd, South-West, but as they are sitting next to each other perhaps they can sort it out between themselves.

I wish to make three specific points on how the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of local government in Wales can be improved, using Clwyd as an example. First, in relation to manpower, all local authorities need to bear in mind the words of my hon. Friend the Minister for Employment who said in the debate yesterday that unemployment can only be tackled through the creation of new jobs in the wealth-creating sector of the economy. Local government is part not of the wealth-creating sector of the economy, but of the wealth-consuming sector.

Nothing has a more dramatic impact on current spending, and so on rate rises, than increases in local government manpower. I am sure that the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West will listen closely to my next point. Clwyd is to be commended for reducing the number of full-time employees by 734, or 8·2 per cent., between September 1979 and September this year, but the beneficial effect of that has been undermined by the parallel increase in part-time employees during the same period—up by 953 or 16·5 per cent. That has had the effect in full-time equivalent terms of diminishing the reduction in manpower to 327, or 2·9 per cent.

More can be done to reduce manpower. There is particular need for the Audit Commission to study more closely the duplication by, and overlap between, the activities of different tiers of local government. I believe that the Opposition are "unitarians" in local government terms, and presumably one of the reasons for that is their belief that there is overlap between the different tiers.

In Wales as a whole there has been an increase, however slight, in the number of full-time equivalent local authority staff, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) has said, in the second quarter of this year compared to the second quarter of last year. That continues the increase of recent years and is a cause for concern. To ensure maximum efficiency, there is a need for all local authorities closely to monitor and to control their staffing levels.

My second point relates to surplus school places. As at October this year, there were 11,235 surplus places in primary schools in Clwyd. The current number at secondary level is not available, but, as of last year, it was 4,075, and, because of falling rolls, the county council expects it to rise to 9,200 by 1990.

The cost of keeping 15,000 school places empty is £2·3 million, or nearly 5p on the rates. Removing even a fraction of them would produce substantial revenue savings that could be redeployed with great advantage elsewhere in the education budget. What is true of Clwyd is true of Wales as a whole. There are more than 125,000 surplus school places in the Principality.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am a little perplexed about the hon. Gentleman's comment about surplus school places. In my constituency, there are many classes with more than 30 children in them. Clearly there are reasons for that in rural and urban areas. Instead of talking about surplus places, why does not the hon. Gentleman talk about cutting class sizes? I asked the same question of the Secretary of State. Why could he not, as a matter of policy, set a class size of no more than 26 pupils? Does the hon. Gentleman agree with that?

Mr. Raffan: The hon. Gentleman answered his own question. There are urban primary schools in my constituency in which class sizes are even higher than 30. But if we remove some of the surplus places, particularly in rural areas, the money saved can be redeployed to reduce the size of cramped and overcrowded classes in certain primary schools. Redeploying money saved by removing surplus places is an excellent way in which that could be done.

As I said, what is true of Clwyd is true of Wales as a whole. There are over 125,000 surplus school places, costing nearly £20 million to keep empty.

My third and final point relates to the revenue implications of capital expenditure. Loan charges in Clwyd have risen from £324,000 in 1982-83 to £780,000 in 1987-88. Total loan charges over that five-year period have amounted to £3,683,000. Local authorities must restrict major capital projects to statutory obligations, otherwise statutory services will suffer severely.

I had hoped to get through my speech without mentioning Bodelwyddan castle. It was a challenge that I had set for myself. But as the matter was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), the House will not be surprised to hear that I express my disagreement with him. It is a wrong priority to spend £4·5 million on that project by 1991, with resultant loan charges, debt repayments and running and maintenance costs of over £500,000 a year. That could well be at the cost of 34 additional primary school teachers.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been unduly modest in describing this as a fair and reasonable settlement. Wales's share of the total grant for England and the Principality has steadily increased from 7·25 per cent. under Labour to 8·4 per cent. under the Conservative Government. Wales has done well again this year. My right hon. Friend has continued his predecessor's fine record. The figures that he gave for local government expenditure in Wales, which has increased in real terms by £152 million, or 11 per cent. under this Government, is in stark contrast to the Opposition's record. The £56 million drop in local government expenditure in Wales under the last Labour Government — that 4 per cent. drop — torpedoes the speech of the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) and all the sanctimonious utterances from the Opposition on local government expenditure.

12.53 am

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I shall briefly address the issues and, in particular, the Secretary of State's remarks about the reasonable and fair settlement. Those of us who live in Wales know that it is not a reasonable and fair settlement.

We hear Conservative Members juggling the figures, but those of us who live in the valleys know the reality of local government and local government expenditure. We have schools that have not been painted for years. We have roads in a deplorable state. We have houses that desperately need improvement grants. I pay tribute to the Government for giving substantial amounts to improve houses in the valley communities. But why have they cut

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

that money? The number of houses in the Rhondda that need improvement grants is 18,000. So 18,000 pre-1919 houses in one constituency are waiting for improvement. The Secretary of State says that the figures are reasonable and fair but we look on that statement with scepticism.

Mr. Martyn Jones: The same position appertains in north Wales and in Clywd, which has already been discussed tonight. Clywd county council, through the Tory chairman of the social services committee, has asked for more money. He and a colleague voted with the Labour group because they felt that the social services were so badly stretched that danger point had been reached.

Mr. Rogers: I am sure that the position is the same in north and mid Wales as it is in the valley communities.

Perhaps the Secretary of State can answer some points when he replies. Are we to assume that all moneys for the valleys initiative are to be new and separate moneys and are not included in the grant? Will the Secretary of State make more money available for the reclamation of derelict land by local authorities apart from other money available elsewhere?

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) intervened earlier to draw out from the Secretary of State that Welsh local authorities received £104 per head in grant as opposed to £98 in England. I wish that the hon. Member would start scrapping for Wales and that he would be a little partial. Although he is a translated Londoner he should remember that he represents a Welsh constituency. He should start fighting for his Welsh constituents instead of intervening with such fatuous remarks.

12.56 am

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): It is typical of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that he not only gets wrong what I said, but sees it as an insult to Wales. I was merely pointing out that, far from being hard done by, we are doing better in terms of public expenditure per head than local authorities in England. That is something of which we can be proud, because it means that the Secretary of State for Wales and his predecessors have fought hard to ensure that Wales gets a larger percentage of expenditure than England.

That is borne out by the figures that my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) has given. Since 1981 the Welsh share of the total grant for England and Wales has risen from 7·4 per cent. to 8·3 per cent. and it will rise again in 1988-89 to 8·4 per cent. The reasons are clear. Local authorities in Wales have a better record on expenditure than England and Scotland, and that has been rewarded. Spending in Wales has risen by 11 per cent. more than inflation since 1979 compared with 17 per cent. in England. Rates in Wales have risen by about 15 per cent. more than the rise in the RPI in Wales, compared with over 48 per cent. in England since 1979. So we have a good record in Wales on local government expenditure. We can be proud of that. In addition, we get 66 per cent. in grant compared to 46 per cent. in England. That ought to be remembered.

Given the figures for the coming year, it should be possible for Dyfed county council to reduce its rates bill by 2·1 per cent., Preseli to reduce its rates by 2·6 per cent., and South Pembroke to cut its bill by 2·7 per cent. if they follow the guidelines in the Government statement. I shall be looking, as I am sure all my constituents in those local authority areas will, to see that that happens.

There are some ominous signs in regard to Dyfed county council. In recent years it has constantly ignored Government guidelines; it put its rates up by 7 per cent. last year and by 19 per cent. the year before. I noticed in the local newspapers recently that the chief officers in Dyfed have been awarded quite substantial increases in pay. That has caused concern among local electors and throughout Pembrokeshire.

Out of the three old counties of Dyfed, South Pembroke provides the most rate income, yet we do not get a fair share of the services that are provided by Dyfed. I am sure that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) shares the concern in Pembrokeshire about the number of county council services that are being drawn towards the centre, in Carmarthen, to the detriment of his constituents and mine. If the county council is anxious that support is given to everyone in the county it does not do much good to start centralising services in the area represented by the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) where unemployment is only 6 per cent. compared to levels of 24 per cent. in Fishguard and 17 per cent. in my constituency. If the county council is contemplating any further centralising moves, I hope that it will consider the effect of such moves on local unemployment.

I believe that the present settlement is good for education. The RSG provision for education in 1988-89 will be £830 million, which is 8·7 per cent. higher than the revised provision for the current year, which in turn, was 17 per cent. higher than the final settlement for 1986-87. Therefore, since 1979-80 educational expenditure in real terms, has increased by 22 per cent. in the primary sector and by 31 per cent. in the secondary sector. That illustrates the Government's commitment to ensuring that we get the best education for the children whom we represent.

The current expenditure of local authorities on the maintenance of school buildings has risen from the 1978-79 level of £53·85 per pupil at constant prices, to £60·5 per pupil in the current financial year. That demonstrates the Government concern to do something about the old primary schools and some of the older secondary schools in Wales that need repair.

We should also consider the provision of money for the local education authorities training grant schemes. In the current year the provision is £11·86 million and it will increase to £12·28 million. However, I am sure that all hon. Members are worried that Her Majesty's inspectors recent report on in-service training in Wales, showed that there were serious deficiencies in the way in which some of the money had been spent. I hope that the Secretary of State and the Minister will consider carefully how that money is spent in the coming year so that the recommendations of the HMI report are adhered to and we get the best value for the £12 million that will be spent.

1.2 am

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The reward that has been handed out to the Welsh local authorities will not be welcomed in Newport. If this settlement is judged a reward by the Government, I am sure that the Newport authority would prefer to be punished.

When the Government figures were first introduced I asked what the settlement would be for Newport. I gave

precise figures and asked for them to be confirmed, but I received no answer. Let us consider what the settlement will mean for that authority. As a result of essential increases following the wage negotiations relating to the teachers' strike and capital expenditure—most of it in Newport—on job creation and encouraging new work, it has been estimated that, to stand still and cope with inflation Newport expenditure must increase by 7·5 per cent. That is the figure that has been given by the authority's treasurer.

We have heard about various figures—4·3 per cent. and 5·63 per cent.—but Newport has fared badly. Over a long period this council has been acknowledged by all parties to be efficient and to be providing good value and cost-effective services. However, Newport has not done well and its reward is a princely increase of 1·9 per cent. compared to last year's settlement. As a result, there must be a rates increase of 9·3 per cent. if the council is to keep up with inflation, but if it seeks to continue its valuable work on job creation and capital schemes the district rate must increase by 10 per cent. The Secretary of State must acknowledge that. We have heard many fine words, but what is this? Is it a confidence trick? We have heard the fine promises, but now we see the reality.

I should, perhaps, have started with a word of croeso to the Government Front Bench. We have had some eight hours of debate in this black December for local authorities in Wales, and tonight the awful, destructive Local Government Bill was finalised. To its eternal shame, the Welsh Office Front Bench put in not a single appearance during the past two days. Even more remarkable has been the characteristic caricature of tabloid press-type local government from the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones). It is a myth and a fiction. Throughout the 100 hours in Committee, we asked time and again for examples of free-spending authorities in Wales—all those authorities for which the Government had to bring in the weapon of the Local Government Bill. That extra bureaucracy and expense, that wholly alien and malicious irrelevance to Wales, will be used to punish the authorities. Again and again I have asked questions, and the Minister has not uttered a single word during all those hundred hours. It must be a record for a Minister to have stayed mute for a hundred hours without earning his salary.

The Bill and the poll tax legislation that is coming this week are wholly irrelevant to Wales. This is a bad day for local government and for Wales. We are witnessing the schizophrenia of the Welsh Office. We have heard fine words and double talk from the Secretary of State. We have seen the double think and tonight we have the double cross.

1.6 am

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Secretary of State talked about the valley initiatives. I am pleased to hear of any initiatives, provided that they represent additional resources given to Wales to deal with the many problems facing those valley communities. However, I ask the Secretary of State to bear in mind that there are special problems in the rural parts of Wales. Following his initiative for the valleys, we would like to welcome the Secretary of State to the rural areas of Gwynedd and Powys, to see the real deprivation in those parts and the hidden problem of rural depopulation. We are losing so many young people because of the lack of proper facilities, services and job opportunities.

Has the Secretary of State allocated resources for implementing the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 in Wales, which will cost between £7 million and £10 million? Has that been included in the formula for this year? The people of Wales will be extremely disappointed and angry if, yet again, provision has not been made for the implementation of that important Act.

Has provision been made in this year's grant for the considerable extra expenditure that many local authorities will incur as a result of this year's severe flooding in Wales—both for the immediate and long-term problems that the flooding highlighted? Much structural work will have to be done to provide proper facilities to ensure that such flooding does not happen again.

I want to make a special plea on behalf of the social services budgets of local authorities—especially for the concept of care in the community. The pressure on health authorities as a result of cuts in their budgets has a knock-on effect on social services departments. In Gwynedd, for example, cuts in the health authority budget will mean that there will be fewer beds for the elderly, in the acute, rehabilitation and long-stay sectors. That will inevitably mean that more people will have to be cared for in their homes. It must be remembered that 18·5 per cent. of Gwynedd's population are aged 65 or over and that 8·2 per cent. are over the age of 75. That is higher than the national average. This will increase demands on the social services and mean that we will need more social workers and more home carers. This year Gwynedd has seen a real cut in provision for social services and home carers. The Secretary of State should bear that in mind. Perhaps when he is winding up the debate he will tell us whether that has been taken into account.

My final point is about local authority smallholdings. I should like to see local authorities being given allocations to ensure that they have more starter farms. The important first step for many young people entering agriculture is the small farm, the smallholding, and I ask the Secretary of State whether that sort of allocation could be made available to local authorities.

1.10 am

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The Secretary of State has again proclaimed that the settlement is fair and realistic. That argument has been rebutted by the Opposition on numerous occasions. Our county councils think that the settlement is neither fair nor realistic, and they are at the sharp end of affairs in local government.

It has been said many times that charity begins at home. I know that because of various pay awards Gwent county council has been under considerable financial strain. The teachers were awarded 16 per cent. overall, but the first full year of that settlement is next year. The money has to be found because teachers, who perform such a worthwhile task in our society, have fallen well behind in the pay league. We can add to that settlement the pay award for manual workers. It was 12 per cent. and took effect from July. Administrative staff and the police and fire brigade received 7 per cent. That took Gwent's inflation rate to 11 per cent. However, the rate support grant settlement to our counties is only 6·3 per cent. and that includes what is known as the special allocation. Yet again, the Welsh

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

counties are being unfairly penalised, not because they have been extravagantly spending taxpayers' money, but because of national pay awards and the Government's mean and shortsighted approach to local government affairs.

The public expenditure levels of the Welsh Office do not keep up with the inflation rate faced by our county councils. What is more, this rate support grant settlement does not make adequate provision for the services that the councils have to provide, including roads, schools and social services. The picture is equally dismal when we consider the district authorities in Wales. I can best illustrate that by citing the case of Newport which has already been lucidly brought out by hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn).

Newport's grant-related expenditure assessment—the Government's own assessment of what authorities should spend to provide a standard level of service — has increased by only 1·9 per cent. compared with last year. That was the figure mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West and is well below the general level of pay and price inflation. If the Newport authority were to maintain services at their existing level for next year and meet the costs from the capital expenditure programme, it would face an increase in expenditure of between 9 and 10 per cent.—much higher than the 4·8 per cent. allowed in the statement and much higher than the increase in Newport's grant-related expenditure assessment.

I turn to the tragedy of Welsh housing. I read this week that 200 families per week are becoming homeless in Wales. My hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) pointed out that it is time for the Government to release the assets from the sale of council houses, because we badly need a massive housing drive in Wales. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) pointed out that no less than £750 million in rate support grants has been withheld from local authorities over the past eight years. This is a deflationary packet if ever there were one. Is it any wonder that the Government, in their submission to the EEC 12 months ago, pointed out that Wales had the lowest economic activity rate in the whole of Britain?

The Government continue to rob Wales. Following the appointment of a new Secretary of State, we thought that there might be some improvement, but we have found that the leopard has not changed its spots. Is it any wonder that the number of Conservative Members in Wales has been reduced to a rump and that they could not even produce a Secretary of State out of their own ranks?

Mr. Peter Walker: The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) will be delighted that Mr. Speaker made the decision to open the Galleries, so that the people of Wales could flock in such considerable numbers to hear the various contributions of Opposition Members.

I start by answering the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), who compared what he said was the 5·3 per cent. increase in Wales with the 7·4 per cent. increase in England. I am afraid that he is not comparing two similar figures. One figure applies to the increase in budgets, while the other provides for the increase in provision. If he wishes me to give the comparison with the 5·3 per cent., I am glad to say that the English figure is 3·9 per cent., not the 7·4 per cent. that he suggested. He asked me to correct him, and I am delighted to do so. I am sure he will be satisfied that his figures have been corrected in that way.

I have also been asked to compare the figures of what has happened in various years under various Governments, and I am willing to do that. The whole tone of the debate from Opposition Members has been, "We think the rate support grant is not big enough; that local government expenditure should be bigger," and they are condemning the Government for not achieving those objectives. The simple comparison is that in the lifetime of this Government we have increased local government expenditure in Wales in real terms by 11 per cent., whereas the Labour Government decreased local government expenditure in real terms by 4 per cent.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): When the right hon. Gentleman says an increase "in real terms", will he tell the House whether he means an increase above the retail prices index, because we know that local government does not buy the same basket of goods as the retail customer.

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to say that the position is worse than the retail prices index, he must be ashamed that, under a Labour Government, it went down by 4 per cent. If he is suggesting that the grant should be increased by more than the rate of inflation, he must remember that the figure went down under a Labour Government. Perhaps he would like to have the figures for the rate support grant for the last years of the Labour Government of which he is such a keen supporter. In 1976-77 it was £585 million, in 1977-78 it was £535 million, and in 1978-79 it went down to £512 million. That was the result of action by a Government supported by Opposition Members who now complain about poverty, bad housing and terrible conditions in Wales and say that more should be done for Wales. Opposition Members sat there supporting a Government who reduced local government expenditure and the rate support grant. They now have the audacity to condemn us for not increasing it enough.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) referred to housing. Has he no feeling of shame about the last Labour Government's unbelievably bad record on house improvement? Is he not delighted that we are increasing grants for housing improvements by a further £7·5 million? Anyone who knows the problems of housing in the valleys and in Wales generally knows the desperate need for a substantial house improvement campaign. The comparative figures are remarkable. This Government have been spending £92 million a year on house improvement. The Labour Government spent not £92 million, but £29 million, on house improvements. These are the people who describe their passion for good housing and who have the audacity to complain that more is not being done on housing. In every respect, the figures in this rate support grant are better than those granted to England. Out of £1,800 per household expenditure, only £300 will come out of the domestic rating system. It is a generous settlement. It is one—

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No. 14* (Exempted Business).

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Report 1988-89 (House of Commons Paper No. 142), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE (WALES)

Resolved,

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 158), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.

That the Welsh Rate Support Grant Supplementary (No. 2) Report 1985-86 (House of Commons Paper No. 159), a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Walker.]*

Liaison Committee

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Sir Antony Buck, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Frank Field, Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Terence L. Higgins, Mr. David Howell, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Ron Leighton, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Michael Mates, Sir Hugh Rossi, Mr. Robert Sheldon, Mr. Nigel Spearing, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Kenneth Warren, Mr. John Wheeler and Mr. Jerry Wiggin be members of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

RAF Carlisle (Staff Transfer)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

1.23 am

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I apologise for keeping the House up even longer. The important matter that I bring to the attention of the House concerns the proposed transfer of the RAF unit DDSM 15 from RAF Carlisle to Harrogate. Although the unit is outside my constituency — it is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean)—many of the 70 employees whose jobs will disappear are my constituents and they have asked me to make representations on their behalf. I understand that the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) has received similar representations and wishes to speak in the debate. I welcome his support.

The work carried out by DDSM 15 consists of ordering and purchasing all the necessary spare parts for the American-built aircraft in service with the RAF. That represents 30 per cent. of all the aircraft in service with the RAF and that figure will soon be increased by the Government's decision to order AWACS. Therefore, the decision is vital to the people in my area, and it is also vital that we do not take a decision that may be detrimental to the country's defences.

I want to examine why the unit was placed at Carlisle in the first place. The decision was taken during the 1960s to disperse jobs to areas of high unemployment. The number of unemployed people in my constituency then was half what it is today. When unemployment has doubled in my constituency why in 1987, are we talking about transferring jobs that were brought to the area to reduce unemployment in the first place? It is bad enough that we are talking about it.

There could be some obscure logic in the proposal if the Government wanted to transfer the jobs to an area of even higher unemployment. I hope that the Minister is listening to me. The official unemployment rate in my constituency is 10·3 per cent., although I could argue that the real figure is 13 per cent. The jobs are intended to be transferred to Harrogate which is one of the few bright spots for employment in the north of England. Unemployment in that area is at the relatively low level of 6·1 per cent.

No wonder that my constituents and the people in the surrounding area feel very aggrieved at the Government's decision to take away job opportunities and send them to what my constituents consider to be a much more prosperous area.

This is not the first time that the Government have considered these proposals. They were considered twice before. As a result of their need to build empires over the years, civil servants have tried to implement the transfer to Harrogate. The first occasion was in 1974 when my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) was the Minister responsible. I have spoken to him and he said that he remembers the case well. There was no justification at the time for the transfers and it was simply a matter of the civil servants wanting everything under one roof. It was also considered by the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) when he was the Minister responsible. Although the right hon. Gentleman cannot recall the matter, I have no doubt that the reason why the proposal was turned down on that occasion was the same:

[Mr. Eric Martlew]

there was no justification for it. The proposal has been turned down by a Labour Government and a Conservative Government.

When I went to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, who is the Minister responsible for the proposal, early in November I was concerned to discover that within a week of his taking the decision he was not aware that the proposal had been reviewed by the Conservative Government in 1979. In fact, I had to tell him what had happened. I am worried about how well the Minister was briefed before he was prepared to take the decision.

I want to consider the consultants' report produced by Peat Marwick McLintock on whose recommendations the Minister is acting. I also want to comment on the letter from the Minister announcing the decision about the transfer. After spending 20 years in industry and 15 years in local government, I have seen many management consultant documents. They were not on the same subject, but the format was the same. The recommendations are usually very scientific. On odd occasions I have witnessed the decisions and comments based on unscientific generalisations and statements similar to those made in this case. Normally statements are not backed up by facts because the clients have insisted that the decision is going ahead. I cannot see why a reputable company such as Peat Marwick McLintock, which considered DDSM 15, should produce such proposals. Indeed, page 19 of the study states:

"Our study shows there is no significant cost advantages in moving DDSM 15 to Harrogate, the justification is in the non quantifiable benefits."

It does not refer to any cost benefits. Indeed, if a report such as that went to the board of any major company—I am thinking of a famous supermarket chain—it would go straight into the waste bin because it contains no facts.

The report says there could be staff reductions of 20 if the transfer goes ahead, but at no point does it say where those job savings would be made. It then says that the transfer could cost £585,000, but that does not take into account the heavy costs involved in early retirement payments that would have to be made before redundancy could be offered.

In his letter of 19 November, the Minister takes up the theme of financial savings through a reduction of 20 jobs, but says that the transfer costs would not be £585,000 as suggested by the consultants but the much lower figure of £335,000. In fact, the proposed transfer would increase the numbers employed at the unit, according to the consultants, who say

"A requirement to accommodate 75 DDSM 15 staff at Harrogate could, under the worst assumption, result in additional accommodation."

The Minister, however, wrote saying:

"DDSM 15 represents some 70 of the 1,100 staff employed at RAF Carlisle."

In fact, the figure of 1,100 is wrong because it should be 980. But I agree with the figure of 70. That number are employed at Carlisle. In other words, if they go to Harrogate, according to the consultants, there will be 75 staff. So if there are 70 now and there will be 75, that is not a saving of 20 staff but an increase of five. In other words, the report is nonsense, and dangerous nonsense.

At present the unit is satisfactorily accommodated at RAF Carlisle. That will be abandoned, even though it is a good building. The consultants talk about additional temporary or semi-permanent accommodation. I think I see the Minister shaking his head in dissent. I assure him that that is what the report claims. The consultants also say that a new office block will be required in the 1990s, and we are only three years away from the 1990s.

The Minister claims in his letter that there will be no loss of efficiency during the transfer period. In fact, the unit at Carlisle is more efficient now than the unit at Harrogate. The sum of the experience of the people employed at Carlisle amounts to 250 years, much of which will be lost when they refuse to transfer.

The people employed at the unit in Carlisle are not dealing with civil servants in other parts of the country. They deal in the main with representatives of American aircraft companies. Those personal contacts are vital, and if they are lost the efficiency and ability of the unit to respond will be lost, and that must, for two years, affect the efficiency of the RAF.

The Minister then talks about a problem of communications. If that was not a problem in 1974, when the matter was reviewed, and it was not a problem in 1979, when it was reviewed again, why now, when we have all the electronic technology at our disposal and better roads, should it be a problem? Much play is made about the 100 miles between Harrogate and Carlisle, but the main communications in this case are between this country and America. Communications between DDSM 15 and suppliers in the USA span a distance of up to 5,000 miles, so why is there such a major problem with a distance of only 100 miles?

I am sure that the Minister will reconsider the matter. When he does so, he will decide, like his predecessors, that there is no moral reason for the transfer. Is it not immoral to take jobs away from an area that has over 10 per cent. unemployment and give them to another area that has 6 per cent. unemployment? Further, to say that that is being done on the grounds of efficiency, with no care for the effects that it will have on the community, is also immoral.

No financial saving will be made because, as the report says, five extra staff will be employed. Extra costs will be incurred for accommodation. There is no defence reason for the transfer because it will weaken, for up to two years, the RAF's ability to respond.

The Minister should come to the same conclusion as the two previous Ministers. They were wise men—it is a seasonable time of the year—and if the Minister takes this decision he could become the third wise man. If he does not, my constituents will think that he is one of the brass monkeys.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the decision that has been made is wrong and that he will let the people of DDSM 15 get on with doing the job for which they received commendations from the Government during the Falklands war.

1.36 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am glad that the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) obtained this debate, and I am grateful for the opportunity to say something on behalf of myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), in whose constituency the RAF unit lies.

I have grave concern about the employees affected by this decision, grave concern about the efficiency of supplies to the RAF of United States' aircraft spares

subsequent to this operation, and grave concern that the Peat Marwick McLintock report does not justify the upheaval. I doubt whether savings will be made if the transfer takes place, and the hon. Member for Carlisle highlighted some of the problems.

I read the executive summary of the consultants' report, and paragraph 46 says that there will be no cost savings. Volume 1, paragraph 9 of the more detailed report says that the move cannot be justified on cost saving factors. Such cost saving factors seem to be the basis of my hon. Friend's decision. Paragraph 45 casts grave aspersions on accommodation at Harrogate.

The hon. Member for Carlisle highlighted the statement in the report that in the 1990s it is likely that the Government will have to purchase or construct accommodation in the Harrogate area. There are doubts about the availability of married quarters, and the report comments on the present layout of the site at Harrogate.

The move from Carlisle, where there is space and accommodation, does not seem to be a step towards practical efficiency. It needs much imagination to believe that a possible saving of £250,000 per year can be made in this new, expensive purchase or building programme.

My hon. Friend is hard pushed to justify the move, and particularly to bring into consideration the distance of 100 miles between Carlisle and Harrogate. Everybody knows that it is only about two hours away by road. Surely with the communications that the hon. Member for Carlisle mentioned, a distance of 100 miles should not come into the argument. It is much more important that we look at what will happen to the people involved.

My constituency of Dumfries is just north of the border and of the RAF maintenance unit. We do not have an RAF station or an Army depot. The Ministry of Defence is entirely absent except for an outstation and the CAD Longtown station at Eastriggs. However, the loss of any Ministry of Defence jobs is significant and serious. We have suffered two blows in recent months—the DDSM 15 decision that we are discussing and the Royal Ordnance decision to close the factory at Powfoot in the middle of my constituency. It is a double blow to lose 200 jobs in an area of high unemployment when we are looking to the Ministry of Defence to help provide jobs. It is unacceptable that that should happen.

My right hon. Friends the Members for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and for Ayr (Mr. Younger), as Secretaries of State for Defence, have both highlighted the importance of keeping jobs in the north, which is an area of high unemployment, but now we are to lose jobs to an area of much lower unemployment which is further south.

My hon. Friend the Minister has been good enough to see my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border, the hon. Member for Carlisle and me. We have read the Peat Marwick McLintock report, and the case for going to Harrogate is not cast-iron. Too many questions remain unanswered and the report contains too many uncosted suggestions, especially about accommodation. I forecast that there will not be a manpower saving but that we shall have a redistribution of the labour force from Carlisle to Harrogate and nothing towards the efficiency of the unit. As we know, the arrival of the AWACS aircraft in a year or two will add enormously to the amount of spares that will need to be carried at Carlisle. I note from my hon. Friend's letter to Members of Parliament, dated 19 November, that that will not begin until 1989, so my hon. Friend has time to reconsider.

In total 70 jobs are involved. My hon. Friend hopes that 20 will be transferred; 24 people are to be made redundant and 26 jobs have a question mark against them. Are they to be lost through natural wastage? What is to happen to the 26 that are not accounted for? Surely, if the move is to take place—I press upon my hon. Friend that it should not happen and that he should change his decision—can he not ensure that the 50 people who might lose their jobs at the maintenance unit at Carlisle are guaranteed jobs in other parts of that large RAF station or at the CAD Longtown station nearby or elsewhere in Ministry of Defence employment in the area?

It is unacceptable to me that many of my constituents, those of my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border and those of the hon. Member for Carlisle should lose their jobs under these circumstances. I ask my hon. Friend to look again because there will be a knock-on effect. What will happen the the MT section or to the signal section. It is really a case of people mattering. The people who will lose their jobs really do matter. I do not think that the Ministry of Defence has considered the constituents of the three Members of Parliament who are present tonight and who are concerned about the future. I ask my hon. Friend to think again and reverse his decision.

1.43 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) for raising this matter this evening, because the debate gives me the opportunity to explain to the House how my Department is dealing with a matter which is understandably of great concern to the hon. Member for Carlisle and to my hon. Friends the Members for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean). They have all taken a close interest in this matter and I understand why, because it is of concern to their constituents. The issue is one on which we have to find a proper balance between improving value for money in the use of defence resources and responding to the legitimate concerns of our staff.

The theme of value for money is central to the Government's approach to the defence budget. We apply it in defence procurement, as we set out in 1983 in an open Government document, through a more commercial approach, greater use of competition at all levels and a broadening of our base of suppliers. We apply it in support, supply and maintenance services by the use of contracting out, privatisation and partnership with private enterprise. We apply it, too, in the management of the Department. The key to success is changing attitudes and developing our management practices. I am sure that the hon. Member for Carlisle will understand that from his own management experience.

I acknowledge gladly the quality of the staff throughout the Department and it is the responsibility of Ministers and senior management to give the staff the best opportunity to get their jobs done as effectively as possible.

There are three particular points which I should make clear from the outset. The first is that the proposal to transfer work from Carlisle to Harrogate does not in any way cast doubt on the motivation or performance of the present staff at Carlisle. It arises simply for reasons of

[Mr. Tim Sainsbury]

efficiency and value for money which are outside their control because they relate to the whole organisation of which they at Carlisle are a part.

Secondly, the proposal that we are debating tonight relates not to the depot—No. 14 maintenance unit—at RAF Carlisle, but only to the group of supply management staff in the Royal Air Force department who are currently based at the station.

Thirdly, I have not yet taken any final decision on the proposal, because, in accordance with our normal practice, we are consulting the trade union representatives of the staff concerned about it. I can assure hon. Members that we take those consultations very seriously, and their outcome is by no means a foregone conclusion. The trade union side has asked that the period of consultation be extended so that it can consider its position at a meeting to be held at Carlisle on 14 January. Though we have been happy to accede to that request, it means that I shall not be in a position to reach a final conclusion before the end of January at the earliest.

Let me briefly explain in the time that is available some of the background to the issue that we are debating. The hon. Gentleman has already referred to the function of DDSM 15 and the fact that it is based at Carlisle, whereas the rest of the supply management organisation is based at Harrogate.

Mr. Martlew: What will happen to the unit that looks after the Tornado?

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman on that point.

Mr. Martlew: Is it not the fact that it is being left as it is and is not being brought into the Harrogate unit?

Mr. Sainsbury: I cannot reply at this moment about the unit to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. One complication is that we have 11 deputy directorates with more numbers attached to them.

The basic point about the directorate being at Carlisle was originally that they should be located alongside the items for which they were responsible. The RAF supply organisation deals with about 1·7 million separate items of equipment, including complete ranges of items — for example, aircraft spares. The staff at Carlisle are responsible for about 200,000 of those items, most of which are stored at the maintenance unit at Carlisle. However, many other commodities at Carlisle are dealt with by the staff at Harrogate.

The staff group at Carlisle was set up in the 1960s to source equipment which was to be stored at that unit. At that time, RAF provisioning activity relied heavily on local depot records, so it made sense to put the provisioning staff next to the depot where the stores were kept. In recent years, depot records have become less important as the emphasis has switched to central computer control, and the need to have provisioning staff alongside the depot has largely disappeared. Indeed, the provisioning staff who were based at another depot were transferred to Harrogate some years ago.

As the hon. Gentleman has said, the transfer is not a new idea. It has been considered on several occasions in the past. What is new in the present situation is that the proposed transfer needs to be seen as part of a much wider reorganisation of RAF supply management, which is being undertaken following a six-month study by a firm of consultants. The object of that reorganisation is to seek better value for money from the RAF provisioning system as a whole. The size of the benefits that we can achieve through this process will be apparent when I say that we estimate that each improvement of 1 per cent. in the efficiency of the purchasing process will save us at least £10 million per annum.

Clearly, if savings of this magnitude are available, we must do all we can to achieve them. The clear advice we have from the consultants — and it is advice which I would endorse from my own commercial experience—is that the move of DDSM 15 (RAF) to Harrogate, and its fuller integration into the supply management organisation as a whole, has to be seen as an integral part of that process.

There has been some misunderstanding about the nature of the consultants' recommendations. Both my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries and the hon. Member for Carlisle referred to that point. In the course of their study, the consultants had neither the time nor the facilities to produce fully validated costings of every aspect of their proposals for the entire RAF supply management organisation. On the information which was available to them, they believed that the proposed transfer was justifiable on wider management rather than direct cost grounds. We have since been able to look at the proposal in more detail and, as I have explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries and to the hon. Member for Carlisle, we firmly believe that it will provide significant cost savings as well.

From our developing understanding of the changes required in the RAF supply management organisation, we now know that integration of the DDSM 15 (RAF) staff into the rest of the organisation at Harrogate would allow us to save some 20 service and civilian posts in the organisation as a whole. We therefore estimate that the total annual saving in staff costs will be about £250,000. Obviously, the costs of the move cannot be fully assessed until we know the intentions of the staff at Carlisle, but we have estimated the total cost of the move to be, on pessimistic assumptions, about £335,000—not the larger cost assumed by the consultants, who assumed that there would be far more redundancies.

It would therefore seem that, leaving aside the important contribution it would make to the wider management benefits that I have mentioned, the move is worth while in itself. As to the timing of the move, this is expected to take place during 1989. The actual timetable will be decided over the next few months when we have a clearer idea of the numbers who are likely to move with the work.

Although, as I have said, the financial and organisational benefits of the proposed move are substantial, we are following our usual procedures for consultation with the trade unions, and their views will, as always, be given the most careful consideration. If, following the period of consultations with the trade unions, I decide that the move should proceed, we shall be taking steps to discover the preferences of individual members of staff. Of the 62 civilian staff affected by the transfer, eight are in the higher executive officer and executive officer grades, and a mobility obligation forms part of their terms of service.

We would also try, so far as possible, to meet the preferences of the 54 staff who do not have any mobility obligation. We understand informally that some members of this group have already indicated an interest in a possible transfer. That is not entirely surprising, because a much wider range of career opportunities is open to these staff at Harrogate than at Carlisle. For those who are unable or unwilling to transfer, we shall be putting into effect the normal arrangements to ensure that they have the opportunity to apply for any Civil Service posts that become vacant in the Carlisle area and at Longtown. We shall also be controlling recruitment to the relevant grades at both Carlisle and Harrogate.

If, in the event, redundancies were to become necessary, we should certainly look for volunteers in the first instance. We have made it clear that these arrangements would extend to all the staff in the relevant grades at RAF Carlisle, not just to those who happen to be working in DDSM 15 (RAF) at the moment, so as to ensure that the effects of the change would be absorbed in as large a staff group as possible. I hope and believe that, through this range of measures, we would keep the number of compulsory redundancies to the absolute minimum.

In sum, we see very significant advantages in the proposed transfer. We also recognise the legitimate interests of those of our staff who are affected by this proposal, but, in the circumstances I have described, we do not feel that those interests outweigh the benefits of proceeding with the move. Nevertheless, it would be quite wrong for me to pre-empt the outcome of the discussions that we are due to have with the trade unions, and I shall not be able to make a final decision on those matters until those discussions are complete. In reaching my decision, I am naturally quite willing to consider the points that have been raised this evening and any further representations that hon. Members may wish to make.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seven minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 16 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Soviet Union (Human Rights)

1. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further details have emerged about Soviet human rights violations over the last 12 months.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): We are monitoring Soviet human rights performance closely and are aware that substantial abuses continue. I discussed these issues with Mr. Shevardnadze at Brize Norton on 7 December. While welcoming recent steps forward in Soviet performance, I stressed the need for further major progress in this area and handed over lists of individual cases about which we have received representations.

Mr. Conway: Bearing in mind that 51,000 Soviet Jews were allowed to emigrate in 1979, and that only 7,000 have been so allowed this year, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House whether his talks on 7 December gave reasonable hope that the Soviet Union might relax its stringent policy in this regard and perhaps pay more respect to the human rights that we should all like to see develop in that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The case that I was making to Mr. Shevardnadze, which we have continued to make to Soviet leaders on many occasions, is precisely that put by my hon. Friend.

Although the figures for Soviet Jewish emigration this year — 7,000 — are encouraging, they are very low compared with those achieved in the 1970s, with a peak of 51,000 in 1979. We shall continue to press the Soviet Union for more progress in that and every other aspect of human rights.

Mr. Mullin: Will the Foreign Secretary explain what entitles us to lecture the Soviet Union on human rights, in the light of the number of innocent people in our own gaols? I refer in particular to the 11 innocent people convicted in connection with the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Anyone who poses such a question must be blind to almost every aspect of the facts about both societies. The cases to which the hon. Gentleman refers, like any cases of that kind, can be—and are—the subject of massive and extensive public debate in a press that is entirely free; the subject of investigation in a Parliament that is entirely free; the subject of investigation in a court system; and, beyond that, subject to the surveillance of the European Commission of Human Rights, as is every other aspect of human rights. I urge the hon. Gentleman to go back to his school room and study the most elementary facts of international politics.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my right hon. and learned Friend make urgent representations to the Israeli Government about the infringement of human rights of the Arabs, whose countries have been invaded——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, the question is about Soviet human rights.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Yes, Mr. Speaker, but——

Mr. Speaker: But?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I was going to continue, Mr. Speaker, to ask my right hon. and learned Friend whether he would bear true regard to the effect of the influx of population from the Soviet Union to Israel, which resulted in deprivation of human rights among those whose land of birth has been invaded and abused by the military forces of the state of Israel.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I suppose that that question is remotely connected with the one on the Order Paper, and the answer is quite straightforward. In the interests of individual Soviet citizens of Jewish origin who wish to emigrate we shall continue to press the Soviet Union for freedom for those who wish to leave to be allowed to do so. That is an elementary component of the human rights case that we have pressed on the Soviet Union. With equal candour, we shall urge the Israelis to avoid all actions that may exacerbate conditions, create further obstacles to peace, increase the risk of confrontation and disregard the human rights of all the people who live in their territory. Our standards are the same and apply to both places in the same way.

Vienna Conference

2. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with progress at the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, Vienna conference, and in particular with the response of the Eastern countries to the proposals in respect of the privacy and integrity of mails and communications put forward by the United Kingdom and other delegations.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): No, Sir. Some progress has been made in negotiations on a final document, but movement on human rights and contacts remains slow. There have been no significant developments on privacy and integrity of mails and telecommunications since my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on 18 November, at column 599.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Will the Minister accept my sympathy and understanding of his dissatisfaction that progress has not been made, as many of us are also dissatisfied? Does he accept that the article in *The Times* on 8 December about the Shapiro family is one that deserves attention? At this time of the year children all over the world are writing to Santa Claus asking for their Christmas wishes to be granted, and a little girl of 10 has written to Mr. Gorbachev asking that she and her family might be allowed to go to Israel to meet her grandparents

whom she has never seen. Does the Minister agree that that letter could be answered positively, and will he encourage such an answer to be given?

Mr. Mellor: Yes, I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. As part of the contact that we have with the Soviet authorities we take the opportunity to put forward human rights cases in the hope that they can be resolved —a number have been—and to point out to leading figures in the Soviet Union that the growth of trust and confidence between East and West will take place only when human rights are as rigorously observed there as we try to ensure they are observed within our society.

Mr. Thorne: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the apparent connivance of the British Post Office in readily accepting the signatures of officials who sign receipts for registered mail in the Soviet Union? It is clear that that mail does not arrive. Should we not take further action in this country to ensure that we accept the signatures only of the people to whom the mail is addressed?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend has raised an extremely important point. He will be glad to know that, as part of the Vienna CSCE process, we have tabled a document calling upon all participants to agree procedures that would mean that only the addressee, or an agent nominated by him—not one put up by the authorities—should be able to give a receipt in those circumstances. We believe that that and a number of other proposals put forward would guarantee much greater freedom for mail than we have any reason to believe exists at present.

Mr. James Lamond: The final document from Vienna has now been postponed for at least six months. Would progress there be much quicker if we were to recognise the spirit of Helsinki and realise that that conference consists of 35 nations of Europe and North America and not groups representing Eastern Europe, Western Europe and non-aligned countries? Should we not try to work together as countries of Europe and North America rather than as groups reflecting political philosophies?

Mr. Mellor: Even though quite a lot of work is done through groups, there are already 140 different proposals on the table and no sign yet that anyone is able to knock those proposals together into something that is acceptable to all. Obviously, we hope that, as the climate improves between East and West, it will be possible to make progress on those issues. None of us wants to see the groups outlive their usefulness. However, at the moment the only prospect of making any progress is by trying to build as large a consensus as possible within groups on matters that can be collectively discussed.

South Africa (Front-line States)

3. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what economic assistance the Government have given to the front-line Southern African states.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): We have long been involved in working to strengthen the economies of the front-line states and to reduce their economic and transport dependence on South Africa. Since 1980 we have given £642 million to the front-line states bilaterally and pledged £35 million to projects of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference.

Mr. Key: I thank my right hon. Friend for her full answer and congratulate the Government on the constructive progress that they are making in support of the front-line states. Public attention is naturally focused on the northern end of the continent, Ethiopia, particularly at Christmas with the tragedy that is unfolding there, but what is the refugee position in Mozambique and what are the Government able to do to help?

Mrs. Chalker: During my recent visit to Mozambique and Malawi I announced in Malawi our willingness to provide substantial humanitarian aid for Mozambican refugees in Malawi. My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is awaiting a detailed breakdown of the food and basic requirements of those refugees from the Malawi Government. Further, we are looking at the needs of Mozambicans who have been forced to flee their homes because of attacks on them.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does the Minister accept that if the constant attempts at destabilisation that are being carried out day by day — including the recent attack in Botswana — are allowed to continue without Her Majesty's Government imposing adequate sanctions against those who permit apartheid, it does not matter how much economic aid is given to the front-line states?

Mrs. Chalker: I have discussed this issue with the President of Mozambique. I should tell the hon. Lady that whatever happens in South Africa—we strongly oppose any form of apartheid, the bandits of RENARMO, or any other group, who are varied and perpetrating the most awful acts against children and adults across Mozambique —I do not believe that sanctions on South Africa would be of any help whatsoever. President Chissano is seeking to bring about peace between the people of Mozambique. I hope that any country that might be involved in cross-border violations will cease to do so forthwith. There is no reason whatsoever for cross-border violations.

Sir Ian Lloyd: As it has recently been announced that a complete Cuban division has been sent to Angola, and $1 billion has been sent in armament aid by the Soviet Union, will my right hon. Friend assure me that no aid from Great Britain has gone to that country? If it has, surely our ideas are fundamentally wrong.

Mrs. Chalker: I assure my hon. Friend that in no way are we assisting Angola, other than in a humanitarian sense. Some £317,000 has gone to Angola for human, civil projects, and not for any other.

Miss Lestor: Does the right hon. Lady accept that the contribution that the Government have made — on a Government-to-Government basis — to the front-line states since 1980 has declined in real terms, according to 1986 figures, by just under half? Bearing in mind that the Prime Minister has refused to co-operate on sanctions, but has said that she prefers to give help to the front-line states which are being so violated by the apartheid regime, does the Minister not think that more help should be given from now on?

Mrs. Chalker: I must tell the hon. Lady that the help that Britain has given to the front-line states has been universally acclaimed as the right way to gain the economic independence of those front-line states, particularly the land-locked countries of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi. That has been helpful to them and

will continue to be so, whatever value is given. In the past year alone, civil aid to the front-line states was over £80 million and a further £4·5 million was provided in military assistance for training.

East-West Relations

4. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on East-West relations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We welcome the results of the Washington summit and hope that the intermediate nuclear forces agreement will lead to further effective and verifiable arms control measures. The more stable and co-operative East-West relationship that we want also requires full Soviet respect for human rights and co-operation over regional conflicts, including early withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Mr. Soames: The House will rejoice at the signing of the INF treaty in Washington and the roles that were played by my right hon. and learned Friend and the Prime Minister in the successful conclusion of the talks. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that future progress on East-West talks must clearly be linked to the Russians demonstrating, not only by word but by deed, that they are fit to be treated as the moral equals of the West and that they must get out of Afghanistan?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support of the INF treaty. I am sure that the House will join me in expressing the hope that it will be speedily ratified and brought into force. I agree with what my hon. Friend said about the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The continued presence of over 100,000 Soviet troops there and the continued absence, as refugees, of 5 million Afghan people from their own country are severe obstacles to the proper development of full relations between East and West. Improvement in that respect is one of the several touchstones by which we shall judge the long-term attitude of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Is not the Foreign Secretary now trying to undermine the INF treaty, which was signed only a week ago, by entering into negotiations for an Anglo-French air-launched missile, thereby destroying the arrangement that previously existed? Will he not be regarded as committing an even greater crime against humanity than those that have been perpetrated by other members of the Government Front Bench?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The intemperate language that the hon. Gentleman seems to find it so difficult to resist demonstrates the total emptiness of his question. We have negotiated and worked long and hard to secure completion of the INF agreement. We welcome it and want to see it ratified, endorsed, and fully in effect. At the same time, we are perfectly entitled, just as the Soviet Union and its allies are, to maintain the effectiveness of forces that are not covered by the agreement.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that while Soviet citizens who apply to emigrate continue to be persecuted, and while religious and political dissidents continue to be subjected to imprisonment, systematic torture and psychiatric abuse, it would not be prudent to regard glasnost as anything more than another exercise in exploring the frontiers of Western gullibility?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Certainly we should keep in mind the extent to which standards in the Soviet Union and in other Eastern European countries fall well short of those enjoined by the Helsinki agreement. At the same time, we must acknowledge that many subjects that were not previously under discussion are now open for discussion. We welcome that as an important step in the right direction. We want to take advantage of that increased openness to achieve the higher standards for which my hon. Friend rightly presses.

Sri Lanka

5. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Indian Government concerning the refugee situation in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): We have made no representations. We understand that few people left Jaffna during the recent fighting, although there was severe dislocation within the province. The Indian Government have since provided relief supplies. Services are now being restored and life is gradually returning to normal.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister realise that there are no independent and reliable reports of what is going on in Jaffna? The International Red Cross is not being allowed in to bring humanitarian and medical aid. There may be thousands of homeless people or refugees. Many people outside Jaffna are asking, "If the Indian Government have nothing to hide, why do they not allow in independent observers and agencies?" Is it not about time that the Government made representations in strong terms to the Indian Government to allow the International Red Cross and other observers to find out exactly what is going on in the province and to try to assist what may still be a severely disruptive and unsatisfactory international situation?

Mr. Eggar: I am not entirely sure where the hon. Gentleman gets his information. Many people appear to have fled their homes during the fighting, but most, if not all, returned later. Food and medical supplies are being provided by the Indian Government. The hon. Gentleman will be delighted to hear that on 10 December, in Colombo, Her Majesty's Government were represented at a meeting that was convened by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Will my hon. Friend make it absolutely clear to the House that the harm that is being done to refugees on the Jaffna peninsula lies clearly at the door of the Tamil Tigers, who have a callous disregard for civilian life, and not at the door of the Indian Government?

Mr. Eggar: We very much support the agreement reached between the Indian Government and the Sri Lankan Government. We believe that that agreement is the only route to a lasting solution of the ethnic conflict.

Horn of Africa

6. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has

received from the United Kingdom ambassador to the United Nations concerning United Nations policy towards the Horn of Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We are continuously in touch with developments through Her Majesty's ambassadors to Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia and our permanent representative to the United Nations in New York. The United Nations development programme resident representative in Addis Ababa, Mr. Michael Priestley, is co-ordinating work to alleviate the current famine in Ethiopia and he has our fullest support.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is tragic that three quarters of Ethiopia's national wealth is now spent on arms, that Ethiopia has just secured a $4 billion credit from the Russian Government for further arms procurement, and that no fewer than 300,000 young Ethiopians have now been press-ganged into the armed forces? Is it not time that the Ethiopian Government started to discover ways of resolving internal strife in Ethiopia and spent less on arms and more on food? Will my right hon. Friend urge our ambassador at the United Nations, for whom we have the greatest respect, to try to bring pressure to bear on the Ethiopian Government, through the international community in the shape of the United Nations, to start peacefully to resolve Ethiopia's internal difficulties so that that country can begin to produce food to keep itself once more?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is a tragic situation, and we very much regret the continued fighting. It is causing great hardship and threatening the international relief effort. On 13 November we and our European partners deplored the attack on and destruction of a United Nations relief aid convoy. As I have said before in the House, a ceasefire based on humanitarian considerations would relieve much suffering and assist relief efforts. We, together with our European partners, will continue to urge progress towards a peaceful solution of the internal conflicts in Ethiopia, and I am sure that our ambassador at the United Nations will do all that he can to bring home to the Ethiopian Government what is going on.

In the long term, Ethiopia will improve its ability to feed itself only if the Ethiopian Government's agricultural policies stop discouraging farmers in the more fertile regions from growing food. They can produce a surplus to feed the growing population and provide reserves against natural disasters.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I welcome the Minister's comments about the efforts of the Government and of the international community in working for peace in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, will the right hon. Lady make it clear that the fact that a tragic war is taking place will not be made an excuse to listen to the voices that are sometimes heard in the House as a reason not to give aid to the civilian population of Ethiopia?

Mrs. Chalker: The Government and all hon. Members wish to see humanitarian aid given to the Ethiopian people, but there is no way in which we will help the Ethiopian Government, who, as my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) said, are spending tremendous amounts of money on armaments rather than feeding their own people. Therefore, all our efforts will be towards humanitarian aid and persuading the Ethiopian Government that their policies of villagisation and forced resettlement are wrong, counter-productive and not in the interests of their people or of anyone else in that region.

Mr. Churchill: Is it not clear that a major element in the serious and worrying famine setting in once again in Ethiopia is the continuing warfare? Will Her Majesty's Government press, through the United Nations and our allies, for the early removal of foreign military forces from Ethiopia — specifically the large contingents of Soviet military bloc advisers and Cuban forces, which have been aiding the puppet Mengistu regime?

Mrs. Chalker: As my hon. Friend probably knows, we have already pressed for that, and we shall continue to do so. Our frustration — like that of the rest of the free world wishing to see Ethiopia able to cope with its ghastly famine problem — is that we are not listened to as we would be listened to by most other sensible nations. In that respect, there is a marked contrast between the way in which the Ethiopian Government have responded to the need for food and the way in which the Mozambican Government have responded by handing the land back to the people of Mozambique and increasing the production of food for their own people.

European Community

7. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the European Commissioner, Lord Cockfield; and what matters were discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I last met Lord Cockfield on 18 November, when we discussed matters of current interest in the Community, notably the negotiations on the Community's financial situation.

Ms. Quin: Has the Secretary of State raised with Lord Cockfield the concern that many of us feel about the regional and social effects of his proposals concerning the internal market; in particular, proposals to open up public supply contracts and harmonise VAT rates? Will he give us an undertaking that he will not proceed further along this road of the internal market until a full assessment of the social and regional effects on the least well-off is published?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I should not be disposed to accept the hon. Lady's advice in that respect. The fulfilment of the internal market, which is one of the central objectives of the Community and has been so from the outset, is rightly recognised as an important objective. We have been making significant progress in that direction recently, for example, with the fulfilment of the internal air transport agreement. Of course, it is necessary for the Community's structural funds to continue to be operated in a fashion best designed to help those areas most entitled to support, but that is no reason for not securing early progress with the internal market.

Sir Peter Blaker: Will not the single European market proposed for 1992 be enormously beneficial to this country, provided that British business is sufficiently alert to seize the opportunity that it will provide? Yesterday the president of the CBI made remarks about the low level of awareness of British business, which is about 5 per cent. compared with that of other countries, for example, France, where the figure is 80 per cent. Bearing that in

mind, what consultations is my right hon. and learned Friend having with his colleagues about the means of improving British business awareness.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely agree with my right hon. Friend. The single market does not just involve the establishment of common rules and the elimination of trade barriers. It involves persuading the leadership of British commerce and industry of the importance of that market and of the challenges and opportunities that it offers. It is for that reason that my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is launching a campaign precisely of the sort that my right hon. Friend has in mind to help British industry increase and make the most of opportunities that will be offered by completion of the market by 1992.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Foreign Secretary consider the fact that, since the Community was created, regional imbalances have increased and that, although the completion of the internal market may generate new economic activity within the Community, it will not benefit the regions unless the Government and other Community Governments take specific measures to ensure that? Why will he not make such a study? Is it because it would embarrass the Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No. The hon. Gentleman knows that, since before world war two, and throughout the decades which have governed our politics, regional policy has been the subject of almost continuous study and adjustment. It is still something which the Government study very closely as part of the wider components of Community regional policy embodied in the structural funds. Any such devices should be effective for the purpose for which they are advocated.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that not only British business, but the British Government, stand to gain from the early achievement of the common market? Will he ensure that other Departments in Whitehall, besides the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry, are made aware that it concerns all of them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right. It is one of the reasons why we have always adopted a structure of government in relation to the Community that is designed to enlist the interest and support of all Departments of State. It is right, for example, that the establishment of sufficient openness in the awarding of public sector contracts should be regarded as an obligation by all Government Departments. I endorse the point made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Frank Cook: Given that a number of MEPs have already raised the issue of the imprisonment of environmentalists and the suppression of their organisations in Malaysia, and that British and other European tourists have come under threat of similar treatment, to such an extent that some have been forced to leave Malaysia very precipitately——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must be related to the EEC.

Mr. Cook: What representations has the Foreign Secretary made to the EEC Commissioners, or what representations does he intend to make, on these issues?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: So far as any representations are appropriate in respect of such matters, they will have been made direct to the Malaysian Government.

Afghanistan

8. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest initiatives to remove Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The European Council recently called on the Soviet Union to withdraw all its forces from Afghanistan by 1988. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reinforced this message when she met Mr. Gorbachev last week.

Mr. Davies: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that although it is encouraging that the Soviet Union has given several signs recently of wishing to adopt a less menacing posture in the world, it is in direct contradiction to that that it should pursue the subjugation by brutal military force of a neighbouring country? Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that if the representations that he and the Prime Minister are making yield no result he will, in due time, consider with out allies what further support and aid we can give to the Afghan resistance?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The best support that we can give to the case for Afghan self-determination is that represented by the pressure that we and our partners in the European Community and the overwhelming majority of the United Nations have given year after year, pressing for the withdrawal of all Soviet troops, the return of the 5 million refugees with honour and safety, and the restoration of Afghanistan's non-alignment and independence. The Afghan people must be given the right to self-determination. We shall continue to take whatever action seems most appropriate to secure that end.

Mr. Heffer: As someone who attacked the Soviet Union for going into Afghanistan at the time and who has always taken the view since that the sooner Soviet troops left the sooner the people of Afghanistan could have their own freedom, may I ask whether the right hon. Gentleman will consider my view that there should be initiatives to ask the United States of America to remove itself from various parts of the world and not to bolster up reactionary dictatorships, as it does at present?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I must confess that I find it difficult to understand how an hon. Member of the hon. Gentleman's distinction and experience could fall into the trap of equating any other situation with that existing in Afghanistan, which is the source of the world's greatest refugee problem. About 5 million people have been turned out of their homes and 50,000 people have been killed or injured during the past year. That is the most blatant violation of national independence. Afghanistan has seen some of the greatest abuses of human rights that we have ever known. It is not possible to equate any of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred with that continuing monstrosity.

Middle East

9. **Mr. Walters:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress towards a middle east peace settlement.

Mr. Mellor: We welcome the Amman summit's endorsement of a peace conference under United Nations auspices and have called on all concerned to agree arrangements for the conference to be held as soon as possible. I shall be discussing these and other matters with senior Israeli Ministers when I visit Israel next month.

Mr. Walters: In the context of non-progress towards a peace settlement, is my hon. and learned Friend aware that in the past few weeks Israeli repression on the West Bank and in Gaza has been responsible for the killing of more than 20 Palestinians, including several schoolchildren? Bearing in mind that we are a permanent member of the Security Council, even if we cannot compel Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in accordance with United Nation's resolution, could we not at least do something to curb the brutality of its army of occupation?

Mr. Mellor: We are seriously concerned by the current upsurge in violent incidents, especially in Gaza, and have registered that concern with the Israeli authorities. Certainly, we hope that the Israeli occupation forces will respond in a humane and de-escalatory manner to the incidents that are taking place, because it is important not to intensify the cycle of violence. Of course, we deplore violence from whatever quarter it comes. However, it illustrates the dangers that are inherent in unresolved conflicts and the urgency of the search for a long-term, peaceful settlement in that area.

Mr. Janner: In the context of the persistent initiatives of Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, for a peace conference, in the setting of the most welcome visit of Israel's President, Chaim Herzog, which ends today, and in recognition of 40 years of Israel's vibrant democracy, which it is now celebrating, will the Minister take this opportunity to express the Government's salute to that democracy and to the joint efforts of Her Majesty's Government and the Israeli Government to achieve that peace settlement and the resolution of those unhappy disputes which lead to such misery for all concerned?

Mr. Mellor: It is a key element of the British Government's policy to recognise the right of Israel to secure existence, and of course we welcome Israel's celebrating its 40th anniversary. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others are engaged regularly in discussions, notably with Mr. Peres, on the need for an international conference to try to resolve the long-standing problems, particularly of the occupied territories, without which one suspects the future of Israel will be difficult. I very much regret that the position put forward by some in favour of an international conference is not the position of all the Israeli Government.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. and learned Friend tell the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) that the vibrancy of Israeli democracy is most strongly felt by the beat of Israeli truncheons on the necks of Palestinian children? Will he tell the Israeli President, who is currently in this country, that the murderous activities of his arrogant stormtroopers in territories in which they have no right to be is totally unacceptable to the House? Will he tell him further, most strongly, that if no action is taken to resolve this issue the Government will take action to help to resolve it?

Mr. Mellor: We must be careful not to appear like competing football fans cheering on our teams in the dispute. Our view is quite clear—I believe the feeling is shared by many people within the state of Israel—that there can be no long-term security for the state of Israel if now almost 50 per cent., and in the future more than 50 per cent., of its citizens are not Israelis but Arabs, many of whom do not feel that they ought to be in Israel. Until that position is resolved, there will be instability. That is why we are doing our best in a non-propagandist way to call for an international conference, in the hope that the moderate leadership of the Arab world will be able to come to terms with the Government of Israel and make some progress under the auspices of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Robertson: I join, perhaps rarely, the Minister in the moderate words that he used and say that Labour Members are strongly repelled by the killings in recent days in the Gaza strip and the West Bank. Is he aware that we share the widespread repugnance in the world, even among the friends of the state of Israel, at the use of live ammunition to suppress dissidents in the occupied territories, when their continued existence threatens the permanent peace of the region? Will he take steps to pursue more vigorously the idea of an international conference and to persuade the Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Shamir—as distinct from his Foreign Minister Peres — of the reckless and almost suicidal nature of his opposition to an international conference?

Mr. Mellor: Very real vigour is being brought to bear on this. If the hon. Gentleman had read the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend to the Conservative Friends of Israel in October he would have seen very great vigour there. We should continue to try to bring to bear all the sensible pressure that we can to make those concerned with the resolution of the dispute realise the reality of the position. I say to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), who asked about this earlier, when asking me to commend Israeli democracy, as I am prepared to do, that that democracy is not extended to the occupied territories. Until it is, or until the position is resolved otherwise, there will never be the harmony that we want to see.

El Salvador

10. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to seek to make an official visit to El Salvador in the next year.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit El Salvador.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister comment on the likely effect on the civil crisis of statements such as that made by General Bustillo, the Chief of the Armed Forces in El Salvador last Friday, in which he criticised the Left-wing opposition in El Salvador, criticised Amnesty International and made ominous warnings to the Government of El Salvador? Will he make it quite clear that the making of such a statement is utterly incompatible with the training of El Salvadorian military personnel in Britain?

Mr. Eggar: May I say, first, that no military personnel from El Salvador are being trained in Britain at the present time. The whole question of the compliance of all countries in the region with the peace agreement will be considered on 15 January by the five Presidents, as agreed under the Arias plan. It is best to suspend judgment until then.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Does my hon. Friend recall that the Inter-Parliamentary Union will meet in Guatemala in the spring? Will he take this opportunity to express his satisfaction with the restoration of diplomatic relations between this country and Guatemala and perhaps reflect on the part played by the British group in the IPU in furthering that process?

Mr. Eggar: Of course we look forward to the IPU meeting in Guatemala. We are delighted that we have been able to restore diplomatic relations with Guatemala and it may be possible to discuss that further in the next question.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that while public attention has been concentrating understandably on the spectacular progress made in implementing the Central American peace plan by the Government of Nicaragua, there has been a regression in the situation in El Salvador? Death squads are back in the streets of San Salvador, two human rights activists have been murdered and the Far Right is flexing its muscles again. Will Her Majesty's Government urge President Duarte to start a dialogue with the opposition and end the murderous attacks on the civilian population?

Mr. Eggar: I do not think that the use of emotive language is very helpful in relation to what is happening in the region. May I state gently to the hon. Gentleman that full civil liberties have still not been restored within Nicaragua. Only recently President Ortega said publicly that the Sandinistas would not hand over power if they lost elections—if elections are held—but would use the army to undermine any elected Government.

Guatemala

11. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek to pay an official visit to Guatemala.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to visit Guatemala.

Dr. Reid: If the Minister has no plans to visit Guatemala, will he at least recognise that, because of the position in Belize, we have some leverage over events in that area, which we can use for the good of the peace accord? Will he assure the House that it will be impressed upon the Guatemalan Government on every possible occasion that any failure on their part to comply with the peace accord and the general movement towards peace in the area will have extremely adverse effects on the normalisation of our relations with them over Belize?

Mr. Eggar: We welcome the constructive initiatives that have been taken by the Guatemalan Government in accordance with the Guatemalan accord, which that Government played a major part in initiating and following through. Again, I must state that the Presidents from the five countries concerned will be meeting on 15 January to evaluate the progress that has been made.

Mr. Rathbone: Should my hon. Friend or my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State reassess the imminence of a visit to Guatemala, will they make a point of calling in on the drug liaison officers posted in the area in Central and South America and ascertain whether they have sufficient support to continue the extremely good work that they have been doing for some years?

Mr. Eggar: I know very well my hon. Friend's great interest in matters relating to drugs in South and Central America. I assure him that I keep a very close watch on that.

Mr. Tom Clarke: If such a meeting takes place, will the hon. Gentleman urge Guatemala to ease the pressure on Belize, as my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) suggested, if only because that may help to co-ordinate efforts against the misuse of drugs in both countries?

Mr. Eggar: That is a matter of concern to us. I know that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the Belize Government have made extensive efforts to eradicate marijuana and have expressed concern about the dangers to that country and others of the traditional marijuana routes being used by cocaine smugglers.

With regard to the state of negotiation between Belize and Guatemala, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that both countries have expressed a willingness to talk. But, sadly, the meeting that took place between the relevant Foreign Ministers in April this year was somewhat disappointing. We hope that both sides will meet again to discuss a way towards settlement.

AIDS

12. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to raise the issue of the global implications of AIDS at ministerial level at the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: On 20 October my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services addressed a special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on AIDS. To promote ministerial discussion of AIDS we are also organising a world summit of Health Ministers in London from 26 to 28 January 1988.

Mr. Butler: The World Health Organisation estimates that within five years there will be 100 million cases of AIDS; in the subsequent five years, most of those people will develop AIDS and die. Does my hon. Friend believe that Ministers are adequately seized of the gravity of the problem?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend rightly stresses the enormous scale of the problem. The threat from AIDS is no respecter of territorial integrity. The WHO should play a central role in the battle against AIDS, and we have given it our full support. We have already contributed £3·25 million to its programme, in addition to the £14 million which has been voted for domestic research into a cure for AIDS. It was precisely for the reasons that my hon. Friend gave that we decided, with the WHO, to host the important summit that will take place in London next year. I am delighted to be able to tell the House that so far we have received 94 firm acceptances from Governments, all of whom—with the exception of only seven countries —will be represented at ministerial level.

Mr. Charles Powell

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects Mr. Charles Powell, currently in post at Number 10 Downing street, to return to a post in his Department or as one of Her Majesty's ambassadors.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In due course, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: Does the Foreign Secretary recollect that in paragraph 187 of its report the Select Committee on Defence on Westland, an all-party Committee, confirmed that from 7 January 1986 Mr. Charles Powell was in a position to keep the Prime Minister fully informed about the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter? If Mr. Charles Powell was really so incompetent as not to have told the Prime Minister, whom he sees three or four times a day, about the role of the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, why is it that he was promoted in post and why did he keep his job—if, if, if?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have nothing to add to the numerous statements and answers to questions from the hon. Gentleman given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, especially — in relation to Mr. Powell's promotion — the written answer on 5 November this year, at column *121*. Mr. Powell has a justified reputation as a very able official.

Mr. Leigh: Has it not been the mark of the moral bully down the ages that he publicly and gratuitously attacks a man knowing full well that his victim cannot answer back?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Foreign Secretary consider appointing Mr. Charles Powell to a job in the Falkland Islands, where he could begin the process of developing a dialogue between Falkland islanders and the Argentine Government? Is the Foreign Secretary aware that the biggest impediment to that dialogue is the activities of Mr. Patrick Watts, a local journalist, whose manipulation——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is miles wide of this question.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the Foreign Secretary's economality with the truth on this, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Commonwealth Conference

14. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implementation by the United Kingdom of decisions reached at the recent Commonwealth conference.

Mrs. Chalker: Many of the Vancouver decisions will take time to implement. We have already provided another 20 training places for black South Africans, we will contribute to greater Commonwealth efforts to assist the front-line states, including Mozambique, and play our part in the Commonwealth Secretariat's working group on distance learning.

Mr. Squire: In addition to welcoming the trade policy and the training programme which my right hon. Friend mentioned, does she agree with the importance of increasing our trade with and investment in the less developed countries of the Commonwealth, so as to help them?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the first, important things is to make progress in the Uruguay round. The exploratory phase during the first year is on schedule, and detailed negotiations begin next year. In addition, it is important that we continue to make progress on the African debt issue. Two elements of the Chancellor's initiative on sub-Saharan debt — more regional technical assistance and longer rescheduling and grace periods in the Paris club — are already being implemented. We are still trying to persuade other countries to agree lower interest rates. We have offered a contribution to support Mr. Camdessus's initiative to enlarge the IMF structural adjustment facility. We still hope for conclusions to negotiations this year. In future there will be extra finance from the international finance institutions for Caribbean countries, and we hope to have a substantial early increase in the general capital increase in world trade.

Mr. Anderson: Are we not in a unique situation at the Vancouver summit, in that we are isolated from the 47 other members of the Commonwealth on the key issue of sanctions? We are isolated, standing out against the call for a genuine effort to secure the universal adoption of limited sanctions, and we are isolated in refusing to join our Commonwealth colleagues in monitoring the implementation of sanctions. Will the Minister confirm that the Foreign Secretary has vetoed the proposal for a meeting between the European Community countries and the ACP countries on South Africa and has, therefore, true to form, again defended South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: We have done nothing to stand in the way of appropriate dialogue with ACP countries, front-line states and other countries involved in those conflicts. The hon. Gentleman is quite wrong to describe the outcome of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting as negative. There was widespread recognition that there is no quick solution and that the momentum for change must come from within South Africa. There was full endorsement of the United Kingdom policy of practical help for the front-line states and for black South Africans. *[Interruption.]* No, we were not on our own. We had full endorsement. I must say that there was agreement that we will coninue to differ over sanctions, but our common commitment in the Commonwealth to a peaceful and fundamental change through negotiations was agreed on, as well as the importance of dialogue and the enhanced programme of Commonwealth assistance to South Africa's neighbours.

East-West Relations

15. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what improvements in East-West relations he estimates will follow from the visit of Mr. Gorbachev to Britain.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Gorbachev's visit to Britain permitted a review of the main issues in East-West relations, arms control, regional conflicts and human rights. It demonstrated both the considerable improvement in our own relations with the Soviet Union and the possibilities for wider co-operation if both sides are ready to discuss our problems openly and constructively.

Mr. Maples: May I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend on the positive and constructive role of the British Government, which was illustrated by Mr. Gorbachev's decision to visit Britain on his way to Washington last week? May I ask him to emphasise to Mr. Gorbachev the importance that the West attaches to the internal liberalisation of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the substantial contribution that that would make to our relations?

Mr. Mellor: The human dimension is vital to East-West relations and certainly will not be neglected in our discussions.

Mr. Wallace: We all agree that, last week, East-West relations took a step forward with the signing of the INF treaty. However, today we shall take a step back, with the United States, after 18 years, again producing chemical weapons. It is to the credit of the Government that, over a number of recent years, they have made efforts to obtain a global treaty to end the production of such weapons. Are any new initiatives being proposed by the Government with regard to chemical weapons and, in particular, verification?

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for the fact that the hon. Gentleman recognises that the British Government have played a leading role in Geneva by tabling a series of papers dealing with verification and the way in which an international organisation might approach the task of removing chemical weapons over a 10-year period. I can assure him that we intend to keep up the momentum in those discussions and use every effort to ensure that the difficult verification issues are properly tackled.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Does my hon. and learned Friend recollect that Mr. Gorbachev first visited the United Kingdom in December 1984 as the guest, not of the Government, but of this House and of the Inter-Parliamentary Union? Does my hon. and learned Friend see a continuing parliamentary contribution to the increasingly—thank goodness—good relations between our two countries and to a constant, continuing dialogue between this House and the Supreme Soviet?

Mr. Mellor: I recall some fetching photographs of my hon. Friend with Mr. Gorbachev at that time. I am sure that Mr. Gorbachev and other senior Soviets would welcome the opportunity to come and be photographed again with my hon. Friend.

Health Authority (Financial Allocations)

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No, not now. I shall take them later.

Mr. Robin Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware—[HON. MEMBERS: "No".]

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a preamble to what is to follow, and I have had notice of it.

Mr. Robin Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that it is a convention of the House that statements to be made by the Government are presented to the Opposition by 3 pm. This afternoon's statement was received by the Opposition at 18 minutes past 3. I raise the matter because, on the front page of early editions of the *Evening Standard*, there is a full report of the statement that the House is about to receive. I understand that the 12.30 pm and 1 pm news also carried identical statements. The Government think that that is a smart move to deny the Opposition time to prepare, but is it not a grotesque affront to the House for Ministers to brief the press without even placing an embargo on its reports before the time when the House is favoured with a statement?

Mr. Speaker: I repeat what I have frequently said before. I hold strongly to the view that the House should always be told first, and that if press notices are handed out, they should be embargoed until Ministers get up.

3.31 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): May I first say that, although it is a courtesy rather than a rule, I naturally regret the fact that the statement was not delivered to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) as soon as possible. Perhaps, when he has heard the statement, he will be able to decide for himself whether the reports that he has heard or read elsewhere are accurate.

With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on allocations to health authorities.

As my right hon. Friend announced on 3 November, for 1988-89 we are increasing the provision for current expenditure on the hospital and community health services in England by £707 million, to a total of nearly £12,000 million. That includes an additional £50 million towards the rising cost of care and treatment for people with AIDS or HIV infection; an additional £9 million for the further development of the breast cancer screening programme; and an additional £5 million to reinforce our programme of projects to reduce waiting lists and times.

Details of the overall increases in allocations to individual regional health authorities, which take account also of the £15 million special fund to help ease transitional problems in regions receiving the lowest growth, and of other allocations including the funding for AIDS, are in the Vote Office. For every region, the extra allocations represent an increase over their current allocations of at least 5·5 per cent., compared with forecast general inflation of 4·5 per cent. We shall shortly also be seeking bids for 1988-89 projects under the waiting list initiative, for which £30 million is available.

We remain committed to the principle of ensuring the fair distribution of resources across the country, and that part of the allocations which depends on what is known as RAWP is based on the existing formula. Extensive work to examine possible improvements to it is, however, nearing completion, with a view to considering changes for future years. Separately, there are additional capital allocations of nearly £26 million. Together with receipts from land sales, which are forecast at over £200 million, this will sustain the hospital building and improvement programme in which over 450 major projects are currently being planned, designed or constructed.

Both current and capital allocations provide for 40 further breast cancer screening centres by spring 1989, over and above the 14 we expect to be in operation by spring 1988. They also provide for over £40 million of expenditure on services which need to be financed on a wider-than-regional basis. Full details of these supraregional allocations are also in the Vote Office. They include increases for neonatal and infant cardiac surgery and for spinal injury services, the designation of a new liver transplant centre in Leeds, and the designation of a fourth heart transplant centre at the Wythenshawe hospital in Manchester.

All these additional resources, together with those released by continuing our successful cost improvement programme and new money arising from income generation schemes, will enable health authorities to continue developing their services. At the same time, we are also taking action to ensure that we have speedier and more accurate information about the financial and service position of health authorities. I shall return to this important matter in a moment.

In so far as this financial year, 1987-88, is concerned, our monitoring arrangements have revealed a shortfall in income that could be eliminated only by short-term measures that would not improve health care or efficiency. This is clearly unacceptable, and we have concluded that to meet the immediate problem it would be right to increase health authority cash limits throughout the United Kingdom by almost £90 million, of which £75 million is for English health authorities. That includes about £10 million in further recognition of the particular pressures from the steadily rising number of AIDS cases which three of the Thames regions are facing this year. We have also decided to make available a further £13·3 million to offset the costs of damage caused by the severe weather on 16 October, thus bringing the additional funding for 1987-88 to over £100 million for the United Kingdom as a whole.

As I have said, we are taking steps to improve significantly the monitoring of health authorities' performance, with the intention of ensuring that resources are spent to maximum effect. These new arrangements will include formal and regular monitoring of income and expenditure levels and of output and activity. In addition, we shall shortly be setting up a special unit to help authorities take full advantage of income generation opportunities. We shall continue to encourage practical partnerships between the public and private sector where this will clearly benefit the patients of the National Health Service. The £7 billion a year of extra resources that the Government have already invested in our hospital services since taking office have enabled them, by any measure, to provide more care to more people than ever before. What I have announced today will help us to build on that.

Mr. Robin Cook: The additional £75 million that the Minister has announced will be welcomed by the Health Service. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ninety million."] No, the Minister has announced an additional £75 million for English health authorities for the current year out of £90 million for Britain as a whole. That money will be welcomed by the Health Service, in the same way as a drowning man grasps at a straw.

I congratulate the Minister on the fact that his monitoring arrangements have revealed a shortfall in income in the hospitals. May I point out to him that the monitoring arrangements of just about everybody else in the Health Service noticed this months ago? If the monitoring arrangements have identified that shortfall in income, why is it that for weeks since the House resumed after the summer recess he and the Prime Minister have denied at the Dispatch Box that there was any shortfall in income?

I remind the Minister that this is the ninth month of the financial year. Why has he waited until this last gasp to provide extra funding for the Health Service? Why has he waited until 3,500 beds have been closed, 10,000 operations have been postponed and 24 infants have died waiting for a place in intensive care? Why has he not acted before? Why has he presented such a widow's mite in contribution?

I remind the Minister that this year he underfunded nurses' pay by £170 million. Where is the other half of the short change? If this sum is adequate, will the Minister tell the House what beds in what hospitals will now reopen and what operations in what district health authorities will now be rescheduled? Will South Manchester be saved the decision which it has to take tomorrow to close another 200 beds? Since the Minister is going to monitor how the money is spent, will he assure us that it will be free from the strings he placed on the £500,000 to Trent and West Midlands last week, when he obliged them to spend the money in private hospitals, not in their own hospitals.

Now that the Minister has had to admit that the sums for this year are inadequate, how can he come to the House and persist with the very same inadequate increase for next year that was announced last month? Is this the answer to the 1,000 doctors who went to Downing street yesterday and asked for extra money? Are they being told, "No, there is no money"? The Minister should recall that the health authorities have estimated that they need £935 million to stand still. Today's allocation of £707 million will mean further cuts in their budgets next year.

The Minister said that this increase represents 5·6 per cent. inflation. Will he confirm that, in estimating that increase of 5·6 per cent., he is taking into account the additional developmental money, and that the underlying inflationary increase on which this figure is based is 4·5 per cent.? Does he believe that the inflation rate in the Health Service next year will be 4·5 per cent.? Does he believe that nurses next year should get an increase of 4·5 per cent.? If he believes that they should get more, will he give the House a clear, unequivocal undertaking that the Government will fully fund whatever increase the nurses get?

I draw the Minister's attention to today's figures on the public sector borrowing requirement and point out that they show that this year the Treasury has received £3,000 million more in revenue than expected and has incurred expenditure of £1,000 million less than expected, leaving the Chancellor—*[Interruption.]*—yes, doing very well—leaving the Chancellor with £4,000 million in hand. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that one tenth of that sum would enable every health authority to reopen the wards it has closed, to fill the beds that are empty and to use the operating theatres that stand half-used for the whole working week. Does the Minister agree that, if that large sum is to spare in the Treasury the first priority for it is not cutting income tax but saving the Health Service? If the Minister agrees with that, will he resign if he does not get the money that the Health Service needs?

Mr. Newton: May I first make it clear—perhaps this ties in with the fact that the hon. Gentleman obviously believed what he heard on the radio at lunchtime rather than what was in my statement—that the increase for the health authorities in England is just under £90 million — not the £75 million to which he referred — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has failed to read on, to where £13·3 million of storm damage money is announced—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that there is a very heavy day ahead of us. Interruptions of this kind take up a lot of time.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I might just ask the hon. Gentleman what he would have said if we had left the South East Thames health authority with a £8 million bill for the consequences of the storm. I wonder equally about some of the other figures that he gave, particularly in his remarks about the alleged under funding of the review body awards this year. I do not know where that figure came from. Some 95 per cent. of the review body awards was funded either in the initial allocations, or by well over £200 million that was additionally made available at the time that the awards were announced. The amount left for health authorities to find from part of the proceeds of their much larger cost improvement programmes was about £24 million.

As for the amount available to the health authorities for next year, I made it clear in my statement that alongside the £707 million whose allocation I have dealt with today are £150 million of further cost improvement programmes — which will do no more than match what health authorities have achieved for several years now—and additional money which we estimate at between £10 million and £20 million from new income generation schemes. The total amount for the development of services is far larger than the hon. Gentleman has recognised.

Finally, let me pick up the point about how the money will be allocated to district health authorities, and, indeed, to individual hospitals. That will be a matter for the regional health authorities, to which the allocations announced today are being made. However, we shall make it clear that we expect them to take specific account of the problems of particular health authorities in deciding how that money will be distributed.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): May I ask my hon. Friend not to take too much notice of the Opposition, who glory in every problem, and are determined to shout down any facts that are given? May I also ask him whether any expert has been able to give him a final figure for what it would cost to meet every medical need as it arose? Finally, will he consider urgently the long-term funding of the Health Service, and arrange to bring in private and other moneys that are available to meet the needs that exist?

Mr. Newton: I am certainly not aware of any expert having put an ultimate statistic on the potential for health demand, which clearly has an infinite range—or so most people would say.

I tried to make it clear in my statement that we recognise the need to obtain resources from all possible quarters to add to those that we take and provide from the taxpayer, and that we shall continue to encourage both new income generation schemes and the partnership between the private and public sectors, which in many parts of the country is bringing significant benefit to NHS patients.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): While I welcome the Minister's statement about the heart transplant unit at Wythenshawe, how will what he has said affect the ever-lengthening queue of people, not least elderly pensioners, waiting for cataract extractions in Manchester?

The Minister is aware of the case of an elderly widow —a constituent of mine—who is blind in one eye and has a cataract in the other, and who had a long, painful and anxious wait for her operation. He is also aware that the most distinguished eye specialist in Manchester has said that we are falling to Third-world standards in this important area. How long must we wait to remove the problem of people dying on the waiting lists?

Mr. Newton: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks about Wythenshawe hospital's transplant centre.

Cataract operations are an interesting example of a service in which there is considerable scope for improving our performance. In some other countries, cataract surgery is done much more widely—indeed, mainly—on a day surgery basis. As the right hon. Gentleman probably knows, the Manchester health authorities have a very interesting project for developing day-care surgery, and I hope that we shall soon find some way of helping them with that.

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): Will my hon. Friend accept that his statement will be widely welcomed outside this House, even though we know the Opposition too well to expect them to welcome any good news? With regard to maximising resources, what will my hon. Friend do about the medical agencies which have been set up to sell the services of junior doctors and which, in my part of England at least, are typically costing local health authorities a six-figure sum every year? That is a rip-off and it should be stopped.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. From exchanges that we have had, he will know that a number of regional health authorities are taking steps towards setting up their own agencies to combat the problem. I should also like to make it clear that I am seriously considering the introduction of controls to deal with the difficulties to which my hon. Friend has referred.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Was the Minister made aware of the disparaging comments that were issued from No. 10 Downing street to the Sunday press about the Royal Colleges of Physicians, of Surgeons and of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists? Does he agree with the tone and content of those disparaging criticisms? Does he believe that the criticism of the fall in standards and services was not genuine? Does he truly believe that £90 million — although extremely welcome — will be sufficient to grapple with the extremely serious problems that the NHS currently faces?

Mr. Newton: I believe that the total amount that I have announced today will make a significant difference to health authorities throughout the United Kingdom in advance of the huge additional allocations which they can expect in 1988-89.

The thing that I found most noticeable about the article in the *Sunday Times* was the extraordinarily rude remarks about other consultants made by a consultant who said that he was about to emigrate to the United States. I would certainly not wish to suggest that the problems and pressures of the Health Service are the responsibility entirely of doctors, but I ask doctors to acknowledge that they, too, have a contribution to make to help us overcome those difficulties.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): I am much reassured by my hon. Friend's promise that he will monitor expenditure. I ask him especially to consider the waste of money in the South-East Thames regional health authority, which is paying for the lease on a building in Croydon that it vacated for lusher quarters in Bexhill. Will he consider that, in my constituency, we desperately need some of that money?

Mr. Newton: Yes, I can tell my hon. Friend that nothing would please me more than to be able to dispose of the building in Croydon, and we shall certainly continue our efforts to do so.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Is the Minister aware of meetings that have been held with district health authority managers in Yorkshire? Is he aware that, in the coming days, further cuts will be made to services in that area? Is he aware that £1·4 million will be cut in the Leeds Eastern health authority and that that will lead to the closure of the St. George's hospital in Rothwell—I was notified of that decision today. Is he also aware that £900,000 will be cut in the Wakefield health authority and that beds in the intensive care units will be closed? Is he further aware of the £600,000 that will be cut in the Pontefract health authority, which will mean a reduction in health care? Will he assure me that his statement today will ensure that those cuts do not take place in that area of Yorkshire?

Mr. Newton: I have said that the distribution between districts is, of course, a matter for the regions. However, I assure the hon. Gentleman that my statement means that the Yorkshire region will have another £4·7 million to distribute.

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Does the Minister agree that we owe it to those working in the Health Service, to patients and to those on the waiting lists to make it plain that, far from standing still, the NHS is in fact making great progress both in terms of patients treated, doctors and nurses employed and new forms of treatment undertaken? Do we not further owe it to the members of the public who have expressed a wish to contribute more to the Health Service to introduce, as soon as possible, an alternative means of finance? If the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds can offer a medical insurance scheme, surely our Government should be able to do so.

Mr. Newton: Not only do we have a duty to consider alternative forms but we have been acting to increase the

income of the Health Service; for example, through the land sales policy, which has so assisted the capital programme, and in other ways, including the income generation scheme. I accept that the problems and pressures that we face, which no one has sought to conceal, are those of an expanding service that is providing more and more care.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): This morning I received a copy of a letter that the chairman of Rotherham district health authority sent to the Secretary of State, saying that the underfunding on inflation of that health authority this year amounted to £500,000, £300,000 of which had gone to meet pay settlements this year. Will the Minister say how much of the allowance that he has announced will put back into that health authority? If the Trent region cannot do that for all district authorities in the region because of the sum that the Minister has in front of him, are we not still underfunded for this year, although he has not answered the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about next year's funding for the Health Service?

Mr. Newton: We shall have to consider issues arising from the review body reports, when we have them, in the usual way. The record is clear: huge additional sums were made available last year. With regard to Rotherham district health authority, I must repeat the answer that I have already given—that the increase for Trent regional health authority is nearly £6 million for this year.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I warmly welcome the financial aspects of my hon. Friend's statement, but is he aware that, for some years, there has been growing anxiety about the quality of administration in the National Health Service—not necessarily at district level but at regional level? Is he aware of the great anxiety—in the part of the world with which my hon. Friend is familiar—about the fatuous performance of the North East Thames regional health authority, which has sought to move cancer services, shifting the goal posts at least three times, causing intense anxiety to cancer patients and relatives, and wasting public money? Perhaps the most important action that my hon. Friend could take to encourage those engaged directly in health care—doctors and nurses—is to shake up the administration of regional health authorities.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend will know that the proposals for North East Thames cancer treatment services are currently with Ministers. Therefore, he will understand that I would not wish to comment directly on them. We shall be just as keen to improve still further the efficiency of regional health authorities as every other part of the service.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I welcome the £90 million that has been announced, but will the Minister say why we are still, according to what the consultants tell us, £110 million short? Some £110 million is needed for this year alone, and of that £500,000 is needed in Liverpool to keep the service going. With regard to next year's Estimates, does the Minister agree that £707 million is £200 million short, and will we not be in the same position next year of coming cap in hand for an extra allocation of £200 million? Finally, are land sales the only measure that the Minister is thinking about to sustain the building programme?

Mr. Newton: No, of course it is not. The building programme is sustained by three quarters of a billion pounds of public money, which we are increasing still further this year.

The increase that I have announced for Mersey regional health authority is nearly £3·5 million.

I have the same comment on both of the hon. Gentleman's shortfall figures. He and those who write the figures persistently ignore the cost improvement programme and all other potential sources of income. That is absurd. It appears that there is no room for efficiency increases—there is: we made it, and it is helping to improve patient care.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My hon. Friend will recall that the West Midlands regional health authority has a rate of funding that is 19 per cent. beyond the rate of inflation, so his statement will be welcomed as an addition to the Government's record. Will he bear in mind that that same health authority is underfunding the county of Shropshire by 10 per cent. on the RAWP scale? We would like to see some real meat to the promise that we shall have equitable funding or, better still, as suggested by the Father of the House, our right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), abolish the regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my hon. Friend's words will have been registered by the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority. I shall certainly bring them to his attention, having recently met many people from Shropshire about their concerns. The West Midlands health authority will gain nearly £7 million from what I have announced this afternoon in the present year, and about £72 million for next year.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to remind the House that we have a busy day ahead of us, with no fewer than six Privy Councillors wishing to speak, and a maiden speech. There is a long list. I shall allow questions on this matter to go on until a quarter past four. Therefore, I ask for brief questions, please. Perhaps we shall also have brief answers as a result.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Will there be a parallel statement concerning increased expenditure on the Health Service in Scotland? Will the Minister recognise that the Minister who is responsible for health in Scotland is not in his place? Yet again, there is no Scottish Minister in the House to hear what is said about the Health Service in Scotland. We do not believe that the Service is safe in the hands of Ministers who are repeatedly indolent. Will he bring the matter to the attention of the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Mr. Newton: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend has been in no way indolent in the discussions that underlie the statement. Scotland will receive an addition £7·6 million. I understand that my right hon. Friend will make a statement in an appropriate way in due course about how he proposes to deploy that money.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Many of my constituents who have seen wards close and waiting lists lengthen will be grateful for the winds of reality that are sweeping through my hon. Friend's Department and the Treasury, much of which is due to my hon. Friend, and I thank him

[Mr. Jerry Hayes]

for that. Will he warn those health authorities that do not believe in cost efficiency and those consultants who are still carrying out restrictive practices that the money that he is making available is a precious resource and should not be squandered?

Mr. Newton: Heeding your injunction about brevity, Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Is the Minister aware that we in Wales have suffered hospital closures and ward closures? We have lost nurses. We have disgruntled and frustrated surgeons and physicians. We have underfunded health authorities. What is in the statement for Wales? If the Minister cannot give us the answer, where is the Secretary of State for Wales? Why has he not come forward with a statement?

Mr. Newton: What is in the statement for Wales is £3·8 million.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my hon. Friend assure me that, if the additional resources that he has provided this afternoon, which are most welcome, prove to be insufficient, he will be courageous enough to come to the House and announce a further allocation of resources? Will he assure the House also that health authorities will not continue to have to pick up the cost of underfunding pay awards? It badly affects the morale of all professions at all levels of the Health Service.

Mr. Newton: If I believed that the resources that I am making available for this year, in advance of the figure of more than £700 million extra for next year, were inadequate, I would not have made the statement in the first place. On the latter point that my hon. Friend has raised, it does not seem to me to be unreasonable that some—I emphasise, only some—contribution towards pay and price pressures in a year should be expected from the substantial cost improvement programmes. of course, we shall have to consider what those amounts should be.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Minister accept that, since the Department of Health in Northern Ireland is linked with the Department of Health and Social Security, most of us are like Oliver Twist? We have come forward today, thanked him for what we have got, but we shall come back again. The reality is that the Eastern health board has already stated that, even in the light of projected figures, which are grossly underfunded when applied to RAWP, those health authorities and regional authorities that seek to do their work properly are subsequently punished because their resources are cut? Does the Minister accept that there is a need for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to be present to answer questions.

Mr. Newton: The Nothern Ireland share of what I announced today is just over £2·1 million.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As the Government insist that health expenditure must grow by 2 per cent. in real terms if cuts are to be prevented, will the Minister assure the House that the NHS will be able to meet that objective this year? Will he help us also in judging the adequacy of today's statement by assuring the House that, from this day onward, he can confidently expect that there will be no more announcements about cuts in the NHS?

Mr. Newton: Taking account of what I have said several times about cost improvement programmes and other related matters, we estimate that the overall real increase in the resources that are available for care should be about 3 per cent. next year, which, of course, would more than cover the figure that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I certainly cannot undertake to him or to anybody else that there will be no further changes arising, apart from anything else, from sensible rationalisation of services—for example, when new hospitals are built.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my hon. Friend aware that, although they did not get a copy of his statement even five minutes before he made it, his hon. Friends warmly welcome it? We congratulate him on the fact that he has managed to prise from the Treasury more cash for this year as well as the substantial sums that he has already got for the following year. Will he say a little more about the monitoring process to which he referred? What will be the consequences of it? Will he be able to point out to some authorities that they will generate more income by contracting out and by working with the private sector? Some health authorities are not doing that. Pressure should be put upon them to use every possible means of getting other sources of income.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will have noticed that the Treasury is here, in the shape of our right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, and appears to enjoy having the money prised out of it.

We shall certainly encourage health authorities to continue to explore ways of improving services and obtaining extra facilities along the lines that my hon. Friend suggested.

We intend to back up the existing cash limit monitoring from the beginning of January, with formal arrangements for monitoring income and expenditure and working balances on a quarterly basis, for taking at the very least, in the light of new management information which is now becoming available, a quarterly check on the number of patients treated and the state of waiting lists. Following those and other measures, we shall systematically take up with health authorities the reasons for the wide divergences of activity levels.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Does the extra £7 million for the west midlands mean an end to the closure of wards, beds and operating theatres as a result of underfunding in the west midlands?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will have heard what I have said. I am not in a position to give guarantees, given that changes in wards, beds and hospitals can arise from a variety of causes, often the subject of dispute, but many of which unquestionably, even in the circumstances that the hon. Gentleman has in mind, arise from sensible rationalisations of services to get best value for money.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Does my hon. Friend agree that, whatever figure he announced today, there would have been a knee-jerk reaction from the Opposition to the effect that it was not enough? Will he accept my congratulations on what he has done, particularly given the problems that face my part of the world, Cornwall? What is the extra amount for the South-West region? When he reconsiders the RAWP formula, will proper account be taken of elderly people and the rural nature of some health authorities?

Mr. Newton: The figure for South Western under this afternoon's proposal is £4·2 million for 1987-88, and it is £43 million for 1988-89. On the RAWP formula, I have had a variety of things urged on me in the past few weeks. I have been urged to take greater account of urban deprivation, the elderly, rural scatter—one of the urban points—and increasing population. We need to examine the matter carefully; that is one reason why I have decided not to tinker with the formula this year.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does not the Minister accept that it is wholly inappropriate that the health authorities of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland should learn of their allocations only by questioning him? Does he not accept that they, too, are labouring under extreme difficulties? Why were not the figures published in the statement, with a clear analysis of how the money will be distributed to our health boards?

Mr. Newton: I have said that my right hon. Friends will be making statements to give further details in the appropriate way.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the Minister give the details for the North-West region? I accept that it is for the region to decide, but will he call the attention of the North-West board to the fact that 23 per cent. of Lancaster's population are elderly people who clearly need more resources? On RAWP, will he take into account the fact that land values in the north-west are very much lower than in other areas and that the north-west cannot get as much when it sells sites?

Mr. Newton: I note the latter point and, indeed, the point about the elderly in Lancaster, which I shall draw to the attention of the North-West RHA, if it is not already aware of it — although, knowing my hon. Friend, I suspect that it probably is. The figures for the North-West region are £5·8 million for 1987-88 and £55 million for 1988-89.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the Minister explain how this grossly inadequate sum will prevent the growing tendency to cut costs by having mixed sleeping wards in hospitals? Is he aware that in my constituency women who have had gynaecological operations are, to their great distress, placed in beds side by side with men's beds? Is he aware that many older women who have given a lifetime of service to this country are ending their lives in geriatric wards, often in mental hospitals, where they are placed side by side with demented men who sometimes physically attack them? They find demented men masturbating in the women's toilets. Is it right that women should be stripped of all dignity and end their lives in this manner for the sake of saving what is, overall, a paltry increase?

Mr. Newton: There are a variety of reasons why health authorities have mixed wards, and one is that some people prefer them. I would say only that I strongly oppose people being made to go into mixed wards if it does not suit them to do so. For the rest, the inadequate Victorian hospitals that the hon. Lady described are one of the reasons why we have persistently pursued a record capital building programme, which will be further advanced by these proposals.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the proposals. However, will he speed up the review of policies such as the centralisation of radiotherapy treatment services, which in the North-East Thames area, at least, would cost more money, involve more hardship and reduce patient care? Will he speed up such reviews to aid the Health Service further —in addition to his achievement today?

Mr. Newton: We shall certainly seek to decide as soon as possible about the North-East Thames region's proposals about cancer treatment services. However, it should be emphasised that the aim is to improve the quality of radiotherapy services throughout the North-East Thames region, which includes Essex.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Has the Minister any comprehension of how inadequate and pathetic the sum of £7 million is to the West Midlands regional health authority, which is already £30 million underfunded for this year? Will that money mean that patients in Walsgrave hospital will be treated in wards instead of being treated in corridors as they were this week? Does the hon. Gentleman remember the Prime Minister saying eight months ago, "I go in at the time I choose, on the day I choose and see the doctor I choose, and I get out fast"? Does not the rest of the country have the right to exactly the same expectations as his boss, on £1,000 a week, and the Prime Minister when they are in hospital? Is it not a fact that his statement does not guarantee those rights?

Mr. Newton: I do not think that the West Midlands regional health authority, with which I spent a great deal of time on Friday, will regard nearly £8 million as trivial. Frankly, even if I had announced that 10 times that amount would be available, the hon. Gentleman would still have regarded it as trivial.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): In view of the widening gap between what is medically possible and what any Government can reasonably fund, will my hon. Friend try to establish what the state should supply free on demand, what the private citizen should insure against, and what the patient should be charged for rather than paying more money to the health authorities to try to meet every medical eventuality? Will he institute a comprehensive review of the National Health Service to establish the principles and priorities?

Mr. Newton: Certainly it is healthy that the difficulties that have been the subject of controversy recently should have given rise, as they undoubtedly have, to more forward-looking thinking about the problems of providing health care. I would simply point to what we have already done to harness additional resources and promote partnership with the private sector to the benefit of the overall health care in this country.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Does the Minister agree that high unemployment and low incomes make a major contribution to the demands made by the people in Northern Ireland on the Health Service in both the public and the private sectors and as regards both physical and mental care? Does he agree that the terrible situation in Northern Ireland exerts extra pressure on the resources of those authorities? Does he further agree that approximately £1·30 per head of population will not make a significant contribution in that respect?

Mr. Newton: I take leave to differ with the hon. Gentleman on whether the sum of money that I have announced will have a significant effect. I judge that it will.

[Mr. Newton]

I realise that there are special factors in Northern Ireland —as there are in areas of urban deprivation, areas with a growing population and others. We seek to take account of all the differing factors in the money that we make available.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): How does my hon. Friend reconcile his commitment to a fairer allocation of resources with the reality that, in the last financial year, Eastbourne health authority was 17 per cent. underfunded on the basis of RAWP, whereas this year it is underfunded by 19 per cent?

Mr. Newton: I do so on the basis that it has always been made clear that this is a movement taking place over a period which has to take account of the transitional problems also. South-West Thames regional health authority, which covers my hon. Friend's constituency, is among those that are benefiting again this year from the so-called RAWP bridging fund, designed specifically to help them overcome some of the problems of achieving redistribution to health authorities such as my hon. Friend's.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): The Minister will agree that, in considering NHS funding, one must correct any increases for the pay and prices NHS deflator. When one considers that, one sees that the increase announced for 1988-89 in fact represents a cut in expenditure in real terms. *[Interruption.]* Wait a minute —don't rush it. The Minister has partly offset that by saying that £150 million will come from cost savings. However, that will simply return us to level funding without taking demographic changes into account. Will the Minister also agree that it is rather hypocritical of the Government to complain about consultants engaging in private practice when one of the Government's first acts when they came to power in 1979 was to change consultants' contracts to encourage them to engage in private practice?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that neither he nor I can know what, to use jargon terms, the HCHF deflator will be in the period ahead. Obviously, we shall not know the outcome of the review body and other recommendations until the spring of the forthcoming year. We shall have to consider that when the time comes.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my hon. Friend aware how welcome it is, at a time of great difficulty, to have a Minister who will listen to representations? Those of us who were here in 1976 can contrast that with what happened under the last Labour Government when there were cuts on a far greater scale than we have now. Does the Minister's announcement mean that, for next year, every regional health authority should be able to give some increase in real resources to every district under its care?

Mr. Newton: I think that I can safely give that assurance to my hon. Friend. In the light of the concern which he and other hon. Members have expressed, he may like to know that, in respect of that part of the distribution for next year governed by the RAWP formula, the highest increase in funding — 6·8 per cent. — is going to the Oxford region.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): It was not until a throwaway supplementary answer of the Minister a short while ago that I, as a Welshman and Welsh Member, was sure that Scrooge's belated conversion was not merely an English phenomenon and that it might apply to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Will he confirm — *[Interruption.]* No, it is not. Will the Minister confirm that the statement contains two detailed pages which apply only to the English authorities? Will he confirm that there is no specific reference to Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland? Will he confirm that there are just two general, undetailed references to general United Kingdom figures?

Since the Minister began to speak, I have taken the trouble to phone the Welsh Office and was told to look for a written answer that is to be published later this afternoon. Will he bear in mind that we have already complained to the Secretary of State for Wales about Government by press release, particularly when the press release can be in the Press Gallery four hours before it is in the Library? If he cannot answer these questions— there is no reason why he should be able to—will he ensure that on Friday the three Ministers who are responsible and should be answering the questions, are paraded here in the House to answer them?

Mr. Newton: The statement said:

"we have concluded that . . . it would be right to increase health authority cash limits throughout the United Kingdom by almost £90 million, of which £75 million is for English health authorities."

I am bound to concede that that sentence does not include the words "Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland". However, it did not stop the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) focusing, rather inaccurately, on the fact that only £75 million was for England.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall, of course, faithfully record the names of those hon. Members who have not been called; when we debate this matter again, I shall ensure that they have some precedence.

Britoil

4.22 pm

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The purchase of shares in Britoil by BP."

Britoil is the largest and most important independent company based in Scotland and its headquarters are in my constituency. It employs 1,700 people who, as we meet here this afternoon, are gripped by fear about the circumstances which have unfolded since the dawn raid on the stock exchange a week ago when BP began hostile takeover manoeuvres against the Britoil operation. According to *The Times* this morning, they are poised to deliver a knockout blow this afternoon on the stock exchange, so this is an urgent matter.

It is also important because the board of directors, the management and the staff are, to a man and woman, opposed to this hostile takeover bid, and are looking to the House and to Her Majesty's Government to redeem promises which they have made to them. Given the Christmas hiatus which is about to come upon us, my constituents and the company are concerned that, before we resume in January, the game will be over and they will have been dragged screaming and kicking into a marriage which is certainly not to their liking.

The consequences of a BP takeover would be dire indeed. Britoil, a good example of enterprise culture in operation, would disappear into the vast maw of British Petroleum, whose own provenance is increasingly open to question. The Kuwait Investment Office has just bought another few hundred million shares, bringing its stake to one billion shares in British Petroleum.

There is a clear locus for this House. The Chancellor of the Exchequer holds a golden share in Britoil, which he said was to ward off hostile predators of the BP kind. If we have a debate this afternoon, the House can ask the Chancellor how solid is that golden share. When will the public see its value? When will he break the less than golden silence of the last few days? Will he ensure that the cheap brass of the City of London does not knock out the black gold of Britoil whose record in the oil industry is exemplary?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) seeks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"The purchase of shares in Britoil by BP."

I have listened with concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said and I appreciate that we are approaching the Christmas recess. However, he knows that the decision that I have to make is whether to give his application precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that his application meets the criteria under Standing Order No. 20, and regret that I cannot put his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.26 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you reflect in the next 24 hours on a parliamentary malpractice which is on the increase? This is the habit of even the most senior and informed Ministers of using their answers to refer questioners to questions that do not in any way answer the question asked. You will recall that question No. 13 referred to Mr. Charles Powell, a senior Foreign Office civil servant, and I asked very carefully how it was that he remained in the post in the circumstances.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are going back into Question Time. I shall reflect upon what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I cannot have any responsibility for answers to questions. I often wish that I could.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During questions on the health authorities statement, a number of hon. Members were called. Perhaps you, Mr. Speaker, could help some of us who will no doubt face criticism in our local press about not being called and not appearing to be here—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, dear."] When Conservative Members take that sort of attitude, let me draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that no one from the Merseyside area, the north-east or the north was called. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that there is a problem with mental hospitals in my constituency, which I have raised many times.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I know about that. I was reluctant to curtail questions on the statement, but, as the hon. Gentleman knows, we have an important debate ahead of us. I wish it were possible for every hon. Member who wishes to participate in these matters to speak. I cannot say more than I have already said, but I shall bear the hon. Gentleman's complaints in mind. If he wishes his position to be reinforced in a letter to his constituents, I shall be pleased to help him.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon the Minister for Health made an important statement about National Health Service funding. It was only in questioning him that the position of Scotland was extracted. He also went on to say that the appropriate Scottish Minister would make a statement in his own way. I have since learned that the Minister responsible for the Health Service in Scotland is appearing on a radio programme in Scotland at 5 o'clock to speak on this subject. I have always understood that the first priority of hon. Members, particularly Ministers, should be their attendance in this place, to account for what they are doing, rather than appearing on the media.

Mr. Speaker: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was on to a very good point in his question when he elucidated the reply.

National Health Service (Improved Provision of Services)

4.29 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require improved provision of services in all aspects of the National Health Service.

If the Prime Minister's husband had cancer, would she see him die because the local hospital had overspent its quota for operations? If the Prime Minister had a grandchild who needed a heart operation, would she see that child turned away again and again because of the shortage of trained nurses? Heaven forbid. The Prime Minister would not want any such tragedies in her family, and neither would I in mine. I do not want them to occur in anyone's family.

The undeniable fact is that, in the Prime Minister's Britain, such tragedies are happening every day. Every day in our public hospitals more beds are lost, more nurses leave their jobs and more people suffer and die unnecessarily. Those people may be statistics, but they are also flesh and blood. Therefore, I have not come here today to bandy statistics—who believes them anyway?

Like a clockwork parrot, the Prime Minister squawks away, "We spend more; we have spent more. We, we, me, me." Who believes that? From every corner of the country and every level of the health profession comes the same lament — "The hospital service is in crisis." Even Conservative Members say so. It is in total crisis, but from Downing street the parrot simply screeches louder, "We are giving more, more, more." The offering of peanuts this afternoon is totally insufficient to meet the crisis.

The Prime Minister is not deaf. She knows exactly what the doctors, nurses and hospital administrators are so desperately trying to tell her. She knows perfectly well that our hospitals will be lucky to survive the winter without more shameful tragedies. Of course, they would not be the Prime Minister's personal tragedies, because people like her buy their urgent hospital treatment. However, they are tragedies all the same. They are the tragedies of those people who are too poor to jump queues, who are not quite rich enough to avoid the effects of Government policy. I repeat those words "Government policy" because in my opinion the current crisis in our hospitals has been deliberately created as an act of policy. Health care is being deliberately squeezed, purposely run down to undermine public support for the principle of the National Health Service itself.

Just after the second world war, Sir Winston Churchill implied that the Labour party's creation of the welfare state and the National Health Service would be the first step down the road to the concentration camps. "How absurd", one might think, "how paranoid", in the light of the vast public health achievements of the past 40 years. Yet deep in her heart, the Prime Minister still believes that, because she distrusts the whole philosophy behind our present hospital service. She loathes the very idea of collective provision for individual need, provided free at the point of that need and paid for, collectively, through taxation, graded to individual wealth. That is still the governing principle of the Health Service, and judging by all measurable evidence it is still the overwhelming preference of the British people.

However, it is anathema to the Prime Minister. If she is indeed determined to dismantle the whole structure of post-war social provision as she sees it, why should the Health Service be exempt? In fact, would not our hospitals be the most crucial target as they most nearly fulfil, in Britain, the hated "Socialist" ideal?

Make no mistake — the National Health Service is not safe in the Prime Minister's hands, because she is philosophically committed to its destruction. The early phases of that destruction are what we see today — hospital closures, ward closures, staff losses, inadequate funding and "industrial-style" management—all leading to lower standards of patient care, all calculated to ensure that the only people who believe that the National Health Service gives good value for money are those who can afford private care. It has all been consciously orchestrated to sap the nation's faith in community provision and is aimed ultimately at privatisation and handing over health care to private profiteers on the American model, with a two-tier system of health provision and with double standards: one for the rich and fortunate who can pay, and one for the unfortunate who cannot, who can be turned away from hospitals when they have got behind with their insurance payments.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am listening to the hon. Lady's submission, which I think will shortly come to an end.

Mrs. Mahon: We should not forget the old man with cancer or the little grandchild with a hole in his heart. In future, are their life chances to depend solely on cash—not on compassion or on the caring instinct, collectively expressed, but purely on the ability to pay? Heaven forbid. Indeed, heaven forbid that a grandchild of the Prime Minister, or mine, or anyone else's, should ever be weighed on the shameful scales of payment or pain. It would be shameful if the relief of pain and suffering were ever again a matter of politics in this country. However, without doubt, we are already on that slippery slope towards the politicisation of pain.

If I am wrong, let the Prime Minister deny it. Let her come to this House——

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I anticipate the point of order. The hon. Lady must tell the House what she wants her Bill to do.

Mrs. Mahon: How does the Prime Minister see our hospital and family doctor services developing, or otherwise, for the rest of the century? What exactly is the Thatcherite vision of the 21st century? In the current crisis, the British people are entitled to know what the cuts and the chaos are about. People have a right to know where the different parties stand on the central philosophical issue facing British society. Opposition Members have no hesitation in saying where we stand. We stand where we have stood for the past few decades and more. We stand for the elimination of waiting lists, charges and understaffing. We stand for adequate resources, adequate pay and adequate public provision——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the hon. Lady, is it in order for an hon. Member introducing a Bill to go on and on without mentioning the Bill?

Mr. Speaker: I have already given that hint to the hon. Lady. I am listening carefully to what she is saying. I should like to hear her say what her Bill will do.

Mrs. Mahon: With respect, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. Gentleman interrupted me that is what I was trying to say.

The Bill is about sufficiently improving services covering all aspects of health care—this is what I was saying when the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) deliberately misheard me — to eliminate all waiting lists; provide sufficient resources to meet the ideals and practical requirements of the system; eliminate all charges, again to meet the ideals of the service; introduce an adequate programme of preventive health care, including provision for the training of staff, publicity and general education; end the exploitation of staff which is, at the moment, rampant in our Health Service and provide adequate rates of pay for those staff; introduce a realistic and enforceable grievance procedure for patients, to be provided by an ombudsman with real powers; introduce a democratic form of management as a matter of priority.

The National Health Service is being run down. I defy any Conservative Member to vote against the Bill unless he can put his clear alternatives to the House and the country. Why is the National Health Service being run down? If it is to disappear, how will it be replaced? Let the Prime Minister come to the House and answer that straight and simple question, not with figures or squawking like a parrot, but with philosophy. Let us see and hear the quality of the Prime Minister's care and compassion. Let this small Bill be the beginning of a great national debate on the most important social institution, the National Health Service, once a matter of great national pride but now, although it hurts me grievously to say so — *[Interruption.]* I am absolutely—*[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mahon: What is happening at the moment is a disgrace that the nation should take to heart. Let the Prime Minister come here to tell us what she has in store for the National Health Service in the 21st century; we have our vision and we want to know the Government's.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. John Battle, Mr. Dave Nellist, Mr. David Hinchliffe, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Max Madden, and Ms. Mildred Gordon.

National Heath Service (Improved Provision of Services)

Mrs. Alice Mahon accordingly presented a Bill to require improved provision of services in all aspects of the National Health Service: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January and to be printed. [Bill 72.]

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: We have a heavy day ahead of us. Is it a matter that I can genuinely answer?

Mr. Bennett: Mr. Speaker, will you confirm to the House that on ten-minute Bills it is the normal practice that people listen in silence to the presentation of such a Bill and do not interrupt with points of order? It is particularly deplorable for Conservative Members to interrupt a ten-minute Bill, when the purpose of the Bill is quite clearly stated on the Order Paper. People often present Bills which are difficult to understand, but on this occasion it was specifically set out on the Order Paper. It is deplorable that hon. Members should interrupt a speech on a ten-minute Bill, which by tradition should not be interrupted.

Mr. Speaker: I agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said, but he will have heard what I said to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon)—that, in making an application to bring in a Bill, it is necessary to describe what the Bill contains. That is all I was seeking to elucidate from the hon. Lady.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Finance Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before calling the Secretary of State, I inform the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. It might also be helpful if I inform the House that all motions for instructions to the Committee on the Bill are out of order. Therefore I have not been able to select them. The instructions requiring the Committee to consider alternative ways of achieving the purposes of the Bill are out of order because the Committee already has that power. The instructions requiring the Committee to consider dividing the Bill are out of order because the Bill is not drafted so as to make a division practicable. The rules governing the admissibility of instructions are clearly set out on page 545 of "Erskine May".

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that, none the less, it is still perfectly in order for those of my hon. Friends who think the Standing Committee should examine the desirability of linking the charge to ability to pay to add their names to the Order Paper at any time between now and 10 o'clock tomorrow?

Mr. Speaker: I can certainly confirm that to the hon. Member, and I confirm that it would be perfectly open for him to put down an amendment at a later stage.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In recent times a change has been made to Second Readings and Second Reading amendments. Mr. Speaker, a practice has been adopted occasionally by you and the previous Speaker that when, for instance, the Liberal leader or SDP leader has put down a Second Reading amendment, it has been taken. There used to be a time when that gate was never opened, when Second Readings were simply voted for or against. Now, as a result of the change that has taken place in the past few years, any amendment to the Second Reading of a Bill, in effect, gives an indication to the Committee to take account of the amendment.

Some amendments have been put down on the Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill. As Mr. Speaker on occasions has found it necessary to take those Second Reading amendments and so give the Committee the power to take account of them, my argument is that the gate has been opened for instructions also to be presented. It puts the Chair in some difficulty if it is prepared, as it has been in recent times, to accept long-winded amendments on Second Reading, but not to accept instructions from other sources. I would have thought that the matter ought to be looked at again.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If Committees have the power to look at those instructions, why is it out of order for right hon. and hon. Members to debate and vote on a motion which 41 Members have already supported, so instructing the Committee? It seems nonsensical if democracy cannot rule in the House, because you say it exists already. Why can we not put our names to it, speak to it and vote on it?

Mr. Speaker: The answer is simple: that is why I made, exceptionally, a statement. The hon. Member should look at page 545 of "Erskine May". I am unable to select these instructions as they are out of order, because it is within the competence of the Standing Committee to do this. It is superfluous to instruct the Standing Committee to do something it can already do.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Nothing else arises from that. It is perfectly in order to canvass the substance of the instruction in the debate.

Mr. Bennett: Mr. Speaker, I would like you to give us some guidance. As I understand it, votes taken on the Second Reading are for the guidance of the Committee of Selection about the composition of the Standing Committee, if the Bill is committed to a Standing Committee. The difficulty is that where an instruction such as this clearly indicates a view held in the House, it seems to me that that ought to be reflected in the composition of the Committee, but if the instruction is not selected there is no way for the House to indicate to the Committee of Selection the division of feeling in the House and therefore the sort of Committee that ought to be set up.

I wonder whether you could give us guidance on whether the number of names that will appear on the instruction ought to be taken into account by the Committee of Selection in setting up the Committee, or whether the practice, which seems to occur too often, will be that the Committee of Selection sets up the Committee simply on a formula of the number of hon. Members of different parties in the House, rather than taking into account the expression of opinion on the Second Reading.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think it would be right for me to give instructions to the Chairman of a Select Committee on how he should proceed, but I imagine that the hon. Member had that view in mind when he asked me if it was still in order for the names to be added to the instruction. I have no doubt that all kinds of matters are taken into consideration by the Select Committee when it makes its selection.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: I say to the hon. Member that, in raising points of order of this kind, which I cannot answer, he denies his colleagues the opportunity to make a speech. I shall bear that carefully in mind the next time the hon. Gentleman wishes to speak.

Mr. Skinner: Well, my shoulders are broad enough; I do not know about yours. Today you have agreed—I repeat the point I made earlier, to which I have not had an answer—that a practice is becoming, not prevalent, but is used on occasions, of taking amendments to Second Readings. I will read the amendment proposed today to the Second Reading:

"On Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill, to move, That this House declines to give a second reading to the Local Government Finance Bill because of the absence of any grading in the rate of community charge in proportion to the ability to pay and because of the absence of a comprehensive rebate scheme which would also take account of ability to pay."

Assuming that my right hon. Friend's amendment is carried, without any question whatsoever that would be an indication of the feeling of the House. In my opinion, that

is no different from an instruction to the Committee because it introduces an argument. There used to be a time when a Second Reading was voted on and there was no such thing as a reasoned amendment. Now that we have reasoned amendments, arguments are introduced into Second Readings, and I do not see the difference between this precedent, the gate having been opened, and an instruction from another part of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member read out the amendment and he correctly states exactly what will happen if the House declines to give a Second Reading to the Local Government Finance Bill. I cannot see his point. He knows perfectly well what the amendment says, and that is what we are about to debate.

4.49 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The objectives of the Bill are, first, to abolish the inequities of the present domestic rating system; secondly, to make local councils more responsive and accountable to their electors; and, thirdly, to provide badly needed protection for business ratepayers. It will achieve those objectives first by replacing domestic rates with a fairer community charge; secondly, by establishing a uniform business rate, and, thirdly, by introducing a simpler and more stable grant system. Together, those proposals will provide the essential linkage between those who use, pay and vote for local services.

I think that it is generally agreed now that the present domestic rating system has not controlled local spending. It does not provide accountability and it is unfair. It must now go. Excessive local spending has plagued Governments of both political colours. When the International Monetary Fund was here and the late Anthony Crosland had to call time on the municipal party-goers, it was the Labour Government who first cut central grant support. It was the Labour Government who invented grant holdback.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) will doubtless confirm that at the outset of this Government an important goal of his approach was to restrain local spending by means of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. We have had some success. The average real annual increase in local authority spending has fallen since the 1970s, but it is still too high. Since 1979-80 local spending has increased by 18 per cent. in real terms, but by much more than that in many of our cities run by the Labour party. That is an unacceptable burden when the key to prosperity lies in reducing the burden of how much the state spends and how much it taxes and borrows.

We have a system in which control of local government's £45 billion gross annual spending is vested in 35 million electors. Yet only 18 million are liable to pay rates and more than 3 million of those receive a full rebate. The fact is that 20 million of the local electorate make no direct contribution to the cost of local services. Under the present system half of local revenue is raised from businesses which are defenceless against exploitation by authorities, particularly those controlled by the Labour party.

The domestic rating system is also unfair. Many who benefit from local services pay nothing towards them. Payments based on rental values bear little relationship to people's ability to pay and even less to their use of local services. Forty per cent. of homes with above average rateable values are occupied by those with below average incomes. It is unfair that a single person can pay the same as four wage earners in the house next door. It is unfair that, because rateable values are taken as a measure of ability to pay, those in high rateable value areas pay more for the same services than those in low rateable value areas regardless of their income. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State said in response to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), a poor family in Birmingham is effectively subsidising a richer family in Copeland.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): My right hon. Friend used two extremely significant words. He referred to "wage earners". If the community charge applied only to wage earners, many people would have fewer objections to it.

Mr. Ridley: I would be delighted to withdraw the phrase "wage earners" and say "people". It applies whatever the source of one's earnings whether they be wages, salaries or benefits. I want to answer my hon. Friend with a precise example because he will find this revealing. In 1987-88, the shire area with the highest average rate bill was south Buckinghamshire where the average domestic rate bill per adult was £400, but the spending by the authority per adult was £650. The area with the lowest average rate bills was Pendle where the average rate bill per adult was £130, but spending per adult was £700. Thus, for example, a pensioner with no other income would pay three times as much for less spending in south Buckinghamshire than in Pendle. That is a measure of unfairness which is unconnected with earnings.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I will give way to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and I will then have got that over with for the day.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Secretary of State remind the House that the high-spending local authority of south Buckinghamshire is run by his Conservative colleagues while Pendle—*[Interruption.]*—the low-rating and low-charging authority, is run by my Liberal colleagues? What outside organisations, including those in local government, support his proposed solution to the abolition of rates? Who are the supporters?

Mr. Ridley: I must take the hon. Gentleman through the figures again. Spending per adult in south Buckinghamshire is £650. Spending per adult in Pendle is £700. Therefore, south Buckinghamshire is a low-spending area and Pendle is a high-spending area. But the people living in south Buckinghamshire pay three times as much as the people in Pendle.

Mr. Hughes: Who runs south Buckinghamshire?

Mr. Ridley: Last night, speaking alone, the hon. Gentleman described himself as "these Benches". I hope that "these Benches"—whatever they may be—do not make the same mistakes that he has made.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, not at the moment.

I think that I am right to say that no major political party supports the present system and all agree that there must be change. So domestic rates must go and few now dissent from that. That is the first leg of the Government's argument. The second leg is to find the best alternative. I believe that the Bill provides the best system — the community charge. It is fair, workable and, above all, accountable.

It is fair because it provides that nearly all adults will pay a flat rate local charge for local services which broadly reflect their use of local services. It is therefore a sort of pricing mechanism which regulates——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend explain this? Those of us who agree with him about the unfairness of the present rating system are mightily perplexed as to how it can be fairer for someone living in a house worth £1 million to pay exactly the same rate as someone living in a hovel with rain pouring down the walls. How can that be fairer? Surely it is the fact that there is no true basis for the ability to pay that matters. Surely the ability to pay must play some part in a just scheme.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend must, therefore, feel that vehicle excise duty, the television licence and a whole host of other charges that are flat-rated across the population are unfair. I have never heard him protest about those imposts because they are not related to the ability to pay.

The Bill is also fair because, accompanied by the new grant system——

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Ridley: No, I want to make a little more progress and I will give way later. It would be a good idea if hon. Members reserved their marvellous contributions for the speeches that they want to make later.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is just curiosity really. The Tory hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said that this Tory Minister is mad. It is in order——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Points of curiosity are not points of order.

Mr. Ridley: To my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), who said that it was unfair to expect everyone to make the same contribution to local services regardless of their income, I would say this: we do not propose that they should. The community charge will raise only enough to cover about a quarter of local spending. About half will be met by grants from national taxpayers and a quarter will come from business ratepayers. Households in the top 10 per cent. income bracket will pay 16 times as much towards local services as the bottom 10 per cent. In addition, the cost of the rebates, which will be about £1,500 million, will be borne by national taxpayers, as will the benefit upratings which I have already mentioned.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled will today confirm that the poorest will be protected with rebates of up to 80 per cent. of their community charge, with a tapering rebate down to zero as incomes rise. Those who receive 80 per cent. rebates will include all those on income support and all those fully reliant on state retirement pensions. Those on income support will also receive additional help with the remaining 20 per cent. of the bill through the income support arrangements.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Has my right hon. Friend not yet had it drawn to his attention that there is a very substantial band of people who do not qualify for housing benefit, as it is redefined—the people on very low incomes? They will have to pay the whole community charge. He must address himself to this problem or suffer the consequences.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend, and all hon. Members, will know that as people's incomes rise above the level at which they qualify for a benefit, they will have problems paying the full amount of a charge. In this case, we have provided a taper, which means that the transition from paying only 20 per cent. to paying the full amount will be eased up the income scale. But there is no escape from the fact that if a benefit is directed at those on low wages, as they go up the incomes scale, they will have to start paying the charge.

I accept that the community charge will cost more to collect than rates, but ease of collection by itself is not a good argument for a tax. If it was, we would put the entire cost on to petrol duty. Ease of collection is not the test applied by those who favour alternatives such as a banded charge or local income tax.

The community charge will probably be twice as expensive to administer as the rates, and I have no doubt that there will be some evasion. But many chief officers are confident that they can manage, and are already well on with their plans for computerisation, administration and enforcement of the new system. The recent report by Cipfa Services Ltd. on the implementation of the community charge in Scotland confirmed that the system would be operable there by 1 April 1989. I have no doubt that, once the period for posturing and gesturing is over, others will rise to the challenge.

The community charge will provide accountability. Few have seriously challenged this claim. Voters will be able to make simple comparisons between the costs of services in their area and those in others. If the full system had been in place this year, authorities everywhere would have needed to charge £178 per head to provide a standard level of service. In some areas, that figure might have been as low as £130. In others, it might have been substantially higher. Whatever the figure, voters will know that it reflects the decision on spending which their council has made on their behalf.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I understand that some of my hon. Friends are floating the idea of a banded community charge. My right hon. Friend has been telling the House about the administrative costs of collecting the tax. Could he give the House some indication of what a banded community charge would cost and how much bureaucracy and administration would be involved in collecting it?

Mr. Ridley: It would certainly cost much more, but I shall deal with the banded community charge later.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) will no doubt quote many high figures at us. He should quote them at his friends in local government and ask them what they plan to do about it. The new system will bring a new atmosphere to local politics. By giving people a clear sign

of the costs of local services, they will be more inclined to turn out and vote in local elections and to vote on local, not national, issues. That will be good for local democracy.

Getting away from the present unfair system will involve gainers and losers——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: If introduced today, the new system would lead to very high community charges——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is apparently not giving way at the moment. Hon. Members should desist for the time being.

Mr. Ridley: To help to manage the change, we have proposed transitional arrangements to phase in the full community charge over four years. First, domestic rates will be abolished and the community charge introduced in one go in 1990——

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): The Secretary of State talks about people having choices in local elections. Does he believe that it is fair to tell a family containing elderly people that the non-statutory home help will be taken from them because of other people's attitudes at the ballot box? Will it be fair to tell big families with young children that their non-statutory nursery education will be removed? Are those real choices for Britain in the 1990s?

Mr. Ridley: That intervention justified my previous action in not giving way. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that the choice is between providing services effectively, efficiently and cheaply and providing them extravagantly, stupidly and wastefully, as happens in many authorities run by the Labour party.

Domestic rates will be abolished and the community charge introduced in one go in 1990 in all areas except those where high spending causes very high community charges—the area covered by the Inner London education authority and Waltham Forest. Secondly, the new system will sweep away the unfair system of resource equalisation whereby those in high rateable value areas subsidise those who live in low rateable value areas. Instead of people paying widely different amounts for the same local services, everyone will pay the same. Of course, those who presently benefit from the hidden subsidies will regret their passing. But for those who live in areas where rate bills are unnecessarily high, our proposals represent fairness. Hence we have always included proposals for the safety net. It will not be an additional burden on the areas which will contribute to it; they are contributing to it now. But to allow time——

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): Is Birmingham disprivileged by this proposal? The first announced figure on 1987-88 spending, with full poll tax and no safety net—for the year 1994-95—was £186. About three or four weeks later my right hon. Friend announced a figure of £249. In my innocence, I assumed that this was a disprivilege to my city of Birmingham. I ask him whether, in the unbending from £249 to £186, for the first time the ratepayers of Birmingham will be relieved of the monstrous imposition that has existed for about 55 years. Is this a real reduction, or will they be paying more?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend's constituents are already contributing that amount of money, through rate equalisation, to other parts of the country that are judged to be less favourable but very often are not. We are proposing to phase out the taxation of his constituents to benefit other constituents in other parts of the country. My hon. Friend believes that that should be done. We are the only party with a plan that suggests that that redistribution should be phased out, albeit over four years. In Committee we can discuss whether to phase it out over four years, or over a shorter or longer period, but phase it out we shall so that his constituents have to pay only for the level of services which they receive. We shall limit contributions to the safety net to £75 per adult. That means that many areas will benefit immediately from the change. Elsewhere the change will feed through progressively up to 1994. Of course, I understand the concern of hon. Members, including my hon. Friend, whose constituents will continue to contribute. I have much sympathy with them, but they must also consider the interests of those whose burden increases as we move towards a fairer system, such as those who live in the constituency of the hon. Member for Copeland.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that in Southend, where the majority of the population readily accept all Government policies, irrespective of their content, local authorities are genuinely concerned about collection, and how we can chase people and get hold of them, particularly as a number of people move around, and an even smaller number of them swap addresses, girl friends and boy friends? Will there be any national guidance for local authorities as to how payment can be secured? Have the Government considered a card or a tattoo to ensure that the money is actually collected, bearing in mind that it will be terribly unfair if a minority of business people have to pay for those who do not pay at all?

Mr. Ridley: Any money which is not collected by the local authority will fall to the other charge-payers to pay, because it will result in a shortfall of revenue to that authority. That will be sufficient incentive to the charge-payers and to the local authorities to maximise collection. We shall certainly be happy to advise and help any authority that asks us to assist it with techniques and methods of collection, which are well advanced already.

I must turn to the national business rates. The uniform business rate is an essential part of the package. It will stop high-spending councils putting more than half of their overspending on to businesses which have no defence. The proposal does not mean that in future 75 per cent. of local income will be under the control of central Government. Non-domestic rate income will be a tax collected locally with the yield assigned by law to local government.

It is argued that local authorities will be worse off because they will not be able to keep their own business rate income. That is to misunderstand the present position. Changes in non-domestic rateable value are equalised through the grant system. The more rateable value, the less the grant, and vice versa. The arrangements for pooling business rates will achieve more or less the same thing but in a more direct and transparent form.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in regard to non-domestic rates, there are anxieties about the manner in which consultations have taken place between business and local authorities in the past? He will no doubt be aware that those consultations

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

have often been called at the eleventh hour, without satisfactory briefing papers. Will he assure the House that adequate and satisfactory safeguards will be built in to the new legislation for businesses to be properly consulted by local authorities?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. I undertake to consider how best to provide the new consultation arrangements that he seeks, and make sure that they are properly carried out.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is widespread support for the proposed national business rate? It will bring considerable help and relief to businesses in the north of England, which have suffered so much. However, is he aware of the anxiety that exists amongst businesses in the south, particularly the smaller businesses for whom rates form a very high proportion of their costs—a much higher proportion than for large firms? Will he consider representations for a safety net, to ensure that business rates, particularly for smaller firms, do not go up by more than 15 per cent. per year?

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps I should give way to my hon. Friends on all occasions. Their interventions are extremely sensible and helpful. We shall certainly consider whether we can improve the transitional arrangements for businesses which face increases in their business rate, and we shall see whether we can improve the suggestions that we have already made, on the lines of my hon. Friend's ideas.

The second function of the unified business rate is to remove the arbitrary variations in the amounts businesses pay at present. Rate poundages vary now by a ratio of 3:1, yet the services to businesses hardly vary at all. A business ratepayer in Manchester now pays 60 per cent. more in rates than his identical competitor in next-door Trafford, for no obvious benefit to him. That is not fair.

Together with the effect of the revaluation—which is now under way—those proposals will reduce rates by some £700 million in the north and midlands. The unified business rate alone will reduce rates by £380 million in inner city programme areas. Those reductions will give a major boost to employment in the areas of greatest unemployment and, at the same time, reduce the pressure for development in the south-east. That should be welcome news both to the Labour party and to my hon. Friends. Business location should be determined by business considerations, not by vagaries of local spending decisions. The changes for some businesses will be large.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Will the Minister give way?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Even an insensitive person like me recognises that the Secretary of State is not giving way at the moment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ridley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that he will understand that I have given way to everyone so far, with one or two exceptions. *[Interruption.]* I have a lot more to say, and I ask hon. Members to accept that I am not giving way because I want to allow as much time as possible for other hon. Members to speak.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Secretary of State referred to a statement made by his junior Minister in reply to me some weeks ago when he said that the poor people of Birmingham are subsidising the rich people of Cumbria. Will he explain what lies behind that statement? Does he mean that there will be a redistribution of the way in which the rate support grant works, away from the county of Cumbria and in favour of other counties in the south? That means a substantially greater level of community charge in the north of England, in the county of Cumbria, than we are assessing and calculating today.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman does not have it right. The present system means that there is a massive withdrawal of funds from certain areas with high rateable values to the benefit of others with low rateable values. So Birmingham is now subsidising counties such as Cumbria. We intend to be neutral in this matter, and have no cross-subsidy from one area to another.

The changes for some businesses will be large. They cannot be absorbed quickly, so, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West, (Mr. Grylls), the Bill provides for transitional arrangements for those facing substantial increases over the full five years to the revaluation in 1995.

We are all agreed that the present system must go. I have described one option, which we believe is the best. In coming to this conclusion, of course we looked at the alternatives. During the passage of the Bill, I am certainly keen to examine in detail any alternatives put forward. We will analyse any detailed options which hon. Members want to put forward, and if possible help them with exemplifications of their ideas in terms of their effects on different local authorities. The Standing Committee will, of course, be free to consider them all. I have to say that no alternative that has so far been put forward is satisfactory, and we remain in no doubt that the community charge is superior to the alternatives.

First, let me look at the alternatives of the Labour party. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) told us in July that he did not wish to

"walk naked into the debating Chamber"

without an alternative policy. I had hoped he would have been able to spare you, Madam Deputy Speaker, the embarrassment of his nakedness in the Chamber today; but I fear not. He still will not tell us what his alternative is. Indeed the hon. Member for Copeland said—I am told—on 4 December:

"It is no part of our obligations to produce detailed responses of what we do in four years' time as an incoming Government".

What a damning admission. Apart from leaving the hon. Member for Perry Barr cold and naked, the Labour party's inability to adopt an alternative shows that it knows that all the alternatives are worse—if not totally unworkable.

The recent history of the Labour party's policy is that, on 7 May in the local elections, their candidates were briefed to campaign on putting capital value rates in place. Two weeks later, in the run-up to the general election, the Leader of the Opposition denied categorically that his party intended to go for capital rates at all. On 25 September, the hon. Member for Perry Barr promised that by the Second Reading—that is, today—

"We will have in place an alternative".

On 4 December, the hon. Member for Copeland said:

"I've made it clear I personally favour a modern property based tax . . . the question is do we ally a property tax with a local income tax, do we have some combination of the two". But, he added:

"We don't have to produce our final proposals until the next General Election."

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): If, as my right hon. Friend says, the Opposition propose to adopt one or other or both of those alternatives—a capital valuation, which is, in effect, a wealth tax, linked with a local income tax—would not that produce enormous administrative problems and bear even more heavily than a local income tax alone on every average family in the country? Has my right hon. Friend's Department done any calculations on the effect that that would have on the poverty trap and on all those who would suffer from what is, in effect, a wealth tax?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is entirely right, as I intend to show.

The Labour party's opposition to these proposals would be much more convincing if it had an alternative that we could compare. I almost put down an instruction to the Committee asking it to consider any alternative of the Labour party.

The reason for this vacillation, deception and evasion is because the Opposition know none of these ideas will do. I will demolish them for them—and the ideas of what used to be called the alliance at the same time. First, I shall deal with local income tax. It would produce crippling tax rates and tax bills in high-spending areas—25·6p in the pound in Camden and 20·9p in Lewisham, compared with, for example, 5·9p in Barnet, or 4·3p in Bromley. A single person on average earnings would save up to £1,600 a year by moving from Camden to Barnet, and up to £1,350 a year by moving from Lewisham to Bromley.

People on higher earnings would have an even higher incentive to move. Those people who are vital to creating a balanced society in inner cities — the job-providers, business men, professionals, teachers, lawyers, doctors, social workers and so on—will have a huge incentive to move out, and the development pressures in low-spending areas will become even greater. The problem of fiscal migration has long been recognised by economists as a major drawback to any form of local income tax. Even in low-tax areas, the bills would be high. A single, newly qualified nurse would pay more in local income tax than she would pay in community charge in every local authority area in the country. In Westminster, she would pay £700 local income tax, compared with £400 community charge. On average, a single person on average earnings would pay £482 a year, compared with an average community charge of £224—more than double. Those who advocate this system have to make it clear whether they would be prepared to reintroduce resource equalisation and compensate authorities whatever the level of their spending. If they would, that would be a licence for any authority to continue spending, because it need not care how many people move away. If they would not, tax rates would soar as the better-off moved away. The incentives on those who remained to join the exodus would further increase. One economist has called that "musical suburbs". But it would be no parlour game.

Next, there are difficulties of enforcement. The tax would have to be enforced by means of a register, to stop people giving the Inland Revenue false addresses in low tax areas, and the income of each person on the register would have to be ascertained and given to the local tax authority——

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Nigel Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: This is the last time I am giving way.

Hon. Members: To whom.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I believe that the Secretary of State has given way to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths).

Mr. Griffiths: If the Secretary of State believes that the figures show that the charge and the rebate system are fair, will he please explain why his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland produced figures two weeks ago that showed that in one of his low-rated authorities — Orkney Islands — people on supplementary benefit income level will have to pay, not 20 per cent., but 41 per cent. of community charge when the poll tax comes—including the personal community charge and the community water charge? Does he call a poll tax rate of 41 per cent. imposed on widows, sick people and pensioners a fair rate?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman will not expect me to know the details. However, I know that he included in his question the water rate and he knows quite well that in England we do not pay that in the same way as it is paid in Scotland.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: I am sorry, I am not giving way.

Adding capital value rates to this makes the problems worse. Exactly the same criticisms about the fairness of a capital value rating system apply to a rental value rating system, only more so. Capital values vary even more than rental values across the country, so the resource equalisation transfer from high-value to low-value areas would need to be greater. On top of the administrative problems of a local income tax, there would need to be another collection system for rates and a complete revaluation of domestic properties based on capital values. The result would be to compound the unfairnesses of the present system, particularly for the less well off — *[Interruption]*—living in high rateable value areas.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. This is an exceptionally important piece of legislation but even the Opposition spokesman is having trouble hearing because of the barracking from his own Benches. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ridley: I shall pause until everyone can hear.

To combine capital value rates and a local income tax would be disastrous, which is why the hon. Member for Perry Barr is still naked. The hon. Member for Copeland obviously knows it, or he would not be so shy about advancing such a combination. If he is even rash enough to do so, I will have pleasure in providing him with some helpful exemplifications of the effects on people's local tax bills. It is damaging that the Opposition, while agreeing that the present system is grossly unfair, have absolutely no idea of what to replace it with.

By contrast, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) is far from naked. He is impeccably dressed in a banded community charge suit. However, his

[Mr. Ridley]

suit is not bespoke but off the peg, the CIPFA peg, and I am afraid that it fits ill. I fear that it represents the worst of all worlds. The proposals put forward by CIPFA contain a series of enterprise and employment traps that are pernicious and unique to this form of local tax. These traps arise because of the steps between the bands. If people earn a little more and thereby fall into the next income band, they would find that the extra amount of local tax that they would have to pay would be more than their extra earnings. Even an extra £1 or £2 a year on wages could mean an extra £400 on the local tax bill. In some cases it could mean an extra £2,000. To avoid this, as I am sure my hon. Friend would want, he would have to go for a taper between the bands. That is to say, a full local income tax.

Progressivity in local taxation, with our tiny local authority areas, is bound to lead to the local brain drains that I have described. We need to minimise them because of the damage that they do to urban communities, and I know that my hon. Friend is equally concerned about that. I will give him just one example of what the CIPFA scheme would mean for local taxpayers in high-spending areas. Using its methodology, with corrected Inland Revenue data, we estimate that in Greater London — where my hon. Friend represents a constituency with the misfortune of having a Labour-controlled council — a person with a taxable income of £10,000 a year would have to pay on average £1,600 in local income tax. On £20,000, he would have to pay £4,270 and, on £30,000, he would have to pay £6,135. I rather doubt that his constituents would welcome that. I understand full well that sense of responsibility that makes my hon. Friend feel that the rich should pay more than the poor, although, as I have explained, they will.

The answer to this concern, which is shared by many, is that the progressiveness of taxation must be seen as a whole in that the contribution of rich and poor to the public purse must be considered across the whole field of taxation. Only one person — the Chancellor — can do that, though of course many are keen to advise him and will no doubt continue to be. It would be disastrous to have 400 Chancellors, one in every town hall, and especially one in Ealing town hall.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The Minister makes the point that there is only one Chancellor of the Exchequer. Will he assure the House that if the poll tax is introduced the Chancellor will promise not to introduce a domestic property tax?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot promise on behalf of my right hon. Friend. I would have thought that it was self-evident that after abolishing a domestic property tax we would be unlikely to seek to introduce a new one later on.

If we are to avoid migration, whether local or national, if we are to keep the incentives that have so dramatically increased our prosperity since 1979, and if we are to keep unemployment on the way down, redistributive taxation must be a national and not a local policy. It would be a mistake to allow prejudice to jeopardise prosperity even at local level. This is why, although I believe that we have the right solution, I am ready to look at any scheme that my hon. Friend might suggest which would help to meet his concerns. However, I have to tell him that the CIPFA scheme is fatally flawed.

It is customary to outline the main provisions of a Bill. However, I think that I have discussed the content of our new proposals in sufficient detail.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister is obviously not giving way.

Mr. Ridley: Therefore, I do not propose to go through the various parts of the Bill. These proposals are fundamentally to restore local democracy. They will restore to local authorities logical and practical——

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): The Minister's voice is getting weaker and is now almost as weak as his case. Will he raise his voice a little? He cannot improve his case but perhaps he can improve the level of his voice.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the Secretary of State has noted that.

Mr. Skinner: I am a lot closer to the Secretary of State than my hon. Friend and I and my colleagues on this Bench are having the same difficulty in hearing him. What worries me most is that the Prime Minister has said that this Bill is the flagship of the Government. If the Minister is leading the flagship, he should want to proclaim the Bill to the world, never mind the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I noticed that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was engaged in deep conversation for some time.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Further to the point of order about hon. Members having difficulty in hearing, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is the Secretary of State having difficulty in hearing Opposition Members who are rising to ask him questions about this proposal?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State gave way on several occasions and made it quite clear on others that he was not prepared to give way.

Mr. Ridley: I am afraid that the only conclusion one can draw from the past three-quarters of an hour is that the Labour party is determined to oppose the Bill, not by putting forward alternative strategies, not by putting forward an idea of its own, not by having the slightest intention of telling the electorate what it would do, but by shouting down those who advocate the Bill.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Ridley: It is the same technique that we saw last night, of trying to get the mob to suppress opinion. It is exactly typical of what happened in the Strangers Gallery last night. *[Interruption.]* It is exactly what goes on in Labour town halls up and down the country. I hope that the Opposition can hear what I am saying. They do not like to hear it, but it is high time that they did.

5.40 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a second reading to the Local Government Finance Bill because of the absence of any grading in the rate of community charge in proportion to the ability to pay and because of the absence of a comprehensive rebate scheme which would also take account of ability to pay.

We came to the launch of the Conservative Government's flagship—and it sank. We noticed that the skipper was not on board; we assume that she had inside information. We note that the Secretary of State did not command the support of a single member of the Cabinet for his performance.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It will have been brought to your notice that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) commented to the effect that there were no members of the Cabinet on the Treasury Bench. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is here.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that *Hansard* will give the correct interpretation.

Dr. Cunningham: All I can say about the Secretary of State for Scotland is that he has certainly been keeping his head down.

The Bill contains proposals of the most profound importance for all the people of Britain. The consequences of a flat-rate personal poll tax will be much greater than those of any Finance Bill this century. The nature and scale of the proposals are such that every household, every adult, every organisation involved with people will be affected — the churches, charities, voluntary organisations and all of industry and commerce. This is not just another Local Government Finance Bill. It envisages the abandonment of the principle of fairness in personal taxation. It proposes unprecedented central control over 75 per cent. of local government finance and the introduction of a national business property tax. If these ideas are accepted, Britain will be unique in Western democracy because they have been rejected by every democratic political party, except the British Conservative party.

The true nature of the poll tax is exposed by an analysis of new powers and ministerial discretions in the Bill. They range from rebates, poll tax capping and future grants to local authorities to demands for information. In total, there are 344 such instances in this one Bill where only Ministers will decide what is to happen. These facts flatly contradict the Tory argument that the Bill is about greater local accountability. Parliament should deeply consider whether such changes are justified or necessary, and that is why we believe that the Bill as a whole should be considered on the Floor of the House.

The House should pause before taking yet another giant stride along the path of central control in Britain and reflect on the Government's record and the consequences of their policies. I have that record. In case anyone is in any doubt, I brought it all along with me: 46 local government Acts in eight years, 2,730 pages of legislation, 12 major changes in local government finance. Why should the House be persuaded by the Secretary of State that the Government have it right this time, when we have the encyclopaedia of failure here in front of us?

On each occasion, the Environment Secretary has said, "This Bill and these powers are necessary to control local government expenditure—to bring more accountability and to clarify the law more and more." Every member of the present Cabinet voted for the lot: targets and penalties, abolition of the English metropolitan counties, rate capping and grant-related expenditure assessments. We fundamentally opposed it all, and so did virtually all of local government.

Now, without a blush, another Environment Secretary tells the House, "It is all over. It is no good. It does not work any more." With a gleam in his eye he proceeds to produce a new solution—a medieval flat-rate poll tax and a national tax on business property. As Bagehot said of Lord Brougham,

"If he were a horse, nobody would buy him; with that eye no one could answer for his temper."

The Government assert that Britain's economy is strong, even booming, and that Britain is enjoying considerable economic success. But none of that alleged success brings any extra benefits in expenditure or the provision of better quality public services, on which the coherence, well-being and future of our society depend — education, housing, health, social services and the environment. The Government choose to ignore the crises that their policies have caused in housing, the Health Service and the inner cities. But a poll tax and a national property tax will exacerbate them and make it more difficult for people and families to escape the awful reality of those crises. A poll tax, a national business property tax and the new grant system, taken together, will make it more difficult than ever for local authorities more effectively to help their communities.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the background to the proposals before the House, and an unusual amount of detail about them, was contained in the Conservative party manifesto for the general election this year? If he does concede that point—I am sure he must, because it is true—he cannot be surprised, nor can the House, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State produces a Bill that reflects with great accuracy what was in that manifesto, on which we won the election.

Dr. Cunningham: Of course, I concede that the commitment to a poll tax was in the Conservative manifesto—it is a matter of fact. But I read with some amusement in "First Magazine" the comments of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack):

"It may have been in the manifesto, but it was not in my election address."

Mr. Ridley: What was in the hon. Gentleman's manifesto?

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to that later. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Don't worry.

The Government choose to ignore the crises that their policies have caused. The House should ask Ministers who supports the proposals, and what is the case for them. True to form, the Government have not had the courage or the openness to publish the responses to the Green Paper, or even to publish a White Paper. It is clear none the less that there is not, and never can be, any political consensus on the proposals, and the Government have not even sought one.

More worrying—and perhaps more important—there is no significant social or economic consensus on the Government's position either. The ideas of the poll tax and the national business property tax have been massively rejected by nearly every organisation in Britain — the churches, the voluntary organisations, the Confederation of British Industry, the Institute of Directors, the National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses——

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

[Dr. Cunningham]

The Economist called it "a bad new tax" which would make the local tax system worse. The CBI said:

"We cannot support the present proposals because of the social and political problems of the community charge, the lack of connection between local businesses and local authorities".

The Institute of Directors said:

"A good local tax must be fair and accountable. The proposal for the national business property tax runs totally contrary to this principle".

Mr. Burns *rose*——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: When I have finished this passage, I shall give way.

The National Chamber of Trade said:

"A uniform business rate is not acceptable to the NCT."

The Forum of Private Business said:

"The Government's rates reform proposals will have a disastrous effect on most of the UK small business sector".

The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses said:

"We cannot support the concept of a uniform business rate because it fails to meet our fundamental objectives of equitability in the non-domestic sector and does not recognise business profitability and ability to pay."

The three key professional institutions—the Rating and Valuation Association, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors—have all criticised all or part of the proposals.

Mr. Burns: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the response sent by the Institute of Directors to my right hon. Friend's predecessor states categorically on page 6, paragraph 5,

"We now see considerable merit in the replacement of domestic rates by a community charge."?

Dr. Cunningham: I can only say that that is true to form for the Institute of Directors. It says one thing in one forum, and another thing in another.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

The Prime Minister and her Cabinet, if they were present—but I see that we now have the Secretary of State for Wales in our midst—could not even turn for comfort to that fount of Tory ideas, theory and doctrinal rectitude, Adam Smith. Adam Smith wrote:

"Capitation taxes, if it is attempted to proportion them to the fortune or revenue of each contributor, become altogether arbitrary . . . and if it is attempted to render them certain and not arbitrary, become altogether unequal . . . and the greatest sum which they have ever afforded, might always have been found in some other way much more convenient to the people."

What a condemnation that is of what the Government are now proposing.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I wonder whether he can now answer the question put to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In particular, can he answer the question that might be put to him by a London docker in a modest house who would face a massive 80 per cent. increase in his rates if they were based on capital value, which we understand to be Labour party policy? Would he say, "Let me put you out of your misery, brother"?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I certainly would not. However, I admire the hon. Gentleman's wit, and I shall come to his point later in my speech.

The Government's main objective is plain. The Bill is a last-ditch attempt to control local government expenditure even more comprehensively than before. The Government wish to establish a system of local government finance that is designed to undermine local government. Why should further proposals designed to secure reductions in local government expenditure be necessary, when we consider the facts? In 1978-79, it was 10·5 per cent. of gross domestic product. In 1986-87, it is 10·7 per cent. of GDP, an almost negligible difference. Is not the Bill's real purpose to undermine the quality and range of publicly financed services?

The Government's case for the Bill, if there is one, rests on discredited arguments, dubious political claims and totally unsubstantiated assertions of the kind that we have heard today from the Secretary of State about local government finance and local taxes. Ministers say that the poll tax is necessary to make the system fairer, to improve accountability in local voting and to simplify the system. We challenge all those assertions.

We are told that the rates are too narrowly based—that not enough people pay rates. Let us look at the figures. A total of 19·5 million people receive a rates bill, and 12 million of them have spouses. At least 31·5 million people now contribute to rates, excluding other adults such as grandparents and children over 18 living at home. Income tax is paid by 20·4 million people. Conservative Members are not saying that, to make voting more responsible in general elections, more people should pay more income tax, are they? Is that the argument?

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I am not giving way now. I shall do so in a moment.

The Government allege that only householders pay rates, yet in their own poll tax leaflet which is being issued to the people of Scotland they say:

"Each partner in a couple is responsible for paying their own poll tax but households' finances are often organised on a joint basis."

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman gave some very interesting figures about those who receive rates demands. Will he now link to those figures the number of people receiving rates demands who are receiving substantial, if not full, public assistance in paying their rates? More than 50 per cent. of council tenants receive such assistance.

Dr. Cunningham: We do not object to that. We are concerned about people's ability to pay.

In issuing that leaflet in Scotland, the Government are already contradicting the stupidity of their own assertions about the number of people who make a contribution to the rates. The argument that rates are not being broadly based is bogus. In proposing a flat-rate poll tax unrelated to a person's ability to pay, the Government are abandoning any claim to be fair in their taxation policy. Their argument seems to be "no representation without taxation".

In fact, the Government's own figures show that 14·2 million people will gain from the introduction of the poll

tax, and 18·8 million will lose. We reject as contemptible the argument that people, regardless of income, must pay more tax to make them more accountable in their local voting. That view calls into question the abolute right to vote. We reject the argument as a sham, and the theory as one that undermines the universal franchise, which for Opposition Members is simply not negotiable——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: —and cannot be related in any way to tax payments. It is a threat to democracy itself.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way in a moment.

The Prime Minister — who is conspicuous by her absence — made her reckless, infamous promise to abolish domestic rates in October 1974, and she said that she would do it by Christmas. She did not say what year.

When the Prime Minister made that promise, she said something else. I quote from her press release:

"Any future local revenue should be based not on property but on the ability of people to pay."

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman knows that, whether people pay income tax or not, everybody pays value added tax and other taxes to central Government. Everybody is accountable to that extent. However, does the hon. Gentleman accept that, largely in Labour-controlled local authorities, only one in four ratepayers pays the full rate? Does he call that accountability? What will he do about that?

Dr. Cunningham: I have just explained—clearly the hon. Gentleman was not listening carefully or did not understand — that the whole argument is bogus. The Prime Minister promised that the new system would be based on the ability to pay, but what happened to that promise? The Secretary of State said nothing about it. It has been ditched, abandoned and cynically cast aside because everyone knows that, whatever else a flat rate poll tax may be, it is definitely not related to the ability to pay. That is the whole point of it.

The Secretary of State does not believe in fairness in taxation or the ability to pay. He made that clear on 1 June in Blackburn during the general election compaign, when he said:

"I think, in terms of local authority services, people should be paying for what they get. It has nothing to do with how rich you are. In this country we are too sold on the idea that the rich should be made to pay for other people's . . . services."

That is an example of the right hon. Gentleman's philosophy.

The argument is that non-ratepaying voters can exploit their ratepaying neighbours and that councillors can buy non-ratepayers' votes with domestic ratepayers' money —[HON. MEMBERS: "That is true."] Oh yes, that is the argument. It may sound plausible, but if it is valid in practice, there should be some evidence to support it. There should be a consistent relationship between the proportion of the electorate paying rates and the size of those rates. The highest rate increases should occur where the fewest electors pay rates. The Government should possess the information — if they have any — to substantiate the argument, but it is not present in the Green Paper, in the right hon. Gentleman's speech, or in any parliamentary answer that we have had from the Department of the Environment. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman complained that we have asked too many questions. The reason why that evidence is not available is that it does not exist.

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull) *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

Without such evidence, the argument that domestic rates weaken rate restraint cannot be used to justify levying a local tax on all the electorate.

Mr. Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the reason why the evidence to which he has referred does not exist is the operation of rate support grant, or has he not heard of that?

Dr. Cunningham: Of course I have heard about the operation of RSG. After all, we have debated it again and again and again and we know that it has gone down again and again and again.

All the changes proposed are in the name of improving the accountability of voters in local elections. Perhaps the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister will explain why people in large houses and with large incomes—wealthy people — will need to pay less tax to become more accountable while people in small houses and with small or medium incomes, who are not wealthy, must pay more tax to become more accountable? What is the answer? What is the basis, logic and philosophy behind such an argument? There is no logic or fairness. If there is a philosophy, it can only be described as a contemptible one.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): I have listened to the hon. Gentleman rant on with his negative opposition to the Bill. However, the Labour party has no alternative. It has not made up its mind whether it wants capital values, capital rating, local income tax or what. All the hon. Gentleman has done is to say that we are wrong, but he should tell us about the alternatives proposed by the Labour party. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State offered to listen, and the hon. Gentleman should explain the Labour party's alternatives.

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to that later.

There is no philosophy in this measure that we can recognise or accept and none that any other democratic party in any other country could accept—all of them have rejected the poll tax.

In the United States, such a tax has been constitutionally outlawed. The 24th amendment to the American constitution says:

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote in any federal elections shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any state by reason of failure to pay any poll tax or other tax."

In 1966 the United States Supreme Court applied the same rule, by way of the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment, to state elections. Justice Douglas said:

"Wealth or fee paying has, in our view, no relation to voting qualifications; the right to vote is too precious, too fundamental to be so burdened or conditioned"

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Gentleman should try to get a seat in Scotland.

Dr. Cunningham: Today, the Tory Reform Group issued a paper on the Government's proposals that said:

"The Government's case for the community charge rests, above all, on achieving proper accountability. Yet this is precisely where it fails".

The community charge

"shows every sign of being an administrative nightmare and will result in a massive increase in the centralisation of power."

On "The World at One" today, Mr. Christopher Mockler, talking about the document, said:

"The Government's case is fundamentally flawed."

Let us consider the Government's case presented to us in the Bill. On the backside of the Bill—probably the right place—we have the names:

"Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke".

On the front of the Tory Reform Group document we have a list of patrons including:

"The right hon. Peter Walker MBE, MP, . . . the right hon. Kenneth Baker MP, . . . the right hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP,".

I am not surprised that they were not present for the Secretary of State's speech.

The Tory proposals have no international support and little support in Britain outside the Tory party. Indeed, within that party, inside and outside the Cabinet, we know that dissent and disquiet is widespread. How can the flat-rate poll tax fit with the Government's argument about "taxing people into jobs"? Surely apprentices, young trainees, newly qualified young people in their first jobs, will be taxed exactly the same as the managing director earning perhaps 10 or 20 times their income. How will the imposition of a personal tax of about £10 a week on a young nurse in London, with a take-home pay of as little as £76 per week, encourage more nurse training, which is desperately needed by the Health Service? To suggest that such policies will not harm young people and their careers brings to mind Disraeli's description of the Peel Cabinet as "an organised hypocrisy".

The Government's refusal to take account of the ability to pay will increase women's poverty and difficulties. Women, who form almost half of the labour force, still earn less than three quarters of men's average pay. If overtime it taken into account, the figure falls to less than two thirds of men's average pay—a differential of over £69 per week. More than half of full-time women workers and three quarters of part-time women workers are among the low paid. Overall, two thirds of all low-paid workers are women. Some 5·5 million women, which represents over a quarter of the work force, earn less than the decent threshold. They will be expected to pay the same flat rate poll tax as someone who may be earning more in a month than they take home in a year.

In the case of married women, or women living with a man, who are unemployed, at home caring for children or sick or elderly relatives, the Government appear to assume that their partners will pay their poll tax.

So much for the Government's argument that all must pay individually to become responsible local voters. The Government cannot have it both ways. Either they are saying that millions of women who, for a variety of reasons, are unemployed have been and will continue to be irresponsible local voters, or they are admitting that everyone in the household has always contributed directly or indirectly to the household budget.

Women have always voted as responsibly as anyone else, and I say that knowing that, regrettably, the majority of them vote for the Conservative party.

The Government argument has another massive flaw. How will the Bill improve local accountability when it proposes to give Ministers and Whitehall civil servants more power over council revenue than ever before? The Bill proposes that Ministers should control 75 per cent. of all council revenue, which is an unprecedented state of affairs. In paragraph 3.11 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", the Government spoke of

"the key to an approach to local government finance that rests on responsible local spending decisions and a reduction in central Government intervention."

We would certainly agree with that, but the Government's present system, which was introduced in 1980 and which has since been manipulated, rigged and subverted by the imposition of targets and penalties, has completely destroyed any rational relationship between changes in expenditure and changes in local rates.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): As the hon. Gentleman is worried about the ability to pay, why has he not referred to the rebate system that the Government are introducing or to support from social security?

Dr. Cunningham: If the hon. Gentleman had bothered to read the Order Paper he would have noticed that that is the subject of our reasoned amendment. Where is the rebate scheme? Why is it not in the Bill?

The present position will be manifestly worsened by the Bill, which will vest in Whitehall the direct control of 75 per cent. of total local authority expenditure. The proceeds of the centrally controlled national business property tax will represent about 25 per cent. of local authority spending. On top of that there is the new revenue support grant, which represents about 50 per cent. of that spending. The Secretary of State will have control of about 75 per cent. of local council spending, and thus will have a much greater impact on the poll tax and the business rate than anybody else or any councillor, individually or collectively.

Where does that leave local authority accountability, based as it will be on a residual 25 per cent. to be funded by the poll tax? It means that for increased spending of 1 per cent. in total budget, a local authority will have to raise 3 to 4 per cent. more from its poll tax payers. This is the notorious gearing ratio that is at the heart of the Secretary of State's proposals. It is an obstacle that is designed to prevent additional local spending.

In an interview on Radio 4 on 21 July 1987, the Secretary of State said:

"Spending in excess of that receipt of money from the Government will obviously cause all the extra spending to be placed on the community charge".

The Government intend to punish people who vote for better services in their communities.

Mr. McLoughlin: A few moments ago the hon. Gentleman spoke about the ability to pay. Does he believe that the present system reflects the ability to pay?

Dr. Cunningham: Not perfectly, I concede, but it is fairer than the proposals by the Secretary of State.

If all this was not enough, the provisions of clause 96 give the Secretary of State power retrospectively to change any local poll tax. Thus, after a local authority has decided its priorities, finalised the budget and fixed the poll tax,

after it has fought and won an election on the basis of its manifesto and come to office, the Minister can retrospectively enforce changes. That renders the process meaningless. It is an unprecedented state of affairs, for which there is no parallel. That is not the way to improve accountability; it is a prospectus for chaos, disillusionment and cynicism in local government.

The implications of the collection fund for local electors and their understanding of the spending decisions of local councils are also confused. Poll tax payers will receive one bill listing all the precepts being levied, along with various grants from central sources, and the bottom line will show the poll tax payable. How this will make the system more accountable or comprehensible to the average person is difficult to see, because county and parish councils will be precepting on the central fund.

The implementation of Labour party policy of annual elections for part of every local authority would do far more to increase local accountability than all this nonsense put together. We offered to co-operate with the right hon. Gentleman in that regard in a Bill during the last Parliament, but he declined the opportunity.

The Government's proposals for a national business property tax and a full business revaluation of 15-year-old rateable values will cause massive changes, as the recent Scottish experience shows. Business and commerce critics have focused on two aspects. First, the effect of the revaluation and national business property tax will be to alter relative rates burdens between different areas of the country. Secondly, although it is set centrally, the national business property tax will still be a fixed tax on property and will be as unrelated to a firm's ability to pay as the present system.

Mr. Ridley: Thirty-five minutes of waffle ago, the hon. Gentleman said that he would tell us what his alternative system of local authority finance would be. When will he get to what we want to hear about?

Dr. Cunningham: I am coming to it, and I can well understand, from his performance in moving the Second Reading, that the Secretary of State would prefer us not to discuss his proposals.

Speaking in Sussex on 14 October, the Secretary of State revealed the new regional policy that is implicit in the tax. He said:

"High rates in the north are one of the engines which contribute to businesses wanting to locate in the south. The national business property tax is one of the weapons we have for reversing this trend and easing the pressures on land and land prices in the south east."

Simply translated, that is a promise to have higher business rates in the south.

The rates-cost-jobs argument is not supported by the evidence. The Bill penalises businesses in areas whose councils—mainly Tory—have acted on the basis that that is true. It is no wonder that the business community is in an uproar. If the arguments about rates meaning job losses are true, the Government must have a calculation about the jobs that will be lost as a result of the national business rate, particularly jobs in Opposition Members' constituencies. For example, business rate increases of 91 per cent. in Kensington and Chelsea, 61 per cent. in Wandsworth, 42 per cent. in Croydon, 39 per cent. in Redbridge, 28 per cent. in Gillingham, and 24 per cent in Rochester are forecast. Will Tory Members vote for that in the Division Lobby tonight?

The proposal for a single revenue support grant is an apparent simplification of the needs and standard grant that was originally contained in the Green Paper. Yet the Bill provides no sign of how the Secretary of State must distribute that amount of money, the criteria that he must adopt or the matters that he must take into account in distributing the grant. The Bill seems to provide for only scant consultation with local government, and it actually provides for even less consultation with the House. As the CBI said, the proposals will result in less accountability, not more, and a national business property tax will "unhook" local government from local business.

Abolition of resource equalisation will cause great damage to the northern regions of England. In the current financial year, almost £1 billion has been reallocated to the north of England through equalisation. The Bill eliminates that major contribution to fairer regional provision and regional policy without proposing any alternative. The Bill does little to benefit business. It favours suburban areas at the expense of inner-city areas, and will threaten public sector employment and investment while doing nothing to stimulate the private sector.

Serious questions about personal privacy and civil liberties are involved in the Bill. If the community charge proposals are implemented, local authorities will have to take steps to ensure that the Bill is enforced as comprehensively as possible. As the Scottish legislation shows, and professional bodies advise, enforcement will necessitate the collection, transfer and storage of personal information in ways that, in an entirely unacceptable way, transgress the privacy of the adult population and their ability to control the use of information about themselves. Therefore, there appears to be an irreconcilable conflict between the need for the efficient collection of a tax of this kind and the protection of privacy.

As CIPFA pointed out in its report to the Scottish Office:

"Canvassers will be required to be well trained not only in community charge law but also in interview techniques. They may well face resentment and, conceivably, hostility and will need to be trained to cope with this."

No doubt that is armed combat.

"The prospective canvassers will have to be vetted—a necessary control procedure, since opportunities for corruption may arise."

We note that the Data Protection Registrar was not even consulted before the Scottish legislation was introduced. His advice was sought subsequently, but it has not yet been published. The registrar's advice should be made public, so that the public can endeavour to ensure that the safeguards that he advocates are built into the legislation. But, from a letter from the registrar to my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), we already know that the registrar believes that there is

"an inherent conflict between the efficiency of a poll tax system and the privacy of individuals."

A Labour Government will abolish the poll tax, if it is in place. Before legislating, we shall publish a White Paper and seek a consensus. We believe that a modern property tax can be made fair and understandable. Unlike the Government, we believe that property should be taxed. I read an interesting and timely leading article today in the *Financial Times*. Under the heading "A tax that lacks support", it stated:

[Dr. Cunningham]

"A long-run solution awaits acceptance that property-based taxes actually make a lot of sense as an adjunct to taxes on incomes and consumption, being relatively fair, cheap to collect and economically efficient."

That is what we believe, and that is the way in which we shall proceed.

There are significant arguments for broadening the local tax base, and we are considering how that might be done. We are committed to the principle that taxes should be based on fairness and ability to pay. Discussions are still in progress with industry, the CBI and commerce about business rates and the implications of the right hon. Gentleman's proposition. In addition, we shall review the functions and duties of local government to re-establish sensible links between it and local government finance.

I make it clear that there is another fundamental difference in principle between Labour's policy and that of the Tories. We shall ensure that local government revenue-raising powers are free from central ministerial control. We value the devolution of powers and responsibilities that are so essential to the success of a pluralist democratic society.

Mr. Ridley: We now have some inkling of the hon. Gentleman's ideas. He has shown himself to be keen that the Standing Committee that examines the Bill should consider all sorts of possible options. I shall make him a fair offer. I shall do exemplifications for every local authority area on the basis of his proposals so that the full impact of them will be understood in every part of the country. Therefore, I should be grateful if he would let me have the full details of what he proposes so that I can ask my officials to prepare such exemplifications. The House will not be short of information about the alternative.

Dr. Cunningham: If the right hon. Gentleman thinks that that is a threat, he cannot have been reading his own written answers. I have put down a question. I have already asked him to do the work and provide the information, and he refused. To get the matter on the record, I shall read from a document on the subject, in answer to my question, which the right hon. Gentleman put in the Library. *[Interruption.]* I shall quote from the *Official Report* of 9 November. *[Interruption.]* It is in the Library; the right hon. Gentleman put it there. It is about rateable values and capital values. I shall happily put the question down again tomorrow. *[Interruption.]* The question is set out. It is long and complicated. It takes up almost a full column of the *Official Report*. *[Interruption.]* No, I shall not read the question. I am more interested in the answer, but I understand that Conservative Members are not. This is the answer:

"There is no comprehensive data available from which to assess the outcome of a capital revaluation of domestic rateable values"

and

"It is not Government policy to undertake such a revaluation or to provide the information."

That is what the right hon. Gentleman said. Why did not he provide the information then, when he had the opportunity?

There is a glaring omission from the Bill. No idea is given of how a rebate system will work and who will benefit. That is one reason why we tabled the amendment. Conservative Members surely cannot object to the wording of the amendment, as the first part is virtually indentical to the instruction to the Committee supported by so many of them and the second part, which refers to a comprehensive rebate scheme that would also take account of ability to pay, is taken straight from the Government's own publication on the poll tax in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) is in his place. I suppose that we should describe his revolt not as a peasants' revolt but as a gentlemen's revolt. Like the gentleman amateurs of old, he really did not want to win. I very much regret, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it was not possible to select that instruction to the Committee. That is why we tabled our amendment. We invite Conservative Members to have the courage of their convictions and to support us in the Lobby.

In the face of all the evidence and opposition, and in the face of all reasonable argument and opinion, the Government stagger on from expediency to opportunism in local government policy. As the British people look forward to the next century, the Government look back to the Middle Ages. They now propose a tax without fairness, which is anti-family, which invades privacy, which is a bureaucratic nightmare and which has no vestige of intellectual support. We, in this most historic of Parliaments, are asked to approve a tax that has been internationally rejected and condemned by all other democracies. We should not do so.

6.32 pm

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): I am sure that the House will have listened with fascination to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that we are to have consensus policies from Her Majesty's Opposition. That is the first time that the word "consensus", on anything except their terms, has crossed Opposition Members' lips for a very long time. Its use had all the credibility of inviting the turkeys to agree the date of Christmas. Opposition Members can agree consensus only among an ever-decreasing number of voters. That probably explains their disgraceful treatment of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State whom they tried to shout down.

Conservative Members' commitment to abolishing the rates was first made in 1974 in response to growing resentment about the system. The disease has as much to do with inflation as with the rating system itself. We faced exactly the same phenomenon in 1979, by which time local government manpower had reached record levels and wages were increasing at an unprecedented rate. However, we did not repeat the commitment in 1979. The reason was that our investigations between 1974 and 1979 had produced no attractive alternative to the rating system.

Instead, we began to tackle as best we could in difficult circumstances the root cause of excess manpower and excess wages. The fact that a record number of people were employed and that the vast majority of them were employed by Conservative-controlled authorities in 1979 meant that the Government were not faced with a set of easy options when they first came to power. I had responsibility for drafting the Green Paper of 1981. As many of my right hon. and hon. Friends know, I started with some sympathy for the poll tax — at least as a partial replacement for the rates. However, by the time that consultation period on the Green Paper was over, the idea of a poll tax had no friends. It was dismissed by the

Cabinet with hardly a backward glance. I wish that I could come to the House and say that I won the argument, but in truth there was no argument.

In the last Parliament, this Government achieved a unique degree of constraint of growth in local authority manpower. In 1960, 1·5 million people were employed in local government. By 1970, the figure was 2·2 million, and by 1980 it was the equivalent of 2·7 million. There had been an apparently unstoppable advance under Governments of all parties, but by 1982 we had reduced the number employed to the levels of a decade earlier—in other words, in the period before the reorganisation of local government in 1973.

I know that the House will sympathise with me on this matter. No one can tell me of the blood that flowed in the battle that we fought to persuade local government to make those reductions in manpower. But one thing emerged beyond question. If one has to distribute billions of pounds of taxpayers' money to more than 400 authorities to finance 20 major public services, one will never satisfy the recipients. Frankly, if, at the same time, the Government are reducing their share of local expenditure and under-providing for wage settlements, one satisfies the recipients even less. However, it had to be done.

The problem that we faced was how to deal with and act against the profligate while recognising the constructive response that we received from much of local government, controlled at that time by the Conservative party. Rate capping was the agreed solution. A whole range of solutions was explored but rate capping was the solution that the Cabinet agreed should be the way forward. Today, slowly but perceptibly, rate capping is breaking the resolve of even the most obdurate authority. The Cabinet discussed these issues frequently, but I cannot remember a discussion of the option of a poll tax in which it was not rejected as expensive, ineffective and unfair. I shall come to the inherent weakness of such a system later.

The perception of Ministers changed with the experience of government. The first perception that changed was that there were easy economies to be obtained on a grand scale from local government. The Chancellor and the Secretary of State for the Environment talk of efficiency and value for money, and that is quite right. I certainly talked of those things, and there is some scope for savings. During the public expenditure round, the public listen to the Home Secretary pleading for more policemen on the beat or to the Secretary of State for Education and Science proclaiming increases in education expenditure, and all the victories of my right hon. Friends in the spending Departments are welcomed extensively on both sides of the House because they are in keeping with many of the aspirations of our society; but they are all victories for increases in local authority expenditure. They are increases stimulated and argued for by the great spending Departments of Whitehall and their Ministers.

There is a second way in which our perceptions have changed. In the summer of 1981, riots swept through eight or nine of our inner cities. Some of us became deeply involved in the brittle fragility of the societies that live there. Nobody disputes the conditions in which they live. One does not need a set of statistics. Just go and have a look. I could not be more in support of the Government's determination to do something about the inner cities, but doing something for them cannot mean making the poor pay more for the worst services in the land. Of course, my right hon. Friend can point to the extreme authorities. This legislation is driven by the need to curb the excesses of a limited but significant number of extravagant and politically irresponsible authorities.

The consequences of this legislation will be felt in every constituency in the land. It may be the Government's view that they can win their case where they can justify what they are doing against a background of extravagance and extremism, but what will they use for arguments when facing the millions of people who will lose out heavily under authorities which are neither extreme nor extravagant? How will they tell losers in Tory-controlled authorities that the Government must protect the voters from the decisions of their local authority?

After all the battles in which I have had the privilege to be involved in respect of this matter, I start with an instinctive support for a form of local government. I distrust monopoly, whether it be commercial, industrial or political. However, if we start with the suggestion that every authority is going to behave like Lambeth, Camden or Liverpool, then far and away the best solution is to get rid of local government altogether.

Let us consider the proposals. First, the unified business rate is designed to prevent inner-city authorities from milking their business ratepayers, but, of course, there is a price to pay for that. It removes any link between the local industrial and commercial community and any local government. We are creating a new national business tax. I have not the slightest doubt what any Government of any other political persuasion would do with that tax.

With the unified business rate comes revaluation. Revaluation is intellectually unopposable. It is politically disastrous. In 1979 we took a decision not to revalue formally, but the valuation practice has continued. In England and Wales 800,000 are valued or revalued every year. The only real demand for revaluation is coming from — guess who? — the valuers themselves. It is at least curious that a Conservative Government should put the tidy minds of the valuation officers at a higher premium than the anxieties of small businesses and large companies in many parts of the land.

I want to turn to the proposals for a community charge. It is important that people should believe a tax system is fair. Grievances are fed not so much on realities as on people's perceptions of realities.

Mr. John M. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend. Other hon. Members will be denied the opportunity to speak unless we make progress.

Of course, there are many grievances about the domestic rating system. We could have dealt with some of the grievances within the rating system, but, having considered them with great care and with the benefit of all the briefing from the Department of the Environment and the Treasury, we decided not to do so. We could, for example, have addressed the problem of families with two or three breadwinners paying no more than a single peson in an equivalent house by introducing a single person discount. However, the more we considered the matter, the more we became convinced that it helped significantly the better-off members of the community and we thought that we could help them more by reducing direct tax rates.

Again, we dismissed the argument that only a minority pay. To argue this, because there is only one rates bill per

[Mr. Heseltine]

household, is to argue that families who pay only one bill for rent, telephone, gas, electricity and water do not know what any of these things cost, but, in practice, families work these things out for themselves.

All of these are criticisms of a system that Conservative Members did not create. The most significant change that the poll tax will produce is that we shall be held totally responsible for it. Responsibility for the rates is confused in the legacy of history. Responsibility for the poll tax will now be targeted precisely and unavoidably at the Government who introduced that tax. That tax will be known as a Tory tax.

We argue for the cohesion of the family, yet it will be far easier for young people to evade the tax if they leave home and seek more anonymous accommodation. We urge families to look after their elderly parents, but the elderly relative pays a poll tax at home and none in a local authority home. We will have created a granny tax. Many mothers stay at home to look after their children. The poll tax will send more of them out to work. *[Interruption.]* I am asked why? The answer is: to pay the poll tax. We already have acute disincentives to work with the existing poverty trap. A poll tax will make it worse.

The rigour of tax collection will become more difficult as urban stress becomes more acute. The Inland Revenue cannot cope now with the burgeoning black economy. The poll tax will bring more tax collectors and more evasion. More evasion will bring more resentment, and the growing scale of rent arrears should be a warning of what lies ahead.

All of these resentments will build on a platform of crude regression which seeks to make equal in the eyes of the tax collector the rich and the poor, the slum dweller and the landed aristocrat, the elderly pensioners living on their limited savings and the most successful of today's entrepreneurs.

This brings me to the argument which is said to be the most powerful of arguments for a poll tax.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I shall not give way to my hon. Friend.

It is the argument that a poll tax will lead to greater accountability. First, the Treasury will always under-provide for wage settlements in the grant distribution process in order to squeeze wages down. It carefully tucks away its real expectations in the contingency reserve. The Government will be blamed for pushing up the community charge.

Secondly, we have two-tier local government. Confusion will not be eliminated by even the clearest demand note.

Thirdly, there is no coincidence in the electoral system between the date on which the increased poll tax is levied and the date on which the council that must account for what it has done seeks re-election. Councils, like Governments, have heard the political message about getting things done in the first year.

Fourthly, virtually nobody knows who their councillors are anyway. Only a small proportion of the electorate vote. Whether people pay rates does not seem to make a great deal of difference to the level of turnout.

Fifthly, incomparably the most important issue in local election results is the prevailing perception of the performance of the national Government. National opinion polls tell one far more about local election results than the rating policies of individual councils.

I used to be attracted by the argument of accountability, but no longer. The proposals are designed to bring down local authority spending. Even before Second Reading, the concessions that the Government have already had to make, as more and more problems are revealed, have thrown up their own anomalies. It is even possible that the expenditure changes announced will lead to higher public expenditure, especially in the shire counties.

There will be some savings in the inner cities, but my right hon. Friend is already achieving those through his rate-capping procedures. However, to avoid the harsh incidence of the poll tax in inner London, the Government are now committed to phasing in London's poll tax over a transitional period. That means that the non-London authorities will have to pay for London's poll tax in the early years. The Shire counties — they will not be controlled by Conservatives in such circumstances—will fix their initial poll tax at whatever rate is necessary to support their expenditure and the subsidy for London. They will blame the Government for the whole thing. Then, as the London subsidy is phased out, they will increase their expenditure but not reduce their poll tax.

Mr. Ridley: On a point of fact, I should like to tell my right hon. Friend that the special arrangements for London mean not that London will be subsidised from elsewhere, but that inner London ratepayers will continue to pay a proportion of rates as well as a growing proportion of their community charge. There is no subsidy to London in those arrangements. They redistribute resources as between ratepayers and community charge payers.

Mr. Heseltine: I believe that after he made his announcement my right hon. Friend published a schedule showing different levels of projected poll tax outside London as a consequence of his proposals. That must have the effect of confusing the transitional arrangements.

I understand fully the wish to reform. I lived for so long with the pressures that I understand that. Having been through the attempt myself, I cannot but admire the courage of my right hon. Friend in braving the storm that always engulfs a Secretary of State who tries to bring about any reform of local government. However, having said that, my right hon. Friend must know that his proposals cause profound anxiety in the Conservative party. It would be a tragedy if, in the name of reform, we ended up with a worse system than the one with which we began.

I must advise my right hon. Friend that I cannot support the Bill. However, let us be quite clear where the responsibility for this mess lies—it lies with the Labour party. Its savage disregard of its responsibilities has caused much of the trouble with which we are now faced. It is true that there are militants in some Labour authorities, but the authority for Labour militancy comes from the Opposition Benches. Year after year, Opposition Members have supported every disruptive protest, egged on every kinky fetish and tossed around the people's taxes as though they were the autumn leaves. If that has led to a winter of discontent in Britain's town halls, the responsibility lies with the Labour party.

6.54 pm

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): As I am the first Scottish Member to be called in the debate, I say right away that I agree with the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and with many of his criticisms. Moreover, I agreed with him during the passage of the Scottish legislation during the previous Parliament. I am only sorry that the right hon. Gentleman voted for that Scottish legislation in the previous Parliament. Conservative Members should listen to the right hon. Gentleman's warnings, especially when they look round their Benches and see how few of their former colleagues from Scotland survived the general election. Of course, there were many causes for that. I do not attribute everything to only one factor. However, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that, in addition to the economic arguments and those about unemployment and housing in Scotland, the fact that the poll tax was already known as a Tory tax and was already on the statute book, the fact that local authorities were already wrestling with it—I shall come later to some of the costs that have been incurred by Scottish local authorities—and the fact that the poll tax was the public issue during the election campaign in Scotland are major reasons why there are so few Conservative Members representing Scottish seats. Therefore, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman's warnings will be heeded by the Government because the proof of them is north of the border.

Mr. Cormack *rose*——

Mr. Steel: No, I shall not give way. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I normally give way but there is great pressure from hon. Members wishing to speak, so I shall follow the example of his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley.

Many hon. Members agree about the unfairnesses and anomalies of the rating system. It has been with us for a long time. However, there is one basic difference between the anomalies and unfairnesses of the rating system and those of the poll tax. The anomalies and unfairnesses of the rating system are accidental. It is, at any rate, a tax which, in theory, bears some relation to the ability to pay — *[Interruption.]* It does bear some relation to the ability to pay because it is a tax on assets. If one owns a large house, there is at least the assumption that one is able to pay. Of course, it does not always work out like that in practice. However, the difference between the domestic rating system and the poll tax is that the poll tax is designed to be unfair. It is designed to be a flat rate tax, regardless of the ability to pay. A widow in a tower block will pay the same as a playboy in a penthouse, whereas under the rating system there is at least a differential in the amounts that those people would pay for local government services.

If I may expand on what the right hon. Member for Henley said, if one considers members of the Cabinet—I do not mean this in any party sense because, by definition, members of any Cabinet are among the better-off in our society because of the levels of income that they draw——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): What about the leader of the Liberal party?

Mr. Steel: I correct the hon. Gentleman right away on that point because the leader of the Liberal party does not draw an income for that. Members of the Cabinet are among the better-off in our society. They are in the highest income bracket. If one considers the effect of the poll tax on individual members of the Cabinet, one can see right away why the public will blame the Government for the tax. The Prime Minister would be due to pay over £3,000 rates on her house in Dulwich, but under the poll tax she will pay only £1,136. The Secretary of State for the Environment will save £1,500 under the new proposal. Of course, the richer the individual, the more will be saved. The Secretary of State for Transport, for example, who is acknowledged to be one of the better-off members of the Government, will save over £6,000 as a result of the switch from rates to the poll tax. I do not see how that inequity can be defended to the country at large.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) treated us to a short tour d'horizon and quoted from the American constitution. He sought to prove that no other country has a regressive flat rate tax of this kind. He was wrong because there is one such country—Papua New Guinea. That country has a hut tax but is about to abolish it. With that one exception, I cannot think of an example of such a flat rate tax.

The anomalies that will be introduced by the poll tax condemn it in themselves. A student nurse, for example, will be liable to pay the tax, but a medical student will not. I do not see how that can be defensible in terms of medical training. As the right hon. Member for Henley rightly said, not only will all the people living at home pay the tax whereas people in residential care will not pay it, but since, as a society, we are all trying to encourage people to accept their responsibilities and to look after the elderly in their own homes—partly because it is cheaper—that proposal will increase public expenditure. It will drive more people, particularly those on lower incomes, from private accommodation, where they are looked after by relatives. To avoid the tax more people will move into homes and hospitals and public costs will go up. Prisoners on remand will have to pay the tax, but prisoners on conviction will not, so in one prison building some will be liable to pay the tax and some will not.

The Government, after very strong pressure, said that they would exempt closed religious orders of monks and nuns, but clergymen will pay the tax. I ask the Minister whether people in schools and hospices run by non-closed religious orders will be exempt.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has shown me his correspondence with the Secretary of State, to which we are still awaiting an answer, relating to what will happen to those charities whose staff work for nothing as part of their commitment to charitable purposes for people in residential care. One charity for mentally handicapped homes is exempt at the moment. If the Government do not announce otherwise, it will be liable for the poll tax, but it has no income to pay it.

The Universe, the Catholic newspaper, reported that the Department was asked what will happen to nuns who have taken vows of poverty, and the reply was, "We have not thought about that one". The Government must think about these cases and about the anomalies which will make an already unpopular tax even more unpopular and indefensible.

The rebate will apply to people on supplementary benefit, who will pay a minimum of only 20 per cent., but the poll tax is designed to be varied locally. We are waiting for an announcement that the DHSS supplementary

[Mr. Steel]

regulations will be locally varied, but we must assume that they will not be, so that a gap will exist between the benefit increase nationally to pay for the poll tax and the amount people will have to pay in particular localities. I resent that the Government, time and time again, pay out money with one hand to one bureaucracy to give to another bureaucracy to pay back through another door. That is a wasteful circulation of money.

The hon. Member for Copeland referred to the invasion of privacy and damage to civil liberties. The Secretary of State was reported on the Nick Ross phone-in radio programme as saying that young people may try to evade the tax. He said:

"I don't think they will succeed or find that a very easy thing to do, because one way or another the registration officer will discover they are there."

Asked if that meant snoopers coming round to see who lived in houses, the Secretary of State replied:

"If you like to use that pejorative phrase, yes."

He was admitting that snoopers will be required.

The House should note the experience of the Scottish Office which has issued a manual to local authorities on how to administer the poll tax. A copy of that manual is in the Library of the House of Commons, but I hope that the Library did not pay for it, since the charge to a member of the public who seeks to buy it is £4,000. I suppose that is market forces at work. The report, which is an enormous volume, suggests that poll tax payers could be given a personal identity number, which would stay with the individual as he or she moved around the country. It suggests that local authorities could rely on details held on individuals by health authorities, national utilities such as gas and electricity and on what is called a mutual exchange of information. It suggests that local authorities should buy up computerised information from trade organisations and should use their own records from housing, rating, libraries and housing benefit to keep tabs on the residents. One local authority chief executive is reported to have said that even records of bus passes will be used as a means of checking.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) referred to the possibility of tattooing individuals to check when they move from place to place. Last night we voted against tattooing dogs — surely we will not have to tattoo individuals to check where they are. The Government should be in no doubt of the bureaucratic nightmare they have created.

The cost of collection has been proved in Scotland to be far greater than the Government have allowed for. The Scottish Office has allocated £9 million for extra capital costs on rates programmes this year, but the Strathclyde region alone reports that the capital costs already are £5 million, and estimates that the annual running cost will be £8 million. My regional council, which is much smaller than Strathclyde, has said that the cost in the Borders region will be 50 per cent. higher than the present rating system and will require 22 additional staff at an increased cost of £430,000 per annum. The sum of £300,000 will be needed to implement the registration and to upgrade the computer facilities. It is important to recognise that the Scottish Office has already demonstrated that its forecast of the cost of the tax is greatly exceeded by the experience of local authorities on the ground.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I reassure the right hon. Gentleman that present estimates of collection costs are exactly as shown on the Bill when it was published.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): Withdraw.

Mr. Steel: No, I will not withdraw. The Minister may correct me if I am wrong. The Scottish Office has allocated £9 million to local authorities this year and the figures I have quoted are from what local authorities say it is costing them. I do not know where the money will come from to meet that difference, but those are the facts and hon. Members from England and Wales should be aware of them. The Scottish electorate did not find the poll tax proposals acceptable and I do not see any reason why they should be more acceptable in England and Wales.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Henley that the proposal for a national business rate philosophically goes directly against the reason for the poll tax, which is to create a greater rapport between the electorate and local government, and would remove the only satisfactory method of communication between local business and local rates that we have at present. The short answer to the steady growth in rates is for the Government to transfer those items of national expenditure which are not variable locally—teachers' salaries are the most obvious—from the rates so that there will be less of a burden on expenditure. In the long run we must go back to the recommendations of the Layfield committee, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) was a member, which recommended the introduction of a local income tax.

That committee report did not meet with Government favour because, to get a local income tax, the Inland Revenue would have needed more advanced computer programmes than it had then. Time has passed and it should now be possible, with the full-scale computerisation of the Inland Revenue nationally, to add on a local income tax together with a property tax on commercial business, based on land value taxation. If that were done, the estimates published by the Government of the effects of local income tax would be nowhere near as great as they suggest.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said, based on a survey as distinct from estimates, that 76 per cent. of households with a net weekly income of under £350 would be better off under a local income tax scheme. As we start from the proposition that taxation ought to bear a relationship to ability to pay, that is a strong recommendation for local income tax as against the poll tax.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Hon. Members have referred to London boroughs as if they are the be all and end all of the argument. There is a danger that we will say that this happens only in London and nowhere else. I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that the city of Nottingham has 20,000 unemployed and is surrounded by more affluent areas of low unemployment in districts such as Rushcliffe, Gedling and Broxtowe. It seems therefore that the tax base within a city such as Nottingham would be much lower than in the affluent areas around it. Therefore, the people living in the city would have to pay a higher rate of tax and the rich people would move out.

Mr. Steel: If local income tax was introduced without any system of national equalisation or support such as we have now, the hon. Gentleman would be correct. However, no one has ever suggested that that is how it would work. There is no escaping the fact that it would have to retain some measure of Government supervision of the ability of local authorities and particular communities to raise the required revenues. However much we fiddle with those taxation systems, we cannot get away from the central responsibility of Government to balance the needs of one community against those of another.

I hope very much that the Secretary of State for the Environment will live up to his reputation as a man of history. I am indebted to a profile on the right hon. Gentleman which appeared in *The Times* in July 1984 which said:

"Bidden to a fancy dress ball at the Mansion House some years ago, Nicholas Ridley did not have to rack his brains to find a costume. He just went to the wardrobe and took out a long brown coat which had belonged to one of his ancestors a century or two ago.

'The costume suited him — he's a very 18th century figure, not entirely at home in the 1980s,' a former front-bench colleague recalls. 'He felt in the back pocket of the coat and came out with a card, which read: "Master Ridley calls on you and requests the honour of your vote" — a canvassing card from an election dating back to the 1790s.'"

I do not know what reception "Master Ridley" received, but I suspect that the canvassers for the poll tax will receive a very dusty reception indeed.

The Secretary of State should be aware that the history of poll tax in this country is not a happy one. In September the *Financial Times* stated that the original poll taxes of the 14th century were introduced to finance wars with France and the question of the social acceptability of the tax was a critical factor that led to the peasants' revolt and their march on London in 1381. At the end of the article in the *Financial Times* the author quoted the historian T. F. Tout as follows:

"The extreme incompetence of the administration was a widespread grievance which, it bearing most heavily on the poor, touched every rank of society . . . The fault was a mulish determination to enforce a thoroughly distasteful order in the face of public opposition."

It looks as if history is about to repeat itself.

7.12 pm

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I am pleased to be the first Conservative Back Bencher to be called to speak and to be fully supportive of the Bill to abolish the present rating system. We have heard much from Opposition Members about the great debate that is taking place over rates. That is revealed in the legislation on the subject that has been passed since 1979. As Opposition Members have spent so much time talking about local government finance, I would have thought that they could have told us fully what they intended to replace the present system with.

It is amazing that the debate about the abolition of local rates is not new. It has been taking place since 1979. The Government came forward with proposals. Indeed, a Green Paper was produced in 1983 towards the end of the first term of the Conservative Government and a declaration of intent followed. We took that declaration of intent to the electorate in our manifesto and received an overwhelming mandate. I am very pleased that we are debating the abolition of the present rating system today.

It is interesting to note that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) started his speech at 5.40 pm and only at 6.23 pm referred to his alternative to the present system. He and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), the leader of the Liberal party, spent a long time attacking the Government's proposals, but they offered no alternatives. That is quite strange. I thought that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made a very good case for the abolition of local government. He seemed to say that, regardless of what happened, there would be no accountability for local councillors.

I became a Member of this House partly as a result of my experience in local government. I am a defender of local government and I believe that it should stay. However, for local government to stay, it must become far more accountable, and that accountability is sadly lacking at the moment. It cannot be fair that so many people do not exercise their votes, do not have a say in what councils are doing and are not even interested in having that say. The survival of local government rests on accountability. The system proposed in the Bill will bring that accountability to bear on local authorities.

Rates are totally unfair and the subject of rate reform has been raised with me on many occasions. It was a major issue during my by-election campaign in 1986 and it was a major issue during the general election in June. I have made no secret of my open and total support for the reform of local government finance that is before us today. It is not surprising that rates were such a big issue in Derbyshire. We have been landed with a very Left-wing Labour authority. Two years ago, it increased rates by 26 per cent. and last year it increased them by 12 per cent.

I am not surprised at the opposition that we have heard today from hon. Members opposite. Indeed, the leader of the Liberal party almost reflected the comments of the hon. Member for Copeland. When the Labour-controlled council increased rates by 26 per cent., the Liberals wanted to raise them by 24 per cent. There was a 2 per cent. difference between them then, and there was less than 2 per cent. difference between the leader of the Liberal party and the hon. Member for Copeland in the Chamber today. The following year, when the Labour councillors raised rates by 12 per cent., the Liberals wanted to increase them by 9 per cent. We would have had the highest county rate in the country whether the authority was Labour-controlled or Liberal-controlled. Only the Conservatives put forward proposals for a reduced rate.

It should not surprise anyone that the question of rating reform was raised so vigorously during my by-election campaign. I would not enjoy the prospect of another general election without the Conservative party having carried out its pledge to abolish the present rating system. To tinker with the present system is no option. We have seen what such tinkering has achieved over the past seven years, with the amount of legislation that has been passed on the subject. That is no option for consideration today.

I believe that the alternative in the Bill today will bring responsibility to local government. Many hon. Members have referred to the ability to pay. I asked the hon. Member for Copeland whether he thought that the present system reflected the ability to pay, and quite fairly he said that it did not. That is not surprising.

I should like to give details of properties on the market at the moment in Derbyshire. The first is a most magnificent stone farmhouse situated in a much sought

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

after residential area within its own grounds, together with two paddocks and 6·5 acres. It is approached via a tree-lined sweeping drive. It enjoys quiet seclusion in the heart of rural Derbyshire with fine views towards the village of Crich and Riber Castle. Although it has been altered in recent years, its character and charm has not changed. It comprises a summer lounge, a main hall, a lobby, a downstairs bathroom and a winter lounge. There are five bedrooms on the first floor.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I will buy it.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend has not heard the price yet.

It has another bathroom, workshops, two garages and stables. There is also an inner hall, dining room, kitchen, sun room, utility room and a separate toilet downstairs. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members should hold on a moment. The market price of the property is £175,000 and the rates payable are £828.

I shall give the example of another property, which is not in my constituency but in that of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is a bungalow in the village of Wessington. It has a recessed porch, a reception hall, cloakroom, large lounge, separate dining room, study, two bedrooms and a box room. It is on the market for £77,000 —about half the price of the other property. The rates payable on that property are £1,210, or about £400 more than on the other property. That cannot reflect the ability to pay.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Labour party's proposal to use capital or property values would enshrine the inequality that he has described and do nothing to resolve it?

Mr. McLoughlin: Absolutely. Indeed, it would make matters worse.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): One of the examples that the hon. Gentleman gave is almost a farmhouse. That would come under agricultural rating, which is a preferential system.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Opposition are clutching at straws. That property is not classed as an agricultural dwelling—*[Interruption.]* I have other examples if hon. Members want them.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): The two examples were in different rating authorities. However bad the difference in rates might be, it is possible that the services in one area are dramatically better than those in the other. Our worry about the Government's proposals is that people who live in the same street and pay the same amount may have vastly different incomes. There would be genuine resentment in that case.

Mr. McLoughlin: In the shire counties, 90 per cent. of the rates are levied by the county councils. West Derbyshire and Bolsover are in the same county.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Wessington may be in the constituency of Bolsover, but it is served by North-East Derbyshire district council. I represent the constituency of Derbyshire, North-East, but not that village. The area suffers from the fact that the Secretary of State for the Environment will not make arrangements to put out an underground fire, or even make a contribution towards it. The people of Wessington will be among the many impoverished people, including those from towns such as Clay Cross, who will have to pay exaggerated rates in the coming year.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman says that the problems will emerge next year. I am talking about this year's rateable values. The hon. Gentleman is defending the present rating system. It is not surprising that the Opposition have defended the present system, because it depends on so few people paying their rates. But my constituents are worried about continuing the present system. The Opposition keep telling us how disastrous our policies will be and how they will lead to the end of the Conservative party. I should have thought that the prospect would make them happy.

This morning, Derbyshire county council met to discuss the report of the policy committee on the community charge. The report gives a clear sign of the council's attitude to the community charge. It states:

"Unlike the existing arrangements, once the Authority's grant entitlement has been set the amount would not be changed and would not vary with expenditure. Thus the full effect of any changes in expenditure would be felt by the ratepayer."

That is what will happen, and we should not be frightened of it. We should be proud of the fact, because the intention of our system is that the people who want services should pay for them. We are told repeatedly that more money must be spent on the Health Service and other services. Those who believe that will now have ammunition for their views. It will be up to them.

Mr. Marlow: There has been a lot of talk about accountability today. Is not the trouble at the moment that local authorities are not accountable to the people who pay for them, but are accountable to the people who work for them? When we introduce this new system, they will, for the first time ever, be accountable to the people who pay for them.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is the point. The Bill will extend local government democracy because it will extend the base of people who pay for services. They will be able to see what services they are getting and make up their minds accordingly at local elections.

The policy committee's report continues:

"The only change to the notified grant would be made at the end of the year by a conclusive calculation to permit the correction of any errors in original data."

We all know that that happens occasionally.

The report continues:

"Payment of grant and non domestic rate income would not be paid separately to County and District Councils but would be paid into a 'collection fund'. The costs of collection and administration would fall upon District Councils. The Government proposals required the community charge bill to show"—

the committee regarded this as outrageous—

"the Authority's needs assessment, the Authority's actual spending level, the contribution made by business taxpayers, the contribution made by the Government, the community charge due and the community charge if the Authority had spent the level of its needs assessment."

Then comes an interesting paragraph:

"Assuming no change in existing grant and non domestic rate level the Council's income would be made up of the national non domestic rate (30 per cent.) and revenue support grant (37 per cent.) both under the control of the Central Government, and the community charge (33 per cent.) under the control of the County Council."

Under those proposals, the ability to pay is met largely through the business rate and through taxes which are collected by the national Exchequer. All that we say is that the people who live in an area will have to pay for a small percentage — a quarter or 30 per cent. — of local government expenditure.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend is making a far better case than did the Secretary of State. But is it fair that the rich entrepreneur and the dustman, who has just enough to pay without qualifying for rebate, should pay precisely the same?

Mr. McLoughlin: In any reorganisation of local government finance, regrettably, some people will be losers. I hope that the new system will more accurately reflect local government spending. The present system is unfair——

Mr. Cormack: This new system is more unfair.

Mr. McLoughlin: The present system is certainly not fair. If it was easy to reorganise local government finance, we would not have needed all the Acts of Parliament that have been introduced during the past eight years. It would have been done a long time ago.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We are talking about charging for services——

Mr. Squire: No, we are not.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, we are. It is a community charge for local government services. If the dustman uses the same services as the millionaire—he probably uses them more —it is fair that both should contribute towards paying for those services. In charging for other services, we do not discriminate according to people's incomes. The use of local government services should be based on the individual. The system of charging on the basis of a property, which does not use the services, is absurd.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I would sum up the system by saying that through the new arrangement my constituents will clearly get the message about what local government does, and the level to which local government extends.

My constituency is made up of a large area on the Staffordshire county border. When I go to various parts of my constituency such as Doveridge, Sudbury, Ashbourne, Hartington, Thorpe and Fenney Bentley which are on the Staffordshire county border, I say to the people who live there that on a comparison between Staffordshire county council, which has been Labour-controlled since 1981, and Derbyshire county council, which has also been controlled by the Labour party since 1981, the rates in Derbyshire are 262p in the pound, but if they are lucky enough to live on the other side of the river, the rates in Staffordshire are 198p in the pound. I do not believe that many people know the rateable value of their houses, but they can easily calculate the difference that that means to them. It means that on average, for a house with a rateable value of £100, it is £64 a year more expensive to live in Derbyshire than in Staffordshire.

I have been a member of Staffordshire county council, and I have lived in Staffordshire for most of my life. I do not believe that the services in Derbyshire are far superior to those in Staffordshire. I would go further than that and say that the schools in Derbyshire are in a far worse state than those in Staffordshire. The difference between Derbyshire and Staffordshire is that no doubt Staffordshire county council does not waste money by overprinting school note paper with statements such as "Derbyshire county council supports nuclear-free zones". Staffordshire county council does not put through everyone's door a newspaper called "Insight", which costs hundreds of thousands of pounds to produce. Staffordshire county council has not increased its staff by more than 2,000 at a cost to the ratepayers of more than £24 million—as my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) tells me.

The new charge will make it far easier for ratepayers to understand such expenditure. People who live in Staffordshire Moorlands and in all the villages to which I referred are just on the other side of the border between Staffordshire and Derbyshire and are controlled by Derbyshire. Under the new system, the people in my villages will be paying an average of £246 in community charge this year. In Staffordshire Moorlands they will be paying an average community charge of £189. It costs them £57 more to live on the other side of the river, and that is what the Labour party is so afraid of.

Mr. Cormack: We are paying the same amount in South Staffordshire, which is a Tory-controlled authority.

Mr. McLoughlin: I would be safe in saying that the difference would be obviously reflected in the difference between those villages in my constituency and Staffordshire Moorlands. That is why the Opposition are so opposed to the community charge. No doubt people will be able to see the levels of expenditure of councils more easily than they can now.

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: No, I shall not give way.

It will be understood more easily than under the present rating system. I wish the Secretary of State every success in the Committee stage of the Bill, and look forward to its Third Reading.

7.33 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I recollect the by-election when the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) was elected, but I shall not follow him down the highways and byways of his county. I noted that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) gave him a back-handed compliment while putting a knife between the shoulderblades of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State said that the Bill is fair. It is evidently not fair, and the right hon. Gentleman was floundering when his hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) put questions to him. He gave no clear answers. Indeed, he evaded each question.

I agree with the Secretary of State when he says that the measure will bring a new atmosphere to local politics. That is certainly a prophetic remark, because the measure will devalue all hard-working councils. I heard the Secretary of State speak about the problem of fiscal migration—whatever he meant by that. He should know that many Welsh people are migrating from Wales because there are not enough jobs to sustain them and their families. The right hon. Gentleman's speech was perhaps the most abject speech from a Secretary of State on Second Reading

[Mr. Barry Jones]

for many years. Where were the Cabinet Ministers? Where was the Prime Minister when the right hon. Gentleman sought to put what is arguably the biggest measure in this Parliament before the House? My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) effectively and devastatingly savaged the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made a speech such as we have not heard for many years. The right hon. Gentleman used his speech as a kind of political teach-in for the benefit of his right hon. and hon. Friends. He told them that if they proceeded down that path, they would lose the general election, and he told them who would be to blame. His speech dealt a brutal blow to the Secretary of State. The right hon. Member for Henley was right to say that the Bill would be expensive and unfair. As he made that broadside, the Treasury Benches were petrified, knowing that they were unable to make a case against him. I heard the hon. Member for Henley clearly say to his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) "Forgive me", like some modern Brutus.

The poll tax is an unjust proposition which will hit hardest the underprivileged people in Britain. If we take the Bill in its social and economic context in northern Britain, we can see that it is quite unjust. I would call, as the latest witness, the Foreign Secretary's famous letter to his constituency chairman. It is now well read, and it describes his real concerns about the Bill. He cites racial, class, regional and social differences. The poll tax will bear heavily on the people for whom the Foreign Secretary expressed concern. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is not here today. I wonder whether that speech, which was published over the weekend, was his way of distancing himself from the poll tax. Certainly, the Foreign Secretary was not present this afternoon to assist the Secretary of State.

I shall attempt to put the proposal into a new context. About a fortnight ago, I heard a former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), denouncing the Education Reform Bill. I remind the House that in 1985 the Duke of Edinburgh made a report about the severe crisis in housing. All hon. Members will remember the tumultuous scenes in the House yesterday, because our Health Service is in great difficulty. The poll tax will hit those who are in need of National Health Service treatment and those of our citizens who cannot afford to pay for health care at the point of use.

I wish to relate the Bill to the problem of unemployment. Ordinary people——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Jones: I shall not give way. Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. If I do not give way, I shall be able to assure the Chair of a much shorter speech than the one that preceded mine.

Ordinary people, as I was saying, are suffering from, or fear, constantly the evil of widespread unemployment. To foist a poll tax on communities that are already stricken by large-scale unemployment is manifestly unjust.

With regard to the inner cities, about which the right hon. Member for Henley spoke so eloquently, local authority associations now warn about the difficulties of collecting the poll tax. I remind the House that black communities are trapped in our decaying city areas. It will be wrong to inflict the poll tax on those beleaguered communities. As the right hon. Member for Henley said, one cannot make the poor pay more. That was a telling point made against his own Secretary of State.

It is instructive to note that former Cabinet Ministers such as the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), for Henley and for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) are raising the standard of revolt. I am astonished that the Conservative party should be prepared to administer such large quantities of electoral poison. If the Government steamroller this measure through, they will lose their standing, their seats and the security of the Administration.

The poll tax is immensely divisive for Britain. As envisaged, it will be a further challenge — like unemployment and bad housing—to the social cohesion and stability of our nation. It will be another major step towards the permanent division of the United Kingdom into the north and the south — the have-nots and the haves.

The case against the measure is clear. As the "One Nation" document said, the tax is unrelated to ability to pay. It will mean that 2 million families with incomes well below the national average will be confronted by rises in local taxation of more than 50 per cent. It is a tax under which most households with weekly incomes of between £75 and £150 will be worse off. It is certain that ratepayers with valuable property will save large sums of money.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I shall not give way, because, as I said, I want to make a brief speech so that others, like the hon. Gentleman, can catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair.

The poll tax will transfer much-needed inner cities' cash to the county shires. It will not make local government more accountable to local electorates. It will be costly to operate and difficult to administer. Moreover, it is likely to lead to a sort of voluntary disfranchisement. We can expect to have fewer people voting and lower turn-outs at the next general election if our worst fears are well founded.

Another point that has not been seriously considered is that the poll tax will be a divisive factor within families. I urge hon. Members to consider families that are just above the bread line with adult children living at home. When the head of the family places the names of the adult children in his home on the electoral register, they will not thank him for putting them down to receive a major bill. In households that are afflicted by insecure jobs or unemployment, or both, the tax will contribute more to the sum total of human misery.

I want to relate the measure to Wales. I had hoped that my country would be exempted from the measure, which is shunned and unwelcome in the Principality. All the district council associations have given stern warnings about its impact in Wales. I take the example of the industrial valleys, which will be much worse off under a poll tax. These communities have Britain's worst housing —40 per cent. of it is pre-1917—worst unemployment and the worst environmental blight. Statistically, they enjoy the worst rates of ill-health and the worst fabric of schools, many of which were built before 1903. To inflict this measure on our people is unjust; it is also unreasonable and unnecessary.

I draw the attention of the House to the still massive unemployment figures in the Cynon valley, in the Rhondda and in Blaenau Gwent. In all the great industrial valleys of south-east Wales, unemployment is still hideously high. Therefore, to impose this measure on those communities is socially unjust. I do not believe that the Secretary of State has considered for one moment the impact that his measures will have on our people. Towns such as Swansea, Cardiff and Newport have many areas of severely blighted housing in which poverty-stricken citizens live. They will not benefit. Nor will the steel towns, which are still labouring under the impact of the large-scale redundancies of the early 1980s. We lost many textile jobs, and our quarry towns, too, are depressed. I shudder to think what the impact of the Conservative Government's poll tax will be on our people. It is a kick in the teeth and a wretched reward for stricken communities that once made Britain a great imperial power. It was our communities in Wales that coaled the dreadnoughts; it was our communities — as Mr. Macmillan said in relation to the coal strike — that defeated Mr. Hitler and the Kaiser's army. Our communities made Britain great, but now, because the profits from the last century's coal explosion bypassed our communities, we have nothing. We have to cope with an industrial revolution again, and we are being promised the poll tax instead.

A hundred years ago, many communities in Wales were extracting from the bowels of the earth the coal that made the owners of the coalmines some of the richest men in the world. The south-west Wales coalfield was a kind of Abu Dhabi, but the people of our communities did not benefit from the profits. Now we face a monumental task of reconstruction, which will take until after the end of this century to complete. Although we complain that there is not enough money for the Welsh Development Agency, we are assured of a pernicious poll tax. I urge the House not to reward some of the greatest communities in Britain with this pernicious tax. I warn the Government that if the poll tax is enacted, it will prove to be an impediment of great seriousness to the Government's most pressing duty—I use the word advisedly—to draw together the regions and areas of Britain, to unite them and to restore to those in the north of Britain some hope and prosperity.

Right hon. and hon. Members should know that in northern Britain there is a discernible sense of injustice. We in the north are missing out in the prosperity stakes, and we think that the Channel tunnel will not help us. The poll tax exacerbates that sense of injustice, and it is a step in the wrong direction.

The poll tax is a major political miscalculation. It will lose the Conservative party many votes. It is a complex suicide note. As the right hon. Member for Henley said, it is a Tory tax, and that is how Britain will remember it. If Conservative Members do not understand the catastrophe that will face them when our people realise what this stupid and cruel Government have done to them, they are even more stupid than the Opposition think they are. The Bill is a negation of the statesmanship that we require from the Government. Daily in the House Mr. Speaker's Chaplain prays for the "uniting and knitting together" of this realm. This Bill will have quite the opposite effect, because, if the poll tax is enacted, it will rip our country apart.

7.50 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): My hon. Friend the Minister will have heard the vigorous and sharp criticism that the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) levelled against the Government. My hon. Friend will hear some much more modest and brief criticism from me. The difference between the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside and me is that tomorrow he will vote against the Government but I shall support them. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept that as a sort of softening up before I speak about an area where the Government could and should be a bit yielding. I refer to the impact of the community charge on clergy, especially clergy in the Church of England on whose behalf I speak as one of the Church Commissioners, but also more widely on other churches as well.

Until now, Church of England clergy have been provided with accommodation free of rates and rent. That is a result of the deliberate policy of the Church Commissioners and the dioceses, which find the money for stipends and pay the rent and rates on behalf of the clergy. This enables clergy to move easily between posts without having to worry about the financial disadvantage that is involved in moving. It also makes it possible to employ and deploy many thousands of clergy despite their extremely modest remuneration. The average Church of England stipend is well below national average earnings.

Under the old system the Government derated clergy houses to the extent of 50 per cent. This derating relief is very welcome. It sprang from the deliberate recognition of the special nature of clergy and charitable employment. To the Church of England it is currently worth about £2 million. Therefore, rates cost us £2 million instead of the £4 million that would be payable if the Government were not generous about the existing derating.

Mr. Wilson: While not in any way dissenting from what the right hon. Gentleman says, may I gently suggest that perhaps he is failing to see the wood for the trees? Early-day motion 454 draws attention to a unique statement issued by the leaders of all the major Scottish churches. In that statement they denounce the poll tax, not on grounds of self-interest in terms of what it will do to the churches, but because they say that it is anti-democratic, a threat to family life and an affront to the Christian imperative of social justice. In his own Christian imperative the right hon. Gentleman should take account of those considerations and not only of the direct impact on the churches themselves.

Mr. Alison: In my speech I am briefly trying to deploy my own sort of early-day motion and I hope that the Minister will accede to that and that I shall not have to add signatures.

Under the new system, tax will attach to persons and not to property and this very generous and welcome 50 per cent. derating relief which the Government give to the Church of England and other clergy will disappear. The Church of England cannot suddenly unleash on the clergy which it has to sustain the full weight of the community charge, and thus the problems of a household rate. That is because the clergy, whose terms and conditions of service presume their housing costs to be met by their employer, would be gravely let down and morally cheated if the Church Commissioners and dioceses were suddenly

[Mr. Alison]

to change their terms and conditions of employment and expect clergy to face the full impact of a community charge on themselves and on their wives.

Mr. Marlow: If the Government see the Church right, having taken account of the powerful and persuasive case being put by my right hon. Friend, could my right hon. Friend deliver the bishops in the other place on this?

Mr. Alison: It would be rash of me to presume to speak on behalf of any bishop, but I am quite certain that if my right hon. Friend listens to the arguments that I am trying to deploy and could see his way to helping us financially, the bishops would not be above receiving a little bit of hard cash by way of rate relief for the churches as an inducement to support the Bill, at least partly.

The full imposition of the community charge on the clergy would hit hardest the clergy who are serving in the worst urban areas where housing conditions for them are particularly poor. One of the special contributions which I think it is generally recognised that the Church of England clergy make is that they remain perhaps the only single professional group that actually lives as well as works in the worst inner-city areas of Britain. Most other professional groups such as lawyers, dentists, doctors and school teachers work in those areas, but leave them at 5.30 or 6 o'clock and go to nice salubrious suburbs.

As a group, the clergy of whatever denomination stay in the communities that they represent—even the worst of the inner-city areas. For that reason the Church Commissioners and dioceses will pay the full community charge on behalf of the clergy whom they sustain and their wives. That means that neither the clergy nor their wives will pay the community charge. However, the honouring of the obligation to continue to provide the clergy with housing free of rates and rent means that at least the Church of England — the Church Commissioners and our dioceses — will face a substantial extra cost. I am sure that the same thing applies to the other denominations.

Protecting the clergy and their wives will present us in the Church of England with a bill of about £6 million. Of course there will be a £2 million offset from that £6 million bill because rates, which at present cost us about £2 million after derating, will no longer be payable. Paradoxically, £1 million of the net extra £4 million burden that will fall on the churches will go in Inland Revenue tax, extra money for the Revenue. It will be a sort of tax upon a tax since payment of the community charge on their behalf by the Church of England, the Church Commission and the dioceses will amount in practice to an extra taxable emolument in the hands of the clergy and their wives. They will be liable for extra tax which the commissioners will also have to meet.

Therefore, an extra bill of £4 million will be suddenly unleashed upon the clergy and the churches as a result of the change from our present system of taxing property to the new proposal to tax the person. I cannot believe that it was part of the Government's intention, in switching from rates to the community charge, suddenly to worsen the lot of the clergy and the churches, while earlier, and at present, it is the deliberate policy of the Government to try to assist and to protect the clergy and the churches. I cannot see any rational cause for ending the principle of some relief for the churches, such as that which exists at present under the 50 per cent. derating relief. The Secretary of State and the Minister will know that the Green Paper originally envisaged the continuation at least of the principle of charitable relief. I shall quote from the well-known paragraph G33 of the Green Paper. It says:

"The Government intends to preserve the benefits of the existing rate relief arrangements in the form of a discount from collective community charge."

That was the early warning—a helpful and positive one — that the benefits of existing rate relief would be preserved. As the Bill is drafted, I see no signs of the continuation, extension, refashioning or refurbishing of the present relief. I very much hope that the Minister will find it possible to honour the implications of the paragraph G33 undertaking and find a way—perhaps at no greater cost than the existing 50 per cent. derating for churches—of relieving the churches of at least part of the burden which they will have to bear to prevent poor clergy and their wives from personally having to meet the community charge. Ministers have kindly talked in an exploratory way to those of us in the Church Commission. So far nothing has come of that. I hope that the winding-up speech will refer to the Government's positive will and intention to continue this principle of relief.

I wish to make a point about church halls, and I apologise if it is slightly technical. Church halls, if not let for profit, and church buildings currently receive 100 per cent. relief from non-domestic rates. The Bill does something apparently illogical and rather disturbing. It provides that, where the ratepayer is a charity and the property is used for charitable purposes, the rates charged will continue to reflect the 50 per cent. relief hitherto available for such property. But there is no such carry-over of the 100 per cent. relief for church halls and churches on the face of the Bill. The 100 per cent. relief can apparently be provided only through an order made at the Minister's discretion.

Surely it is unjust that 50 per cent. charitable relief for some kinds of property should appear on the face of the Bill although the existing 100 per cent. relief for churches and church halls should not. This means that the 50 per cent. relief is guaranteed, but the 100 per cent. relief is not. In the interests of fairness and consistency, both should feature on the face of the Bill. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will allay anxieties about this omission and apparent discrimination and will accept an amendment in Committee to write into the Bill 100 per cent. relief for church halls and church buildings. In the expectation that my hon. Friend will listen sympathetically to my points, I again assure him of my general support for the Bill's philosophy and purpose.

8.2 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. It has been an interesting afternoon. Conservative Members arrived full of a sense of their liberation from the complexities of local government finance and flushed with pride at the prospect. As the afternoon has passed, it has become all too clear that the hour of liberation, if it ever comes, does not come with this legislation. Already, even before this debate, there were significant signs that this hour of liberation would be postponed.

The simple clear lines of the original proposal have already been corrupted in a number of ways. We have seen the reintroduction of rate capping, of the poll tax, a

cumbersome mechanism for paying 100 per cent. rate rebates in an incredibly complex way and of safety-netting procedures, which dampen the effects of the transition from the present rate support grant system to the new one. We see in the proposals the fatal reintroduction—albeit on only a small scale at present—of multipliers in the standard community charge, which still remains, as part of the proposals, as a property-based tax.

Conservative Members who imagine that in this legislation they are escaping from a property-based tax have evidently not considered the proposals for the standard community charge, the multipliers and the accompanying regulations.

The Government propose to introduce a tax on which there is little or no buoyancy. There is little alternative if one wishes to raise revenues in this system of taxation other than by raising the rate of tax. A form of taxation on which there is little or no buoyancy will inevitably be short-lived. Further corruptions of this wonderful simple system will be required in future to modify its workings.

I have said that there is no buoyancy in the proposed tax, but that is not quite true. There is negative buoyancy. Because of the long-running tendency of population to leave inner cities and the northern region — this has happened for 50 years — and because this is a population-based tax, built into the Government's proposals is a downward drift of locally-determined revenues in the north and the inner cities. It is remarkable that a Government who agree that there are problems to be dealt with at local level through local authority services in the north and the inner cities should have devised a taxation method that has this inbuilt downward drift of revenues in precisely the areas in which it is agreed that the problems exist.

The right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) pointed vividly to the problems of lack of buoyancy. The present rating system has been largely affected by the lack of buoyancy. The right hon. Gentleman clearly explained the reason: the present Government bottled out on the 1979 rate revaluation. Many of the trials and tribulations of central and local government since 1979 have been caused by the lack of buoyancy of revenues, yet its author opposes these proposals—which is at least a sign of one sinner repenting.

Because of the gearing effects on locally generated revenues in this legislation, it is virtually impossible to sustain large locally determined services or expenditures that are not approved by the Government and are not recognised in the new revenue support grant system. Because of these gearing effects, it will be impossible for a local authority to sustain any independence of policy under the new system. That may be part of the Governments's intentions — part of their way of controlling the activities of the dozen or so councils that figure in the list of the unrighteous that is constantly waxed in front of us. I invite Conservative Members to consider the fact that they are reducing all local government to total dependence on Government permission to spend under this rate support grant system.

After the passage of the Bill—if perchance it becomes an Act—local government will simply act as a postbox of complaints to central Government about the lack and poor quality of services in local communities. They will have very little role apart from that. As the right hon. Member for Henley said, it would be fairer, more honourable and more logical to do away with the whole of local government if that is what is intended.

Herein lies another central problem of the legislation —the revenue support grant system that is to replace the present rate support system. It is difficult to talk about this system, because it does not really exist. It is referred to in the legislation, but it is not described. One of the few detailed indications of what it might be is given in a special paper put out by the Department of the Environment, which states:

> "The details of the methodology will be decided after discussion with local authority representatives. There will be a separate assessment of need made for each authority. Such a system will require far fewer separate indicators of need than at present."

That is all that we know about the system of revenue support for local government, on which the pattern of expenditure and services in all our local authorities is to depend.

The future is very uncertain. The difficulties can be explained by reference to the present system of assessing the expenditure needs of local government. Let us take a relatively small matter, museums. Museums are important to my own city of Newcastle upon Tyne, and to the city of Liverpool, which runs one of the largest collections of museum services outside Greater London.

Of course, it would be far too simple to build into assessments of revenue needs a straightforward recognition of what it costs to spend on museums. The local authorities would then start converting everything that they had into museums to take advantage of the loophole in the system. The present system of rate support grant uses a proxy indicator, which is the square footage of shops and restaurants in a city, to determine its needs for museums. O happy city that has no museums and many take-aways! It will be credited through the rate support grant system with expenditure on museums that it does not actually incur, because the museums do not exist; meanwhile, authorities with considerable museum expenditure will see their expenditure go unrecognised in the system of assessed need to spend.

Here is the difficulty of the new, magical revenue support grant system, when we finally know its details. Either the indicators will be so few, and so gross, that the consequences for the pattern of expenditure and services in local government will be entirely unpredictable, requiring complex damping mechanisms—see how the old language creeps back into the new, and all the Sargasso sea of municipal controls from which we are promised an escape floods and seeps back into the new system—or the calculation about need to spend will be so finely drawn and so complex as to be impenetrable, having no visible connection with the actual pattern of expenditure in any particular authority.

However, it is on the robustness and consistency of the new revenue support grant system that the whole future of local government will depend after the passage of the Bill. Instead of the annual discussions about rate support grant, we shall have precisely the same anxious consultations when the Government present the annual calculations of revenue expenditure need assessment.

Mr. Marlow: I think that the hon. Gentleman has had long enough.

Mr. Cousins: I have only just started.

[Mr. Cousins]

When we are offered a simpler system in the legislation, we should be very cautious about what we are offered. I find some features of what is proposed quite remarkable. Lloyd George—[HON. MEMBERS: "Knew my father."] He may have known the fathers of some Conservative Members; that is their business.

Lloyd George could not achieve a national property tax, but, in the limited form of the uniform business rate, the present Government are introducing a national tax on business property. The right hon. Member for Henley was right to advise us of the awful possibilities of the future if such a tax were to fall into the wrong hands. That may at least sound a note of caution to supporters of the legislation.

At the same time as we are considering this Bill, the Housing Bill is in Committee. The purpose of that Bill is to encourage more renting of property—to encourage underoccupied property back into use. Yet this Bill confirms the undertaxation of underoccupied property. That cannot be logical, and it cannot be right. For the last generation, this country has seen the steady decline of the extended and large family. This Bill has decided to target for taxation large or extended families, although we all know that—for the purposes of community care and social stability, and for moral and philosophical reasons—large and extended families are something we should attempt to defend.

The tax will be difficult to calculate, to collect and to police, but one thing is clear: in areas of high population turnover, the difficulties of tax collection will be particularly great. Our cities already contain many areas with a high population turnover, where no one knows who his neighbour is. Yet precisely that disintegration of community relations will be reinforced and encouraged by what the Secretary of State this afternoon, in a beautiful phrase that will long endure in the annals of the study of British urban communities, called "fiscal migration".

This is a tax on the north, on stable communities and on the extended family. More damaging for the Government's future, however, is the fact that it removes local government as a barrier between central Government and the people of the inner cities. Following the passage of the Bill, the independence, authenticity, quirkiness and diversity of policies in those areas will be impossible to sustain. It will be for the Government to negotiate directly through whatever channels they can devise the patterns of services and expenditure that they wish to see. That cannot be right, either for the inner cities of the north or, indeed, for the Government.

The Secretary of State has devised an enormous heffalump trap. Gently, kindly, firmly—with different motives and ultimate political purposes—can we not find a way to steer Eeyore away from the trap?

8.19 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech during this important debate.

In the course of a few minutes how does one pay tribute to my predecessor who sat for Stroud for a total of 32 years, given that I have known him for only 18 months? Sir Anthony Kershaw was one of that band of honourable and gallant Members. He had a distinguished war career and, in recognition, he was awarded the Military Cross. Thereafter, in the 1950 and 1951 elections, he contested Gloucester, a Labour stronghold. In 1955 he successfully contested the constituency of Stroud and, from then on, he increased his majority.

As has already been said today, politicians are largely concerned with people's perception of them. Some constituents are unhappy unless their Member is on television or on radio every night. Others imagine that we are glued—today we might be—to the green Benches from half past two to some unspecified, but generally considered anti-social hour. Others are not happy unless their Member is a Minister or, better still, a Secretary of State. Others want a good constituency Member. Sir Anthony was all of those things. He achieved a successful balance and I believe that that, to a large extent, accounted for his success.

For some years Sir Anthony was Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). In 1970 he became Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Public Building and Works. Thereafter, he became Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In 1973-74 something went wrong and he was Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence. Sir Anthony developed an extensive and unrivalled knowledge of foreign affairs. As a result of conversations that I have had in this House I believe that, in recent years, he was a popular and effective Chairman of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

With such extensive knowledge, I am sure that Sir Anthony has much to offer public life in the country. Hon. Members may be interested to know that Sir Anthony's predecessor, Sir Robert Perkins, is now 94 years old. He represented the Stroud constituency from 1931 to 1945 and from 1950 to 1955. A few weeks ago Sir Anthony had one of his many retirement parties—a spirited affair—and Sir Robert wrote to him to congratulate him on his 32 years in the House. Sir Anthony will do the same for me when I have been here for 32 years, but there will be one or two small problems, not least Sir Anthony's handwriting, because by that time he will be 105. I know that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will join with me in wishing Sir Anthony and Lady Kershaw a long and happy retirement. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

On 11 June it became my privilege to represent Stroud. That constituency covers nearly 200 square miles of varied and beautiful countryside. It represents much of the green bit — geographically rather than politically — between Gloucester and Bristol. The constituency extends from the level reaches along the Severn vale through steep, wooded embankments to the Cotswolds. My constituency consists of the wide open spaces that are much favoured by royalty and commoners.

Apart from agriculture, there are many active local firms in my constituency, mainly engaged in textiles, engineering and hi-tech. I am pleased to report that, in general, prosperity is increasing in the area and that is largely attributable to the proximity of good communications, not least to the M4 and M5.

I am a chartered surveyor and, for the past 20 years, I have disliked the ever-increasing complexity of local government finance, as witnessed by the pile of documents on the Dispatch Box. I especially dislike the present rating system. If we understand capping, penalties, targets, recycling, hold-backs, slopes, thresholds and all the other

jargon, do we understand the way in which they interact? No doubt in common with many hon. Members, what I do not fully understand I do not fully trust.

Many people outside the House assume that rateable and rental valuations—they mean the same thing—are somehow based on capital values. They are not. They are merely based on a notional rental value assuming a free market in the private rented sector. That calculation may have been easy enough some 50 years ago, but after decades of Rent Acts and civil Acts — however well-intentioned — there is now no extensive private rented sector. From experience I can tell the House that valuations that were always more of an art than a science are now more of a farce.

We have already heard that the present rating system is not related to an ability to pay. This afternoon we heard again from the Secretary of State about the much-publicised two semi-detached houses. There could be similar houses in any street, avenue, cul de sac or whatever in any constituency. In one house lives the widow, in the other a family of four or five, all perhaps of working age. It is quite wrong that the widow and the others should pay similar amounts. However, let us suppose that in each house there is a family of four or five — would the situation be any more equitable? Do we assume that because there are the same number of people in each property their circumstances are comparable? We do not know enough to make that assertion. Household A may have a 100 per cent. mortgage, but household B may have no such worries. However, whatever else this may prove it is clear that the ability to pay in each case is different.

On several occasions since June we have considered how important it is to maintain the housing stock of the nation. A great defect in the present rating system is that it discourages people from maintaining that stock. When people are retired they must, in general, anticipate some reduction in their income. Perhaps they consider that they need a new central heating system—that is important to older people — and they want to spend the necessary money. However, not only do they have to pay for the central heating, but soon after there will be a tap on the door and it will be the rating valuation officer. Because that heating system is an improvement the rates increase. At a time of life when one faces the prospect of decreasing income it takes a brave person to take on increasing overheads. For that and other reasons I shall not lament the passing of the present rating system.

I support the Bill in its present form. I do not know whether the community charge should be called the Tory tax, but I know that there is no popular way of raising taxes. I support the principle of that charge because it is right that all who receive the benefits of local government should make some contribution, however small. The community charge — I have not heard this said this afternoon — will not pay for local government expenditure; it will pay only for a tiny part of it, because 50 per cent. of local government expenditure comes from central Government, which derives its income from income tax, which is a progressive tax. A further 28 per cent. is derived from industrial and commercial properties, leaving 22 per cent. only to come from the community charge.

The rebates for low-income groups are well designed and will be effective. We should not assume that just because someone lives in a larger house they are better off without knowing whether they have a mortgage. That person will be paying a progressive tax on the 50 per cent. that they pay through central taxes, so why should they pay extra on the further 22 per cent?

I favour the provisions in the Bill for non-domestic rating. It is scandalous that department stores in Edinburgh or Glasgow should pay two or three times the rate per square foot of a similar property in London. We have heard much about Ravenscraig steelworks, and it is equally scandalous, although I am unaware of the figures, that it is paying more in rates than it would if it were 300 or 500 miles south and closer to its natural markets.

Initially the central rating lists will produce some tremors in some areas, but over a period of time company directors will be able to budget in line with inflation and will know their liabilities for years to come. That will create stability, which creates confidence and, with a bit of luck, confidence creates success. What a chance the Bill gives to businesses that we hear so much about in certain parts of northern England and Scotland, which will be able to compete once again on an equal footing.

There is a saying, no taxation without representation, which is a good maxim. The Bill will go far to re-establishing that principle and accountability in local government.

8.31 pm

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): It falls to me to congratulate the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on his maiden speech. There was a convention when I entered the House many years ago that maiden speeches should be non-controversial. However, that convention has been broken for some years. It is a convention to refer to one's predecessor, and the way in which the hon. Gentleman did that drew support from hon. Members. He spoke of the attractiveness of his constituency, which I can endorse as I drive through it quite often.

The hon. Gentleman showed his strong support for the Government. I am sure that he will learn, when he has spent a little longer in the House, that it is important to be critical of one's party, and I am sure that in future he will do so in the same eloquent manner.

It is a convention not to respond critically to maiden speeches, but many of the points that the hon. Gentleman made were answered by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). My hon. Friend spoke, as shall I, about the impact of the Bill on local democracy.

The Bill is the final nail in the coffin of democracy in Britain. It must be considered along with the other drives to a centrally managed state with a concentration of power in Whitehall and a little less power in Edinburgh and Cardiff. It must be considered along with the policies of the Education Reform Bill, which deals with the privatisation and opting out of schools. It must be considered along with the proposals in the Housing Bill, which will transfer council housing estates to the private sector or to self-management. It must be considered along with the proposals to place inner cities under the control of unelected corporations, allegedly to regenerate derelict areas. We can look forward to a scenario in which local government will manage rubbish collection, which itself will be privatised.

There are three lines only in the Bill that I support. Clause 121(4) says:

[Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas]

"Any power conferred by this Act on the Secretary of State may be exercised differently for England and Wales, whether or not it is exercised separately".

Regrettably, there is no separate exercise of power for Wales in the Bill. However, there are some slight differences in the way that revenue support grant and non-domestic rate income are to be paid separately to county and district councils.

It is not clear how those slightly different aspects of the Bill will work in Wales. There are some differences in the non-domestic rate multipliers under schedule 4 and there will be a separate non-domestic rates pool for Wales under schedule 4. Other different arrangements are made for calculating the non-domestic rate income entitlement. Wales is following Scotland in having the tax imposed rapidly in 1990.

In one of my favourite readings, the Welsh Office handout, the Secretary of State for Wales said:

"The Bill provides for a separate system in Wales; one which is tailored to the needs of Wales. No resources will be lost to Wales as a result of the move to the new system."

The new system has not been defined. In the same handout, the Secretary of State said:

"The new system will distribute grant on the basis of objective assessments of need. I am anxious to ensure that those assessments reflect the differences in areas of Wales as accurately as possible."

He further said that there will be discussions with local authority associations.

It is not clear to Hon. Members on this side how the system of assessing needs will operate and how it is different from the present system of rate support grant. At least that was based on an attempt, through the GRE assessments and, traditionally, through the formula of the RSG, to establish an assessment of need for local authorities. Perhaps the Minister for Local Government, who, were it not for the political resilience of the Secretary of State for Wales, might be in his right hon. Friend's position—the hon. and learned Gentleman has a special interest in the subject as well as his own nationality—will explain how consultations are going and how the new revenue support grant system will assess the local needs of authorities. We were told in the Green Paper that there might be two grants—a needs grant to cover differences in needs, and a standard grant. However, that is no longer the case.

It would be helpful if the Minister would explain how the crude system of calculation in schedule 5 of the entitlement of each authority to revenue support grant will work in practice. That part of the Bill should be explored in detail today, tomorrow and in Committee.

The Secretary of State told us that there will be little or no change in Wales as a result of the Bill, but the effect on individual income and local authority expenditure is substantial. The Government intend that 16 per cent. only of local authority expenditure in Wales will come from the poll tax. That underlines the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, who said that this tax lacks buoyancy and restricts the operation of local government.

Are the Government hoping that, if there will be a need for a local authority to increase the poll tax, it will result in a steep rise because of the small margin of flexibility that is available? Will the result be such local opposition to poll tax variations between authorities that it will be seen as a move towards a fully grant-aided system of local government? That was one of two stark alternatives offered by the Layfield committee to the Labour Government in 1976. It said that if local government were to be accountable it either had to be 100 per cent. grant-aided, and therefore accountable to the Secretary of State, or accountable on the basis of local income tax as a major source of revenue, and therefore accountable to the electorate.

In discussions on the Education Reform Bill, we shall be considering ways in which education authorities' formula for granting each school's budget will be discussed, and again the Secretary of State will have, in practice, to insist on high education expenditure, which will be at the expense of other local government services.

The possibility of discretionary expenditure by local government has now almost entirely disappeared. Locally elected authorities are in a similar position to that of health authorities in relation to central Government. Revenue is entirely determined by the Welsh Office, by the Department of Health and Social Security in the case of England, and by the Scottish Office in the case of Scotland. That is the position as a result of the changes.

With the current crisis among health authorities, we can clearly see where the mechanism of entire, complete central control leads. It leads to the fundamental discrepancy between Government statements on what funds they are providing and the reality of services. Surely the Health Service crisis is an example of the breakdown of democracy. Nominated bodies are unable to manage and deliver services effectively in accordance with local need, and centrally distributed resources cannot meet the needs. That is the path that we are following in respect of local authorities and health.

The loss of discretionary powers makes the possibility for local authorities to make substantial grants to voluntary bodies virtually nil. It will affect voluntary organisations such as the citizens advice bureau. I can envisage a day when the National Eisteddfod will become a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Office.

As we have been told, the changes in the business rate will have a particular impact on areas such as rural Wales, mid Wales and north Wales. The business rate in such areas will increase. Ironically, one of the reasons why responsibility for assessing rateable value was taken from local authorities in depressed areas was that they tended to favour their own industries and businesses. Local government complained about the regressive nature of the rate and the need for another supplementary tax or taxes long before the Conservative party jumped on the bandwagon.

There are fairer options that relate to two principles. Services are paid for on the basis of ability to pay. We have heard that phrase in Government rhetoric about their interests when it suits them. As an overall principle, the ability to pay must point to a form of local income tax. Also, there is a clear need for a property tax in the form of a capital or wealth tax. But the essential argument is that we need local payment and redistribution mechanisms. Both mechanisms are under threat in the legislation.

The Government tell us that, because of their complexity, the traditional rate support grant allocation formulas are no longer credible or viable. At least there was an attempt to assess need, to transfer resources, and to equalise resources according to needs. This legislation

represents a crude assessment of need and gives no clear sign how the Government intend to deal with allocations to authorities.

Another aspect of the Bill relates to the changes that will affect various income groups in a differentially bad manner, particularly in respect of many low-income areas of Wales. Studies show that, as a result of the changes, two thirds of the population will be worse off in terms of their personal incomes and that of their households. In particular, women will be worse off. The average wage for female manual workers in Wales is less than £100 a week. Low-paid people will bear the burden of the Bill.

When we consider that together with the burden of the changes in the social security legislation, which will come into force early next year, we see that the Goverment's policy represents a class attack on those who do not support them. It is a clear attack on local democracy. Governments that attack local democracy only create a demand for a vibrant, diversified real democracy. The history of the relationship between central and local government in all states demonstrates an ebb and flow between the tendency for centralisation and the demand for greater autonomy from localities and regions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Welsh Office (Mr. Ian Grist) *indicated assent.*

Dr. Thomas: The Minister is smiling and agreeing with me.

The centralised phase, of which this Government have been the main example—it goes way beyond any Fabian centralism ever attempted by the Labour party—will create its own reaction. We shall see a system of democratic local government in the British counties that will replace the centralisation that the Government have imposed.

8.44 pm

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on his excellent maiden speech. He paid an eloquent tribute to his predecessor and to his lovely constituency. I am sure that all hon. Members look forward to hearing his contributions and observing how he gets his point across in such a good-natured way.

I have had the pleasure and the responsibility of holding one political mandate after another from the residents of the borough of Solihull since the autumn of 1971. For much of that time, I have held more than one mandate. The consistent, constant theme throughout that time has been the residents' dissatisfaction with the domestic rating system. Indeed, so constant has been residents' dissatisfaction about rates that that sentiment has spawned two generations of residents' associations —one in the 1930s and one in the 1970s. It is true that they have paid their taxes in sorrow, but they have paid their rates in anger. Since the 1970s, I have been in favour of a capitation tax in preference to domestic rating. I welcome the Bill.

Much has quite properly been said about the ability to pay. All civilised societies tax the ability to pay. We call it income tax, capital gains tax, or tax on benefits in kind. We also pay the same amount for many things—for example, car tax, television licences, petrol excise duty—or at the same rate as with VAT. We shall pay the same rate of community charge—just as we do for many things—except the poorer people in society. The least well-off will get substantial rebates, up to 80 per cent.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that, with the example that he cited, there is an element of choice? There is even a choice in respect of black and white or colour television sets. People do not necessarily have to have such things. But there will be the same rate of community charge, regardless of personal circumstances.

Mr. Taylor: There is always an element of voluntariness about most taxes. If one chooses a frugal lifestyle rather than that of an investor, one will sidestep capital gains tax. That is true of many things. My central position remains. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) can make his points in his own speech. I know that he is impatient to do that, so I shall try not to delay him.

Clearly, there are at least two groups of taxes. One is on an ad valorem basis and the other is on a flat-rate basis. The community charge will be a flat rate. Frankly, I welcome it as such.

Many would say that an ideal for local services is to get the payment mechanism as close as possible to consumption—that is, payment by consumption or, at least, payment by consumers. A capitation tax is much closer to a tax on consumption than a tax on the occupation of houses could ever be. It is not a tax on franchise. I suppose that it is a tempting play on words for the Opposition to pretend that it is, but it is not. I am on a voting register that is now held by a local authority, and I am on a rating register that is now held by a local authority. No one uses the one as a sanction against the other and there need be no fear on that count. *[Interruption.]* What I have just said is unchallengeable. Opposition Members can read it in *Hansard* and see for themselves.

The community charge will confront a larger component of the community with a far closer approximation to the truth of the cost and value of what the local authority is doing in the community's name and with its money. That may not be fun, but it will be honest.

Many of my constituents are unhappy about the safety net or taper over a four-year period. I have taken no pleasure in explaining to them that I do not like it either, but that resource transfer is not new. It has been going on since the 1920s. The transfer of resources, often from provident authorities to improvident authorities, is as old as that. However, it is now visible by virtue of the safety net. I am not sure whether that was the first and prime intention of the safety net, but it has certainly had that effect. It may well be a casual benefit of the safety net transitional provision that it will show people starkly the sort of resource transfers that they have been underwriting for many years. Candidly, it will make a lot of people think. For those of us who live in prudent local authority areas, the safety net takes some of the gilt off the gingerbread. However, at least the reality of resource transfer by stealth through the rates will have been exposed, and that process will be eliminated over the four-year period.

Nothing could be more unloved than the present rating system. The Conservative party alone has shown a willingness to do something about it. It is clear from the debate that no one else has a better idea; in fact, no one else has any ideas at all. I shall support the Bill.

8.51 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I shall refer to some of the points made by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin). I am sorry that he is not in the Chamber. I intended some of my remarks to refer to him personally, so I will leave those out. The others relate to what he said about the Government having a mandate for the legislation. He spoke as if that was somehow the end of the debate and we could disappear. That point is made not only by the hon. Gentleman; it is repeatedly made about the mass of legislation that is being rapidly pushed through the House. This is the first occasion on which we have had a two-day debate on a major measure. The Education Reform Bill — the Government have abused the title of the great 19th century reform Bills—has been dealt with in a summary fashion and pushed through on the basis that the Government have a mandate to take such action.

The way in which hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West present the concept of a mandate is like politics for tiny tots. It is a crude understanding of the notion. The little book called "The How and Why Wonder Book of Parliament", published for young children, would not descend to such a simplified interpretation of a mandate. The people who wrote it presumably have some understanding of and a background in the study of politics and know that they could not say such things to young children.

If it means anything, a mandate means solid and sound support and enthusiasm from the majority of people in the country. I doubt whether any of the major measures that the Government are pushing through the House have that, and this measure certainly has not. The Government can lay claim to only about 42 per cent. of the vote. That does not make the case for electoral reform but it does make the case for the Government acting with restraint and realising that factors other than the issues dealt with in a document made available to only a few, which was never a major item of discussion at the election, need to be considered.

A mandate seldom relates to single issues. On some great occasions and in some great election campaigns issues of major concern — such as the reform of Parliament in the 19th century, to which I referred — have been serious considerations affecting the electorate. This was not the case at the last election. The only part of the country where the issue of the poll tax came under serious discussion was Scotland and the evidence from Scotland is that the measure is extremely unpopular. I criticise my hon. Friends and those responsible for organising Labour's election campaign for not making the poll tax a major item for discussion. Had they done so, we could have had some understanding in the rest of the country of attitudes in Scotland. We should then have seen whether there was a mandate and it would have been clear who had compassion and was concerned about the issues.

Mr. Howard: Does the hon. Gentleman not think that, had the matter been raised by his party during the election campaign, it might conceivably have been asked what its policy was?

Mr. Allen: The Minister is presenting the Bill, not the Labour party.

Mr. Barnes: That is right. We have had presented to us a major measure of transformation. It is your job to argue the case for it and tell us why it is better than the present system. The fact that there might be problems in finding a replacement in no way excuses your position. It is a disgrace. It is rather like saying——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The hon. Gentleman should be cautious in referring to me in that manner. He should use the third person.

Mr. Barnes: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker; I was not intending to refer to you. I have been here no longer than the maiden speaker who spoke tonight. I intended to refer to the Government Front Bench and to the barbs that it directed to me.

Mr. Allen McKay: My hon. Friend will not be surprised to learn that I made opposition to the poll tax a major plank in my election campaign. My constituents were interested to learn that 96 per cent. of them would suffer increases in rates while only 4 per cent. would gain.

Mr. Barnes: Those who campaigned during the election, as my hon. Friend did, and who have been campaigning since, have found that this campaign has been unlike many others. Those of us who have been engaged in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and in supporting the miners' cause or other causes have had to go out and take the lead. We had to hand people leaflets and gain their support. The poll tax is different. When one campaigns against the poll tax, people rush up to one asking for leaflets and information because they feel that the measure represents a great danger to them. In that context, how can we talk about a mandate? When mandates are seriously considered, they are only one element in our electoral system. They do not take away the responsibility for weighing up changes, developments, feelings, attitudes and the rights of minorities. Legislation was introduced last night which will take away the rights of minorities, but the fact that one has a mandate and that one might for example, develop it to exterminate 49 per cent. of the population would not make it justifiable. This measure will have serious consequences.

When one comes to the House, it is almost like going through H. G. Wells' time machine and moving backwards in time. That applies to the institution, the building itself and the way in which parties travel round it. In addition, legislation now reflects that feeling. H. G. Wells wrote "The Time Machine" in a period which fits in well with the heyday of the House as a Parliament-controlled rather than a Government-controlled body.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I have listened with great care to the arguments. As the hon. Gentleman is crystallising the view that this measure is a sure vote-loser and election-loser for the Conservative party, why is the Labour party arguing against it?

Mr. Barnes: The Labour party wishes to defend the interests of the people whom it seeks to represent. In defending those interests—despite the fact that it might not be within its own long-term interest within the electoral game — it is often obliged to vote in ways which are not cynical and do not hammer the people.

Current legislation, in respect of employment, immigration and education, reflects a society beyond which we have now moved, but this measure takes us even further back in the time machine. The Victorian images of

the House have been replaced by images of the middle ages. The images in the building, which was rebuilt after the 1834 fire, link us to former times.

People are looking backwards to a time when revolt arose out of legislation. Modern techniques are being used to contain that situation.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman says that we have been looking backwards. Perhaps we could look forward if the hon. Gentleman will tell us something about the consensus tax which has been outlined by the Opposition Front Bench. That is a tax which everyone will enjoy paying to their local authorities.

Mr. Barnes: If we went back to 1972, we would see an acceptable financial system, which operated in local government, despite the injustices in specific cases, such as those mentioned by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West. We could accept those matters in a rough and ready way. Since then we have had grant capping, rate capping and other measures which have made nonsense of the basis of the current arrangements. We want to get the best out of the system and seek to build upon it. I should have thought that, until it was taken over by the new revolutionary tendency, the Conservative party would have appreciated such a way forward.

The ordinary people of the country are expected to be vassals. The Government are acting as the new barons and that is not acceptable to the people. They will react against it. The social bonds will be broken as a result of pressures exerted by the Government and this in turn will lead to anti-social behaviour or open rebellion against the measure. Conservative Members should face up to their responsibilities.

Several specific things are wrong with the legislation. It is unfair and unjust. It cannot be fair that somebody who earns £100 a minute, someone who earns £100 an hour, someone who earns £100 a day, someone who earns £100 a week and someone who earns £100 a month—that is roughly the amount that is earned by someone on a youth training scheme—should be expected to pay the same amount in taxation for local services. That would take us back to the period about which I have talked. However, such proposals have been presented in this century in Europe and in other nations. Essentially that has happened in fuedal-type regimes, rather than in regimes that operate on democratic principles.

The scheme is wrong because it is also expensive and unworkable. Many hon. Members have explained the problems and details of that. It is also a serious attack on civil liberties. That raises the problem of law and order and the desire for people to respond to a stable society, to seek to aid themselves and their families, and to advance their condition generally. People will be pressed, and will have to face up to whether they will take part in actions such as occurred in my constituency in 1972 during the passage of the housing finance legislation. People were pressed and oppressed. The social bond was broken and the Clay Cross rebellion was the result. However, that rebellion will be as nothing compared with the actions that could result from this legislation. The legislation will either be accepted by society with a dull acceptance and cause anti-social responses, or people will be galvanised to take action. The Government should not do that to their people.

9.5 pm

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I think that the House is agreed that we should have reform and that there is not a perfect system that would satisfy everybody. At times I suspect that if the Government's scheme were in being and somebody came along and said that they had had a brilliant idea for a property tax called the rates, many people would say, "What a good idea; let us put it into operation." However, I am afraid that time has passed and we must recognise the need now to move on to something else because the present system has clearly become discredited.

As the House knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken his courage in his hands and launched this scheme. As the House also knows, it comes in three parts. The first is the switch from the familiar rate support grant to the new revenue support grant scheme. Oddly enough, as has already been pointed out, the Bill tells us virtually nothing about that. It merely states that there will be a revenue support grant and that the Secretary of State must get it through Parliament. However, enough has been said outside the House for us to realise that in its objectives it is trying to get rid of the resources element of the present system and to introduce a more objective assessment of needs. I am bound to say that that seems to be right, with one proviso about resources. Essentially, as I understand it, the scheme is a move in the right direction. I should also acknowledge that it will benefit my constituents financially.

The second part is the unified, or sometimes uniform, business rate. Clearly, my constituents will not like that. There is no doubt that businesses in constituencies such as mine will be worse off as a result. That has been partly masked by the fact that the figures used have not incorporated an element for revaluation. I understand that until revaluation takes place it is hard to say what the financial consequences will be. However, they will be painful. On the other hand, we must set against that my right hon. Friend's desire to provide additional succour to those parts of the country where business and commerce are weak. If we suffer, no doubt we shall complain, but we shall watch what happens carefully. I cannot say, overall, that it is wrong to try to help industry in those parts of the country where there is clearly real weakness.

It is when I come to the third part of the Bill, the community charge or poll tax, that I part company with my right hon. Friend. I accept that it may mean increased accountability. However, if it will increase accountability, I still do not understand why it requires a capping mechanism to be built into it. That seems to undermine the claims that are made for it. I understand also that it will help some people, notably single people. However, as hon. Member after hon. Member has pointed out, it is not related to ability to pay and it will not be seen as fair by many people. In fact, it is an unjust tax. I believe that its injustice will make it appreciably harder to administer than would otherwise be the case. Goodness knows, it would be difficult enough to administer anyway.

In Aylesbury Vale, using the Government's figures and assuming an average of two persons per household—I understand the calculation was slightly under that—65·8 per cent. of households will be worse off initially than at present. The £500 they will have to pay for two community charges is more than they are paying at present. It is amazing what a high proportion of people are on rebates,

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

but rebates apply to both the existing and the proposed system. In each case many people will receive rebates. When the transitional period ends and the safety net is withdrawn, the number of people worse off will drop to about 30 per cent. in Aylesbury Vale, with about 11·6 per cent. on roughly the same level. That fall will be due not to the poll tax but to the new revenue support grant.

It is inescapable that, comparatively speaking, under the proposed system the less well off will be still poorer and the better off will be richer. That is what makes the proposal so unacceptable. That fact is spelt out clearly in the Government's table comparing households under the rates and the community charge. Either way, the poor will be largely helped by rebates, but people on a net income of £100 to £400 per week will pay a higher community charge. It is only when net income for a household reaches £500 per week that the poll tax becomes attractive, and it becomes increasingly attractive as the income goes up the scale.

I am concerned particularly that the people who lose out will be not those who are in poverty, because of the rebate system, but those just above the poverty level—the people we have been trying successfully to appeal to politically in recent years, such as council tenants who have bought their own homes. I have no doubt that they will suffer heavily, as will council tenants who have not bought their own homes, such as those in older and poorer properties, couples with modest savings, and so on. As a Conservative, I am worried that we should run the risk of hitting those people and spreading disillusionment among them.

Reference has been made to history. I make one further reference to the days of the peasants' revolt. In "The Offshore Islanders," Paul Johnson describes what happened:

> "By the 1370s the Government . . . sought to tap the new wealth of the masses by resorting to poll taxes, that is, by a direct, fixed levy on every adult, irrespective of income. This monstrous device, of Continental origin, was the perfect formula to provoke civil commotion. Attempts to take a preliminary census, in 1377, led to riots in the big cities, such as London, and resistance almost everywhere else. In 1381, the actual imposition of a shilling poll-tax was the signal for revolution, particularly in the heavily populated areas in the south-east."

I am not arguing that revolution will be produced as a result of the scheme, but I am genuinely concerned that in some inner-city areas we will see disorder and have great difficulty in compiling the register and collecting the tax. I fear that we will see disorder, or possibly no-go areas. I cannot believe that anybody could be happy about that

The question is whether there is an alternative. Any alternative must be related to ability to pay. That is the essence of the argument. In the attempt to find an alternative, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have put forward an instruction to the Committee. The House knows, perhaps for understandable reasons, that a Division has not been called for, but it is notable that more than 40 of my right hon. and hon. Friends, a substantial part of our party, have signed the instruction to the Committee, for the reasons that I have expressed.

I do not have time to set out in detail the scheme for a possible alternative, but the instruction indicates that it would be a type of banded system based essentially on the information available to the Inland Revenue. The local tax would fall on those who pay income tax in some form, but it would be graduated rather than the flat-rate system of the poll tax.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Raison: I am afraid that I cannot give way, because I want to finish my comments.

I recognise that there are problems. No one would say that my alternative is the easiest thing in the world. However, it is not impossible for the Inland Revenue to provide the data. It would mean more work for the computers, but that would not be incompatible with the kind of information that is being compiled and collected already. Some people are concerned about tax information being passed from the Inland Revenue to local authorities. In fact, at the moment Inland Revenue information is passed to the DHSS and to the Department of Employment. Those who have filled in an application for a grant for a child in higher education will have had to tell the local authority about their income level. I do not believe that there is anything particularly outlandish about that.

I recognise that if we go down this path we shall require some kind of resources redistribution, and I have already said that there is one element in which we would need to keep resources redistribution, otherwise there would be a very heavy burden on those parts of the country that are low in terms of taxable income. However, it can be done. The crucial point to remember is that, under the present scheme, £1,500 million is available for rebates. Obviously a system of the type to which I have referred would not require rebates, because it would be related to the ability to pay. It would therefore be possible to use that very substantial sum to achieve equalisation. It would not need to bite into the overall basis for the resources element because £1,500 million—as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has confirmed—could be available for that purpose.

It has also been argued that there may be heavy burdens in certain areas under the type of scheme put forward by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. However, the amount available for equalisation to which I have just referred will partly allay that. If we accept that type of scheme, we can choose at what rate we set it. Some examples produce rather intimidating results. If that happens, we can make the scheme less progressive, more progressive or strictly pro rata. A wide variety of options is available to find the most suitable scheme. After all, we should remember that, whatever the system, it will have to raise the same amount of money. We must choose those bands that make most sense.

The most important point that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State put forward is the possibility that, as earnings increase, there may be a substantial jump in the amount of revenue that one would have to pay. I recognise that we must face that. The answer may lie with increasingly narrow banding. However, if, at the end of the day, the kind of examination that I have advocated leads us to suppose that banding is not the right way to proceed and that a simple direct relationship with income is a better way, so be it.

In putting forward the instruction, we are asking the Government to recognise the deep anxieties felt about the proposed scheme and to enter into some kind of

constructive and realistic search for a better way to proceed than the present proposal. I sincerely believe that if we cannot find a better way to proceed, we may run into serious trouble. In view of the anxieties that I have expressed, I must state that I cannot support the Bill.

9.18 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): The House is discussing the most radical proposals for local government finance for centuries. The impact of the community charge, or poll tax, which the Government propose to introduce to replace domestic rates will be as devastating as it will be iniquitous. The Government say that they are introducing the poll tax for several reasons, not least because

"an unacceptable price has to be paid in the disruption faced by ratepayers following revaluation."

That is poppycock. One need only examine the research carried out to know that that is not so. In my constituency, which is fairly representative, the poll tax would be seven times more disruptive than a rate revaluation.

The Government's criterion for unacceptability was that more than 5·26 per cent. of householders would experience an increase in their rates of more than 20 per cent. In Durham, 50 per cent. — not 5 per cent. — of householders will experience rates increases of more than 20 per cent. Indeed, under the proposed poll tax, nearly 50 per cent. of people can expect increases of more than 80 per cent. Even with the safety net, the poll tax will cause disruption in more than 34 per cent. of households — well above the 5·26 per cent. which is described as unacceptable in the Green Paper.

The real reason for changing the rating system has nothing to do with disruption and everything to do with favouring the wealthy, especially in the south and south-east of England. The Government are trying to harden the north-south divide. The benefits to occupiers of properties with high rateable values are obvious. The rich will make considerable gains while the poorest members of our community will become poorer. It is estimated that about 80 per cent. of householders in the south-east will reap substantial benefits, but in my constituency the average household rates bill will increase by more than 32 per cent., from £359 to £475.

Large families and those who live in small houses with low rateable values will lose, as will all households of more than two adults in lower-rated houses. The tax is exceptionally regressive and bears no relation to the ability to pay. The Secretary of State for the Environment, who is pushing these changes, will gain by as much as £1,500 a year. Many of his colleagues will also gain. The Secretary of State for Transport will benefit by more than £6,200 a year. Many unemployed people with children must live on less than that. What is fair about it?

The Bill is offensive and pays little regard to the ability to pay or earnings and spending. It is a flat-rate tax. The same amount will be paid by the millionaire living in a mansion and by the widow living in a small cottage or flat. It is not my idea of reform for the better. It leaves a nasty taste in my mouth, but it is what we have come to expect from the Government during the past eight years. They have pushed local government finance into complete chaos.

Even the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), was kind enough to consider the plight of the owners of modest terraced houses, some of whom are first-time buyers. He said that those owner-occupiers represent about half of the householders whose rate bills would increase by 80 per cent. or more under revaluation. That represents about 3 per cent. of all householders, but research shows that 15 per cent. of occupiers of properties with a rateable value of £100 or less, which is a fair description of modest housing, would suffer increases of more than 80 per cent. under the poll tax.

We all know that the unfortunate householders who will be affected by the new charge will not live in the more desirable parts of our towns or rural areas. They will be the people who can least afford to pay the increased tax. Safety nets may provide temporary protection for local authorities, but there is no such provision for individual householders.

The poll tax will be much more disruptive than revaluation. It is directed against those who live in low rateable value properties and it favours householders in high rateable value properties, such as those in Dulwich. The disruption will be far more severe than a fair rating revaluation. In my constituency, one in three householders faces a poll tax increase of more than 20 per cent. and one in seven faces an increase of 80 per cent. I must conclude that the disruption caused by the poll tax will be at least three times as extensive as that caused by revaluation.

We are told that some poorer sections of our community will pay only 20 per cent. of the new tax and that people on supplementary benefit will be protected. The majority of people will be asked to pay, regardless of their ability to do so.

Who will pay the poll tax for the housewife or for the unemployed youngster? We all know that it will have to be paid by the working husband or father. Once again, pensioners will be most severely affected by the poll tax. Age Concern states that as many as one third of all single pensioners will be £5 a week worse off because they are more likely to be living in low rateable value properties.

The Bill will push up the prices of bigger houses by removing the burden of rates, and once again house prices may crazily spiral upwards as they did in the early 1970s. Since it is generally accepted that most wealthy people and high wage earners live in good quality, high rateable value properties, and the poorer sections of the community live in low rateable value housing, the disposable income of wealthy people will be increased as their tax burden is reduced, whereas the opposite effect will apply to poorer sections of the community. There will be a definite effect on assets as house prices change. If property no longer has a tax liability placed upon it, the value of large, high rateable value property will significantly increase, unlike that of small, low rateable value houses.

How on earth can the Government justify the poll tax? It is simply a philosophy of robbing the poor to pay the rich, and the Bill is a shameful one. The Bill will have far-reaching effects. It will make it difficult for poorer local authorities to afford the basic services needed by their residents. The poll tax has no regard to the ability to pay it, so authorities with a high proportion of residents on low incomes in their areas will find it difficult to increase the poll tax. Those authorities will have to settle for lower levels of services, unlike authorities in the more affluent areas of Britain. That will undoubtedly serve to widen the north-south divide.

The Government say that the Bill will increase the accountability of local authorities, and that accountability

[Mr. Gerry Steinberg]

is one of the key factors of their supposed reform. That means that local authorities will now control only 25 per cent. of their income, so it is ludicrous for the Government to talk about accountability, since the Government will also determine a uniform business rate nationally. Under the new provisions, 75 per cent. of council income will be under direct Government control, so the poll tax will be the only means by which councils will be able to meet special local needs. The Government will have greatly increased power over local authorities, and local accountability will be confused and severely undermined. The poll tax will mean more simple control and less accountability.

The true motive of reducing local government expenditure is clear, since the Government have decided to retain the power to cap the poll tax. If the poll tax is not a sufficient deterrent, community charge capping is being held in the wings by the Minister.

The cost of collecting the new tax will be three or four times more than that for the present rating system, but loss of income through evasion will certainly be higher. When a poll tax was introduced in the 14th century, it was extraordinary that the adult population fell by a third in four years—according to the poll tax register. History has an uncanny knack of repeating itself.

It may be necessary to change our present rating system, but the speed at which the Government have bulldozed their way through the Bill, ignoring the outcome of the consultative process, and rejected proposals put forward by organisations is neither reasonable nor rational. It has been rejected as an option on every occasion that it has been considered. If a long-standing local tax has to be changed, everyone concerned would be much happier if more time and general debate could be given to other options. No solution would be perfect.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steinberg: No. It is almost 9.30 pm and other hon. Members are trying to speak.

I do not believe that any solution would be perfect or would satisfy everyone, but all of us should satisfy ourselves that what replaces the old is fair, will better serve our needs and will strengthen the status and accountability of local government and its relationship with central Government. No other country in the civilised world has such a tax, which is not surprising when the disadvantages are considered.

I want to quote an example that sums up the iniquity of the proposed legislation and provides firm evidence of how unjust the Bill is. A recent television programme focused on two young men living in London. One worked in the City as a dealer in securities, and earned £100,000 a year. He lived in a new luxury flat valued at £150,000. His poll tax would be £674. The other man also worked in the City, but as a shop assistant. He earned £8,000 a year and lived with his wife and baby in a one-bedroomed council flat. He and his wife would pay a total of £1,348. He would have to pay it all, because where will a mother looking after a baby find £674? The first young man would have to find 0·674 per cent. of his income for the poll tax. The second would pay 16·85 per cent.—exactly 25 times as much. That is surely evidence of the iniquity of the Bill.

The poll tax will be costly to administer, complicated, impractical, centralist and, most importantly, unjust.

9.31 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I understand that we have had a maiden speech. Unfortunately, I did not hear it and I apologise to the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) for that. However, I assure him that my hon. Friends who heard it have commented on its eloquence. They said that it was a good speech, even if they did not necessarily agree with all the sentiments expressed in it. I am told that the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Sir Anthony Kershaw, who was much respected in the House, would certainly have been pleased with the performance of his successor.

The right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) in a way summed up in one sentence the reasons for the opposition to this Bill that exists on both sides of the House. He said that the poor will be poorer and the rich richer. That seems to be the theme of the Bill—to them that have, it shall be given.

The performance of the Secretary of State when presenting the Bill was remarkable by any parliamentary standard. I heard some parts of his speech. He seemed to spend half of it knocking down propositions that had not been put forward, and half avoiding answering questions that had been put to him. In political terms, never before have I seen a Minister teetering on the window ledge with his enemies trying to pull him back and his friends shouting, "Jump"—and jump he did. He said that, in the name of efficiency, accountability and fairness, he was introducing the Bill. That presented us with a slight problem, because his right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) denounced the Bill on the grounds that it was expensive, ineffective and unfair.

It is not for me to enter into a family row on the Conservative Benches, but the right hon. Member for Henley is another Swansea man, and, as one Swansea man to another, I feel that I should lend him a little support. In fairness, his was not a complete denunciation of everything that the Secretary of State had said. He agreed about one thing — that the Bill would increase accountability. The trouble is that he did not want the accountability that would be increased. The ex-Secretary of State for Defence said that the Government would be held accountable for having introduced the Bill in the first place.

We are grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for a delightful phrase. He described this as a Tory tax, and that is a phrase that we can all use. In the same way the national non-domestic rate, another Tory tax, is an instrument that we can all use and for which at some time we may have cause to be grateful.

The right hon. Member for Henley revealed that, when he was still a friend of the Prime Minister, the poll tax had been rejected by the Cabinet. He said that that happened without argument, as if that would have been a surprise to anybody, because, as far as we understand it, all decisions in the Cabinet are taken without argument.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Williams: Yes, because I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a far better knowledge of what goes on inside the Cabinet than I have.

Mr. Hamilton: The difference between the right hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is that in the Opposition there are arguments without decisions. I hope that in the course of his speech the right hon. Gentleman will come to what the Labour party proposes.

Mr. Williams: Labour party policy will be spelt out in the most minute detail when we need to bring forward a Bill to enact it. We are now talking about the Government's Bill and that which it is intended to replace.

The right hon. Member for Henley has a certain antipathy towards his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister because in the 1970s the Prime Minister said that any tax that replaced rates would have to be based on the ability to pay. The right hon. Member for Henley had the feeling that perhaps the decision to sever any relationship from the ability to pay must be the fault of the Secretary of State. It is unfair of the right hon. Gentleman to hold his colleague guilty, because of the nature of the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. The right hon. Gentleman should realise that there can be no guilt where there is no comprehension.

It was entertaining to watch the manoeuvrings of the right hon. Gentleman. I wish that he were here. Today we had the privilege of sitting in on the launch of his leadership campaign, although, in fairness, he had to try to be even-handed and at the end of his speech put in one paragraph of statutory ranting against the Labour party. The target throughout the rest of his speech was his own Front Bench. I felt sorry for the Secretary of State for Wales, who had to sit there locked into the Bill while his opponent, his challenger, was making his bid. If the Secretary of State for Wales disclaims the Bill, he will lose his Cabinet post and if he disclaims his name on the front of the Tory Reform Group document, he will lose the support of his fellow wets. What a dilemma he faces.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): It is nothing like the dilemma faced by someone for whom four out of five people in the Labour party refused to vote in the election for the shadow Cabinet.

Mr. Williams: It will be interesting to see the support given to the right hon. Gentleman when he puts his name before a ballot. He will face a dilemma tomorrow. I gather that he will open the debate, and I look forward to hearing him speak. It will be a performance of ethical gymnastics of olympian proportions, but, of course, he is the Government's most experienced surviving gymnast.

The Tory Reform Group correctly described the Bill as centralist. The right hon. Member for Henley said that if local government is as bad as the Bill implies and as bad as is implied in what the Tory Reform Group says, the sensible thing might well be to get rid of it altogether. Frankly, we suspect that that is what the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister wish that they could do. Instead, as they cannot, they have consistently eroded and undermined—in 46 Acts and with 344 powers given to central Government — the power of local authorities. They put ministerial diktat in the place of local democracy. They have taken unto themselves the ability to determine the business rate and the level at which councils can spend and the power retrospectively to cap the community charge. It is interesting to note that there is no reverse power in respect of authorities which are negligent or inadequate in their provision.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Williams: I gave up half the time available to respond, so I shall not give way. I normally give way, as the hon. Gentleman appreciates.

It is slightly poetic that we have two Secretaries of State — for Wales and for the Environment — calling upon councils to be more efficient, yet they admit, as the Secretary of State for the Environment made a point of saying, that the tax that they will introduce will be twice as expensive to collect as the rates that it replaces. I dispute that it will be twice as expensive. With an extra 28 million tax accounts, an extra £300 million in tax receipts, the cost of the extra accommodation, staff and computers and the compiling and updating of the register, twice as expensive is a modest estimate, and it is almost certainly an example of the central Government being caught at creative accounting.

Frankly, whether it is twice as expensive does not matter. It does not matter whether it is two, three or four times as expensive. The point made by the right hon. Member for Henley is valid—the real cost of the Bill is not in finance but in the destruction of the sense of fair play. Only this Secretary of State for the Environment could envisage making the poor pay more and the rich pay less as fair play. The manifest unfairness of the Bill will create resentment. It will perpetuate a sense of deprivation.

What does the Secretary of State think will be felt by those who live in the riot areas of the inner cities when they see that they have to pay more yet are told that the people living in Hampstead will pay less? What does the right hon. Gentleman think the effect of the Bill will be in terms of resentment when people in the jobless valley towns of south Wales have to pay more—for example, two and a half times more in the Rhondda — and those in the grassy suburbs of the Vale of Glamorgan and along the coast pay less?

The sense of unfairness is erosive because of what it does to attitudes and standards. Many will say, "If the tax is unfair, it is unfair to try to avoid it." If 3 million people are not on the electoral register, when it does not cost them to register, it is naive to think that fewer names will be on the community charge register when it will cost them to be on it. Even if the figures are the same and only 3 million people are not on the new register it will mean a loss of £500 million in revenue.

The cost is also in the threat to our civil liberties. Compilation of the register is a complex task. The constant updating needed will be nightmarish. The Scots have found that there are about 800,000 changes in the register in a year. But the real threat will be in the measures and actions that the Government will need to take to stop this avoidance. They will have to create a snoopers' army. In Strathclyde nearly 1,000 people are being recruited to register and check. What data will be sacred? The Law Society is worried about personal privacy, whereas the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy is worried about the safety of the people who have to collect the information, and understandably so.

Does the Minister really think that there will be a welcome, a cup of tea and a rock cake for the official who arrives on the doorstep to ask questions about marital status, or to ask, "Does anyone in your family have a serious mental illness? Is anyone in your family in prison? When did you last see your father?" — or, more

[Mr. Williams]

probably, son or daughter—and other items of social chit-chat? How will the Government trace people who move? They will not get very far if, as we have seen in some of the reports, they rely on checking library tickets and, perhaps, fingerprinting pensioners' bus passes.

What central Government and local authority information will be available? If evasion reaches a level of £500 million or £1,000 million, the pressure on the Government to take further action to stop it will be irresistible. Already, in Scotland, they are talking about identification numbers. That is only one step away from the identification card, without which a person is a non-person and is entitled to no services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) pointed out today that the poll tax has been virtually shunned in all other advanced countries. However, I must tell the Secretary of State that there is some support for his position. *The Guardian* of 5 December tells us that the nearest equivalent to the new system is apparently the hut tax, which is used to finance local services in Papua New Guinea and a handful of Polynesian islands. The bad news for the Secretary of State is that they are planning to get rid of it. While Papua New Guinea is stamping out head-hunting the Secretary of State is bringing it in by statute.

If this were just another political wrangle, it would not matter; however, a look at the Order Paper reveals that it is much more than that. The Bill is more than unjust and ill-conceived. It is dangerous, and it should be rejected by both sides of the House.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): We have heard a number of distinguished contributions, but let me mention particularly the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman). I was sorry to miss the first part of his speech, but it was distinguished and robust, and we look forward to many future contributions imbued with the same common sense. My hon. Friend rightly paid a warm tribute to his predecessor, Sir Anthony Kershaw, whose fine record of service to the House is well known. That tribute will have brought pleasure to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The debate about reforming the way in which we pay for local government has now continued for more than 10 years, and some would say for even longer. Our Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", issued in January 1986, brought the debate to a head. The Bill contains a comprehensive package of reforms, which will provide a fairer system of paying for local services—and fairness is what the whole debate is about.

The shortcomings of the present rating system are well known. No one, I think, has advocated that that way of funding local services should remain. The present system needs reforming because it is unfair, unaccountable and complicated; indeed, it is incomprehensible to all but a few experts.

Rates are certainly unfair. What, for example, is fair about a widow just above the benefit level paying exactly the same amount as the family with three or four wage earners living in a similar home next door?

Mr. Marlow: Is not the secret — the proof — the reason that the Labour party is against the Bill—to do with accountability? The problem now is that local government is accountable to local government unions, public sector unions, the people who work for it. What we are going to do is make local government accountable to the people who pay for it, and that is what the Labour party does not like.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Under the present system, there is no proper accountability. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at the beginning of the debate, 35 million people in this country are entitled to vote. Of those, 12 million—just over a third—pay rates directly and in full. A further 3 million pay a proportion of their rate bill——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Chope: I have got 11 minutes only in which to try to reply to some of the points that have been made in debate.

Twenty million people pay nothing at all and in some areas the figures are even more dramatic. For example, in Liverpool, only one voter in four pays rates directly and in full. In Manchester the proportion may be even lower. What has developed is a system in which the majority of the electorate may vote for services for which they do not pay or for which they pay only a small contribution. The opportunities for abuse that are presented by the system have been and are being exploited by the most irresponsible councils. By their actions they are bringing local government into disrepute.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made an eloquent speech to which the House listened intently. My right hon. Friend has said that he would have liked to have been here for the wind-up, but was—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members not to debate from a sedentary position.

Mr. Chope: I recall that when Opposition Members were making their speeches my hon. Friends listened—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—and it is rather a pity that Opposition Members have sought, throughout the debate, to shout down my hon. Friends' speeches.

I remember when my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley was Secretary of State for the Environment because, at that time, I was leader of the London borough of Wandsworth. My right hon. Friend visited Wandsworth to look at the newly privatised street sweeping system. There were ugly scenes of violence and my right hon. Friend was attacked and intimidated. Those actions were certainly supported, if not organised, by the Labour party.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I agree with my right hon. Friend that——

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood) *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I will not give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chope: I agree with my right hon. Friend that the Labour party has a lot to answer for. The blank cheque and the hands-off approach of Opposition Members is——

Dr. Cunningham: Are we responsible for all these Acts I have here?

Mr. Chope: I accept that my right hon. Friend was responsible for some.

I believe that what my right hon. Friend said about Opposition Members' abdication of responsibility was entirely correct. However, I was slightly disappointed with my right hon. Friend's speech. He voted in support of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 I fail to see any major distinction between that measure and this legislation—*[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend argued for the status quo on the ground of expediency rather than of principle. I do not believe that that is an attractive argument.

My right hon. Friend said that he was against the revaluation of non-domestic property despite the fact that the case in its favour is intellectually overwhelming. I am sure that engineering employers and manufacturing industries in those parts of the country that have carried an unfair rates burden for far too long would not be prepared to put up with the status quo supported by my right hon. Friend.

My right hon. Friend says that he fears the consequences for the inner cities—that was echoed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison). My right hon. Friends do not seem to appreciate that, as a result of the reforms in the Bill, there will be a £380 million reduction in the business rate burden in the inner-city areas. In the inner cities there are many single pensioners and one-parent families and they are the very people who will benefit as a result of our reforms. I cannot accept the argument that our proposals will be inimical to the inner cities.

In that regard, the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) suggested that single pensioner households would lose out. He claimed that one third of single pensioner households would be more than £5 per week worse off, but nothing could be further from the truth. Some 137,000 people will be £5 better off per week under the new system.

Mr. Steinberg *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall not give way.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley argued that responsibility for the rating system was confused with the legacy of history and can be ignored. I do not agree with him because when I have talked to individuals I have found that they are extremely discontented with the present rating system. It is not my recollection that right hon. and hon. Friends, during recent rate support grant debates, have expressed contentment with the existing and extremely unpopular system of resource equalisation.

My right hon. Friend dismissed the accountability arguments and put forward his support for rate capping. I recollect that my right hon. Friend introduced legislation in the earlier part of the decade to withdraw grant from councils that were over-spending. That did not work effectively, so rate capping was introduced. The reason why that system did not work effectively was that so few people, relatively speaking, were having to pay full rates. It meant that in the Inner London education authority area about 81 per cent. of rate income was coming from businesses, and that there was no effective restraint on expenditure of the Inner London education authority, which increased expenditure so much that it forfeited all of its grant entitlement. My right hon. Friend's experience should lead him to support the principles of accountability in the Bill.

We should be discussing what we shall replace the present system with. We came close to hearing an alternative from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), which seemed to be based on capital revaluation. Now that the hon. Gentleman has had a chance to see the detailed question to which he referred he may wish to withdraw what he was suggesting to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—that my right hon. Friend had dismissed any idea of considering other proposals. *[Interruption.]* The sentence comes from a parliamentary answer given in July 1986, but the hon. Member for Copeland did not make it clear that he was referring to a parliamentary answer that was given as long ago as that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury put forward his alternative proposals for a banded community charge. He distanced himself from the proposals put forward by CIPFA and suggested that there should be a revised system of banding. The effect of changing the banding so that those on low incomes have to pay less inevitably means that those on higher and moderate incomes will have to pay even more.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) mentioned churches and church halls. He is right that provision for continuing the rating exemption for churches and church halls does not appear on the face of the Bill. I can assure him that that will be put right in Committee.

We have reached the halfway stage of the debate, but it is clear that those who are putting forward alternatives do not have any coherant alternative——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Chope: —that they are prepared to submit to the scrutiny of the House.

My right hon. Friend made it clear early in the debate that the Committee will be delighted to look at any alternative proposals. I am sure that all alternative proposals will be totally unacceptable. They will not deal with the fundamental flaws of the present system with which the Bill seeks to deal.

The new system will be an uncomfortable experience for some local authorities because more people in their areas will be aware that it is their money which is being spent and how it is being spent. No longer will they be able to explain away different bills through the complex grant system or resource equalisation.

Dr. Cunningham *rose*——

Mr. Chope: I shall not give way.

From 1994, the community charge will be the same for everyone where councils spend in line with assessed need. No longer will they be able to be elected on the votes of those who do not have to pick up the bill. No longer will councils be able to use——

Debate adjourned.—[Mr. Boscawen.]

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Comptroller and Auditor General

Mr. Speaker: Before calling the Prime Minister to move the motion on the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General, I should inform the House that I am not able to select the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and many other hon. Members. This is a proceeding in pursuance of an Act of Parliament, and the terms of the motion must be strictly confined to the limited subject matter of the proposed address to Her Majesty. However, the method of the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General is obviously a relevant consideration, and I am prepared to permit debate to range over the subject matter of the amendment as well as the main question.

10 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her Majesty will appoint John Bryant Bourn Esquire, C.B., to the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General.

I begin tonight by endorsing the tribute paid by the right hon. Gentleman the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee in the PAC debate last week to the retiring Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey. He has performed this exacting task with distinction for the past six years, and the House has cause to be grateful to him.

The procedure for the appointment of the new Comptroller and Auditor General is laid down in the National Audit Act 1983. We have followed that procedure minutely, as the House would expect.

The name in the motion before the House, which has the agreement of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), is that of Mr. John Bourn. Mr. Bourn has served in a wide range of posts in the Ministry of Defence and at senior level in the Northern Ireland Office. He is eminently qualified to assume the post of Comptroller and Auditor General, and the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and I have every confidence that he will be a worthy servant of the Committee and of this House.

10.2 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I wish to support the motion on the Order Paper. It is the first time that such a procedure has been used. It is without precedent. The Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee have acted together in bringing to the forefront a person who is to be Comptroller and Auditor General. I pay the same tribute as that paid by the Prime Minister to Sir Gordon Downey. He has been outstanding; I use the word unreservedly. The language of the Public Accounts Committee is rather restrained. When I say that that he was outstanding, it has the full support of all members of the Public Accounts Committee and, of course, the Public Accounts Commission. Sir Gordon had the task of creating the National Audit Office. He organised the transition from the old Exchequer and Audit Department into the National Audit Office and into its present building in Buckingham Palace road. The way in which he has changed that office and the kind of work that it does is a tribute to him and the team that he gathered around him.

The time was when the Exchequer and the Audit Department — the predecessor of the present National Audit Office — consisted of civil servants whose value was only to the work of the Civil Service. Today, some of the accountants and auditors examining the accounts of the Government Departments are directly comparable with those in the private sector—so much so that we are suffering considerable losses as they move out of the National Audit Office and are attracted to private accountancy practices. There has been quite a revolution in the kind of people who have been appointed over the years. Undoubtedly Sir Gordon Downey has earned and deserved our tributes.

The Comptroller and Auditor General is an Officer of this House. That was so right from the beginning and my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) showed by his perseverance how the occupant of the office, who was once responsible to the House of Commons, became responsible to the Government Departments and the Government service over a period of 50 or 70 years. The change came about in the National Audit Act 1983, which was the precursor of this motion.

Mr. John Bourn is a notable person in the Civil Service. I might add that he is a visiting professor at the London School of Economics and has a wide range of interests. He has the background to enable him to understand the work of the Government Departments. I knew that the Comptroller and Auditor General would be going some months before he announced his resignation and I felt it right to ensure that I saw a large number of people and consulted widely both as to names and as to the methods of my consultations.

I saw some very useful and important characters in private practice who would have been excellent. However, the difficulty was that they did not understand what went on in Government Departments. The danger is that we shall appoint people who know something about the private sector but who cannot transfer their knowledge into the public sector. In America there are many inners and outers — people who move easily from outside the Government service into the Government service. We do not have those. I interviewed many people of outstanding ability who could produce splendid analyses of what was wrong, but I felt that not much was likely to be implemented. I was anxious to ensure that any recommendations could be carried through in a reasonable time. We are very short of such people.

I saw not only people from outside the public sector but those who had been in it. There were not many people with the necessary experience at the higher level. On the whole, those with experience in the public sector had been fairly junior when they left the public service.

The work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and his 900 staff is to inquire from within. He needs that ability. He can produce his reports because he has his own staff in the Departments. He produces two kinds of work. The first is certification work to ensure that the money spent on the instructions of the House of Commons is spent in the manner dictated by the House of Commons and that that money goes to the people to whom the House of Commons sends it. That is crucial. We should not underestimate the dangers of fraud and corruption. We take it for granted that we are safe from them, because fortunately we have very little fraud and corruption. However, it can recur, as has happened in other countries, and we should ensure that we remain as vigilant as ever.

Nevertheless, that is becoming rather easier to handle in terms of staff. Computerisation procedures also have made it much easier to handle. Therefore, we are increasingly concerned with value for money exercises.

The Comptroller and Auditor General, acting solely on behalf of Parliament—that is his role today—has an investigatory role, a role in Parliament and a managerial role. Mr. John Bourn has that kind of experience. The Fulton committee understood that there was a shortage of people with such experience, but I think that in John Bourn we have such a person. Like all Officers of the House, he will need our support. I am sure that he will be able to earn that support. I wish him well and believe that he will do his job splendidly and be accountable to the House of Commons. He will make an excellent Comptroller and Auditor General.

10.10 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I am delighted to join the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) in paying tribute to the work of Sir Gordon Downey as Comptroller and Auditor General and to the work of National Audit Office. Its reports are valuable to the House and complement the work of the departmental Select Committees in scrutinising the Executive.

As the House knows, the National Audit Act 1983 empowers the Comptroller and Auditor General to carry out economy, efficiency and effectiveness examinations but not to question the merits of policy decisions. In practice, that distinction is hard to draw. In many cases, major questions of policy inevitably come into an economy, efficiency and effectiveness inquiry. I shall give one example from defence. Collaboration on a weapons system by more than one country reduces unit costs and results in economy. However, one must also take into account the value of independence in procurement; the extent to which compromise in setting a joint specification may be less than ideal for the United Kingdom; the time scale, and the question of interoperability related to the joint defence plans of the countries concerned and so on.

As the House knows, the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General are almost invariably taken up by the Public Accounts Committee, under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. The PAC does splendid work in checking the propriety and value for money of public expenditure. However, the PAC is hard pressed. It examines all areas of Government spending —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask hon. Members not to have private conversations?

Mr. Mates: I apologise to the House if the argument seems arcane. In fact, it is seminal to the work that we all do in this place to try to check on the Executive. While I am sure that it is not the most thrilling of subjects——

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): My hon. Friend should not worry. He is making it interesting.

Mr. Mates: My hon. Friend is kind to say so.

As I was saying, the PAC is hard-pressed. It examines all areas of Government spending. Inevitably, the result is that it cannot give the time to major subjects which those subjects deserve. I mean this as no criticism of the right hon. Gentleman and his Committee but, when, for example, the PAC examined Nimrod it asked only 11 questions about that disastrous programme. Only a fortnight ago—again I do not offer this as a criticism—it dealt at a single sitting with three of the biggest subjects in defence — Trident, torpedoes and warships. Those subjects occupied for many months the Committee that I have the honour of chairing.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I suggest that the hon. Gentleman has no knowledge of the numbers of questions that are asked because not all of the answers that are received are necessarily published in our reports. I must ask him to withdraw the suggestion.

Mr. Mates *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) goes too far down that line, may I draw his attention to what I said at the beginning. The debate concerns the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General and not what has gone on in the PAC.

Mr. Mates: Indeed, Sir, I accept that. However, we are talking also about the next Comptroller and Auditor General, the task that he will face and the possible conflicts that will arise if one cannot make the points that I am trying to make about the PAC, the CAG and the departmental Committees. If the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) or the PAC asked questions in private, which have not been published, I shall of course, withdraw my remarks. However, I do not believe that the Committee went into private session on this matter, so I think that my comments stand because it is all on the public record.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It did.

Mr. Mates: None of this would matter if the PAC were looking only at the propriety of public spending, which is its major function, and had not cast its net wider. The Public Accounts Committee does not have an explicit remit on policy, but all the departmental Committees do. I am the last to want to interfere with the traditional relationship between the Comptroller and Auditor General and the PAC, but when there is an overlap of subjects of inquiry with departmental Select Committees — or, worse, when the PAC reaches a conclusion different from the relevant departmental Select Committee —the only winner will be the Executive, the activities of which all hon. Members have a duty to try to scrutinise. A good and current example of an overlapping inquiry is that into the procurement of DROPS equipment. Those of us on the Defence Committee inquiry in the last Parliament——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is going into too much detail. He must confine himself to the motion on the Order Paper, which is the appointment of the new Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mr. Mates: Mr. Speaker, I accept your ruling, but in discussing the appointment, we are discussing what he will do——

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member cannot have a point of order in the middle of Mr. Speaker's reply to a point of order.

Mr. Mates: I am answering Mr. Speaker's point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman, rather than answer my point of order, should confine himself to the motion.

Mr. Mates: You have called me to order, Sir. I assure the hon. Member for Workington that I am not knocking the PAC; I am trying to suggest, in welcoming the appointment of the new CAG, that he has a potential problem on his hands.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No problem at all.

Mr. Mates: It may not be a problem for the hon. Member, but he and I do not always agree on these matters, and I am as entitled to my view as he is to his.

The departmental Select Committees are relatively new, but the amount and competence of the work they can do is growing. I am putting down the marker tonight because I want to avoid any problems for the new Comptroller and Auditor General as he takes up his office. I am suggesting —I hope you, Mr. Speaker, will think that it is germane to the debate—that one or two problems might arise which the CAG would be advised to read about before he takes up his office. If that is out of order, Mr. Speaker, I accept your ruling.

I am surprised that anyone on the PAC should object to what I say, because we have a common objective to check the Executive. My questions and warnings relate to how we can best do that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Defence Committee does not have a certification function at all, that that is the role of the PAC?

Mr. Mates: I am not trying to suggest that it has. If I give way again to a member of the PAC, I would be happier to give way to the Chairman because he and I know that I am not arguing against him, but I am trying to produce a common argument as to the better way in which the CAG might work with his Department to help all departmental Select Committees. I am serious in this wish.

The current example which highlights the problems is the DROPS inquiry. The Defence Committee in the last Parliament took 1,200 pages of evidence in that inquiry and now, perfectly properly, the Public Accounts Committee has decided to take up the inquiry. The worst of all worlds would be that we should disagree on our examination of the Executive. The Defence Committee has said that, during the PAC inquiry, in which it has indicated it will take some evidence, we will suspend our inquiry.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must look at the motion again and reflect on what I said earlier. We are not debating whether the PAC has competence to deal with his Committee; we are dealing with the appointment of a new CAG. The hon. Gentleman will please confine himself to that.

Mr. Mates: If you want to tell me, Mr. Speaker, that to discuss the particular relationship between the Comptroller and Auditor General and the PAC and the way in which that affects the way other Select Committees work is out of order, then I will resume my seat. The point is——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman only has to look at the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Mates: Surely we should talk about what the Comptroller and Auditor General is going to do. If I am not allowed to talk about what he is going to do, I will end my remarks.

I am trying to make some helpful comments as the Comptroller and Auditor General begins his job and I wish him well. I want to be helpful and perhaps remove problems that would never have been discussed with the appointment of the Comptroller's predecessor because the departmental Select Committees had not gone about their business in the way in which they are acting now. If that is out of order, of course I will stop. I am trying to highlight one or two problems which the Comptroller may wish to address. Surely that is part of the spirit of the debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not a question of the spirit of the debate but of what is on the Order Paper. The hon. Gentleman should confine himself to that.

Mr. Mates: I accept what you say, Mr. Speaker. I will not resume my seat without wishing the new Comptroller and Auditor General well. When the problems arise, I will have to say that I tried to raise them today.

10.21 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Further to the point of order raised earlier, Mr. Speaker. The previous Comptroller and Auditor General made it clear that he believed that it was his role not to give the benefit of his advice to anyone but the PAC, which is not the constraint of the National Audit Act 1983. He gave that as his own view. We were trying to establish that the new Comptroller does not see his view as constrained in that way and that the department Select Committees also have the responsibility of examining the efficiency and economy of their particular Departments——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that would be an admirable subject for a speech on a later occasion.

Mr. Mates: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, the hon. Gentleman has had his time. Mr. Garrett.

Mr. Mates *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Gentleman every opportunity to get in order, but he failed to do so.

10.22 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I am sorry to intrude on what appears to be private grief. I think that we have just witnessed a boundary war between the Select Committee on Defence and the Public Accounts Committee, which could have been settled in some other forum.

I oppose the process by which the selection of the Comptroller and Auditor General is made and I regard the appointment with some disquiet. I have no personal animus against the Comptroller designate and I am willing to believe that he will do an excellent job. However, the arrangements by which he is nominated pay inadequate respect to parliamentary democracy and the enforcement of parliamentary accountability and that issue should concern hon. Members on both sides of the House.

The history of the Comptroller and Auditor General since the establishment of the office in 1866 is one of constant encroachment by the Executive—the Treasury

—until the passing of the National Audit Act 1983 which clearly re-established the Comptroller as an Officer of the House. Credit for that must go to the former right hon. Member for Chelmsford, the former Leader of the House, Lord St. John of Fawsley—I tend to say "Faulty" or "Forley" from time to time, but I believe he is Lord Fawsley. His interest in the issue re-established the Comptroller as an Officer of the House.

The Exchequer and Audit Department Acts of 1966 and 1921 enlarged the scope of audit and referred to the Comptroller and Auditor General as examining the accounts on behalf of the House of Commons. Lloyd George as Chancellor of the Exchequer in April 1912 referred to the Comptroller as

"an Officer of the House, and independent of the Treasury".—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1912; Vol 37, c. 371.]

Between 1866 and 1983, the Treasury exercised ever-increasing power over our state audit system. The Comptroller and Auditor General was nominated by the Treasury, usually from its own ranks. The form of the accounts was prescribed by the Treasury, and, gradually, less than half of Government expenditure was covered by the audit. The Treasury fixed the number and the grades of the auditors at a far lower level of qualification than in other state audit bodies. The Treasury ensured that our audit concentrated on narrow issues of waste, extravagance and proper authorisation, not on the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending.

A supine House of Commons allowed that encroachment to continue year after year. The process culminated in 1978, with a note by the Treasury to the general sub-committee of the Expenditure Committee which observed.

"The CAG's relationship with Parliament derives from the fact that most of his reports are presented to Parliament and he has by long practice established a close relationship with the Public Accounts Committee at which his formal status is that of a witness."

In 100 years, the Comptroller and Auditor General was transformed from an Officer of the House to nothing more than a witness before the Public Accounts Committee. There could be no clearer example of the bureaucracy taking power away from Parliament.

The present Comptroller's predecessor had the effrontery to say to the Public Accounts Committee:

"I think it would not be right . . . for Parliament or anyone else to as it were have the power to distract me from the way in which I and my Department ought to carry out that responsibility"—

for statutory audit. Later, he said:

"The department is independent of all other public departments, including the Treasury, but at the same time it is an important instrument of the Treasury, since it is responsible for ascertaining that their directions relating to expenditure are duly obeyed; thus, the harmonious action and mutual support of two departments are essential to efficient financial administration."

We have moved from a watchdog reporting to the House of Commons to someone who had to move in harmony with the Treasury.

The unsatisfactory nature of that development was made public in 1966 by a great scholar of audit, Dr. E. L. Normanton, who wrote that, in Britain, the powers of Executive direction over our state audit could scarcely be more complete and that they were incomparably more so than in any other Western country.

The 1983 Act put matters right and made it clear that the Comptroller and Auditor General was an Officer of the House. But in getting the Act passed, we lost some battles. Instead of the Comptroller and Auditor General becoming an appointee of the House, we were forced to compromise and agree to the appointment being made by the agreement of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and the Prime Minister. No other state auditor in the Western world is appointed with the veto of the Head of Government. The Comptroller General of the United States is appointed by Congress. In West Germany, the President of State Audit is statutorily independent of the Government.

It is unacceptable that the Prime Minister should have a hand in the appointment of an Officer of the House whose job it is to inquire into the financial management of the Government. We should handle this issue by asking the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee to produce a short-list of applicants who should be examined by the Committee in public. The Committee should then make the appointment, and its Chairman should table a humble address to Her Majesty. It has been said that that would be unsatisfactory because the Government have a majority on the Committee and the Prime Minister would lean on them to promote a favoured candidate. That does not worry me in the least. The present members of the Public Accounts Committee have a fine, fearless record of independence, and I have no doubt that we can trust their judgment. Our amendment, the contents of which you said we could discuss, Mr. Speaker, was an attempt to pave the way towards such a change.

Where do you fit into all this, Mr. Speaker? No doubt you will confirm that Mr. Speaker is the line superior of the Comptroller and Auditor General. For management purposes, the Comptroller and Auditor General reports to you. Were you consulted about the appointment? Where else is a superior manager not consulted on the appointment of someone who reports to him? I certainly think that, under the procedure that I am proposing, there should be informal consultation between the Chairman of the PAC and yourself, Mr. Speaker — or whoever occupies your Chair. You see, Mr. Speaker, I trust the judgment and independence of yourself and future Speakers.

The proposed appointee is a civil servant who has served in the Treasury and the defence procurement executive. Many of the most important inquiries conducted by the National Audit Office that we see are on the subject of weapons procurement. That may place the proposed appointee in a difficult position.

It will be said that there was no other suitable appointment from inside the Civil Service. I do not doubt that. It will be said that there was no other candidate in the whole public service and throughout the public sector. I find that difficult to believe. However, the National Audit Office has 800 or more staff. Why is it not possible to find a successor within that organisation? What other organisation of its size has no succession planning nowadays? I certainly expect the next Comptroller and Auditor General to train up his or her successor, so the PAC has a choice within the Office as well as having to trawl outside it.

The Government resisted the extradition of the National Audit Office from the clutches of the Treasury tooth and nail in 1983. I remember being warned by Treasury Ministers that independent status was most unwise. They said that Her Majesty would not like it because the appointment was in her name. They said that

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the public would disapprove of Parliament acquiring another 800 staff. They used every device they could think of to wreck the 1983 Bill.

It is interesting that if this Comptroller and Auditor General is appointed and we get the reform that we want at the end of his term, it will have taken more than 30 years to regain control of the Office. I have no doubt that we shall do it in the end. To most hon. Members, this matter is technical, peripheral and boring. To some of us, however, it goes to the heart of public accountability. The House must take complete and unfettered control of our state audit arrangements. We should be failing in our duty to settle for less.

10.32 pm

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) has the advantage of having studied the National Audit Office and the functions of the Comptroller and Auditor General for a great many years. But he was unnecessarily harsh about Lord St. John's Bill, which was, after all, a private Member's Bill when it was introduced. I recollect that well, as I was one of its sponsors. It was an attempt to separate the control of the National Audit Office from the Government. In that, it was successful.

Perhaps through some oversight, the hon. Gentleman neglected to mention the Public Accounts Commission, which is charged with the duty of the oversight of the National Audit Office, and, in particular, with the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General as the accounting officer for that body. Without making too many claims about the Public Accounts Commission—I would be the last to do so—I believe that the process by the which the Comptroller and Auditor General has been selected has been entirely right. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the PAC, will correct me if I am wrong in saying that the Government have not interfered in any way in the selection of the new C and A G. Indeed, I believe that the Chairman of the PAC was largely responsible for the selection. If so, that is entirely proper and right. It is right that a leading member of the Opposition should have the function not only of being Chairman of the PAC, but of having a major say in the selection of the C and A G, which is at the fount of this business. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman has carried out that duty with his usual thoroughness and expedition, and I much look forward to meeting Mr. Bourn, as I am sure we shall soon.

I should like to pay tribute to Sir Gordon Downey—I have done so in another context—because he was an admirable Comptroller and Auditor General. As was rightly said, he more than anybody else introduced the functions regarding value for money that many hon. Members might feel were long overdue. We know from the evidence given to the Public Accounts Commission just how far this new direction will go. It is entirely right that the National Audit Office should in future take much more time and give much more attention to value for money in the public service. This is welcome everywhere —not just in the House, but by the Government—no matter how harsh the criticisms may be.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) spoke about the Select Committee on Defence whose work he well knows. From my recollection as a member of the PAC, I know that when we looked at the Sting Ray torpedo we did not think that we were expert enough to pronounce upon this weapon, so we shunted the matter off to the Select Committee on Defence. In due course we got a reply which more or less said that it was a very interesting development. I should say it was interesting! By that time it had cost over £1,000 million and there was not a single torpedo to show for it.

The National Audit Office has an accounting function, but the work of that office and of the C and A G will turn increasingly towards value for money and the effectiveness of the public service. My goodness, there is room for that.

Mr. Mates: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point for me. The difficulty in which we found ourselves when we undertook that inquiry was that we were not privy to the information from the C and A G to which his Committee is privy. That can only mean that we cannot do our jobs as well as we might. That was a warning that I was trying to sound.

Sir Peter Hordern: I do not know about that. I should be very surprised if the Select Committee on Defence did not know about the money that had been expended up to that time. In any event, that does not alter the fact that the range of duties and responsibilities that the new C and A G will encompass will be much more inclined towards value for money. There is a great deal of scope for that in all Government Departments. I am sure that the new C and A G will carry out his task with the help of outside bodies and expert advice from private consultancy firms.

I am sorry that the National Audit Office and the C and A G are not empowered to examine the works of the nationalised industries, because that would be better than pursuing that matter through the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which is appointed and irregulated. We have discussed this matter before, and no doubt we shall come to it again. I am sorry that so far that is not done. As time goes on, the work of the National Audit Office may increasingly turn towards questioning the way in which the Government set about producing public goods and services. Quite rightly, it has moved a long way from accounting in a strictly accounting form for the correctness of the accounts to value for money.

If it is the object, as it must be, to provide free health care for the poorest in the land, is the way in which the National Health Service is conducted at the moment the most efficient way of providing that? I hope that that and similar questions will come within the remit of the C and A G.

I notice that in this financial year the C and A G proposes to have five sessions on the five reports on the Health Service.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order to draw attention to that, but not to go too far on it.

Sir Peter Hordern: I do not propose to do so, Mr. Speaker, and I do not wish to detain the House for a moment longer than is necessary.

This sort of examination is bound to raise considerable issues of principle that may be discussed in the House. Parliament cannot suffer by being better informed on these issues, and I am glad to see that the C and A G is pursuing such a role. The selection of Mr. Bourn with his experience in the Ministry of Defence gives me great encouragement. That is because, of all the Departments of State, possibly the Ministry of Defence requires more supervision than any other Department. Over the last few years a disgraceful amount of money has been spent on some weapons.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): At the risk of instantly becoming the most unpopular Member, I suggest to my hon. Friend that, without a shadow of doubt, the greatest single waste in a defence project has been on Nimrod. The reason we went down the Nimrod——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That would not be a good thing to suggest in the context of this debate.

Sir Peter Hordern: My hon. Friend has a very good point but I have a better one — the one which I

[Sir Peter Hordern]

mentioned. In deference to you, Mr. Speaker, I shall not drag on the debate. But, my goodness, the Ministry of Defence is certainly a Department to examine.

I am glad that Mr. Bourn has been appointed to this task because of his considerable expertise. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) on selecting him.

10.40 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Public expenditure tends to be a boring topic. I am delighted to see the large number of hon. Members present. It gives some hope for the future of public expenditure discussions in the House. I hope that hon. Members realise a point that is fundamental to parliamentary democracy. For 700 years, the power of Parliament has depended on the ability to collect and agree to the expenditure of moneys. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) said that that power had been weakened during the past 100 years. This power is so fundamental that at one time we even had a civil war over the matter of the Supply from Parliament. In addition, we came close — perhaps not close enough — to abolition of the House of Lords in 1910 when expenditure was foremost in the minds of Members of the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister often expresses a cliché about government—it is not the Government's money but the taxpayers' money. Even more accurately, it is not the Government's money; it is secondarily Parliament's money. Until Parliament reasserts its control over that expenditure, we shall be far weaker than we need to be. The year 1866 may be seen as the zenith of our control over expenditure.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Was my hon. Friend here then?

Mr. Allen: I was not here then. But the matter was taken more seriously then than it is now. When the Exchequer and the Audit Department were merged, Gladstone said that that was the last portion of the circle of the control of public expenditure. Since then, there has been constant atrophy in the control of the House of Commons over public expenditure, with the Treasury acting like a jungle encroaching upon a deserted city, gradually reclaiming its territory. The territory is rightfully that of Members of the House of Commons. It is up to us to reassert some control. It was merely a fluke that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South and my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) happened, over a decade, to do the research and work that coincided with the former right hon. Member for Chelmsford winning the parliamentary bingo game with his private Member's Bill which put the National Audit Act 1983 on the statute book. But for that fluke, we would not even have our present nominal control over public expenditure.

A measure of our weakness can be seen when we compare this Parliament's control over expenditure with that of the General Accounting Office in America, which has five times as many staff, employs specialists and offers a career structure. Members of the legislature or a major investigatory committee can refer a matter to it for investigation. For all its gloss and pomp, our Parliament, in relation to public-expenditure scrutiny, is no better than a third-rate banana republic. Parliamentary democracy is but a veneer unless we regain control of Government expenditure.

Yes, we have departmental Select Committees, but they do not meet for six months, they are not elected by the House and they cannot report to the Floor of the House as a matter of course. Yes, Parliament approves expenditure, but, as we saw last week, £47 billion can be nodded through — under a regime that allegedly maintains tight control of public expenditure—without any debate whatever. Yes, we have a parliamentary audit system, but half of public expenditure is exempt from that system, and the Audit Office is constitutionally and technically divorced from Parliament.

The Comptroller and Auditor General — the senior financial Officer of the House—is subject to the veto of the Executive, and that cannot be healthy for our democracy. Parliament should not and does not, make any claim to govern the country, but unless it claims to hold to account those who do it has no major role in our democracy. If that role is to be fulfilled effectively, the Comptroller and Auditor General must be seen to be wholly constitutionally independent of the Executive.

At a time when the two most notorious breaches of financial accountability are the Zircon affair and the Chevaline project, it is hardly fitting that the appointment of the former chief civil servant of the defence procurement staff can be put to the House and nodded through without so much as a biography being circulated to the Public Accounts Committee, or to ordinary Members of the House. Whatever the Prime Minister's involvement, for her to retain a veto on the appointment of the House's most senior financial servant is unacceptable, if Parliament is indeed to remain independent. I would gladly offer the right hon. Lady the chance to say that this is the last time that the Executive will have a say in the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General, if she were prepared to give the House such an assurance. I fear, however, that she is not.

Finally, let me say that I am sorry that we did not have a chance to speak to the amendment. If it had been selected, I would have hoped to divide the House. However, out of respect for my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, and the representations made to me, I shall not do so. I extend every good wish to the new incumbent of the post of Comptroller and Auditor General. However, it will be up to the House, and to members of the Public Accounts Committee, to ensure that he is equal to the great honour that the House has bestowed on him.

10.47 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Complaints by some Labour Members that this is an example of the Executive appointing the new Comptroller and Auditor General are manifestly ill founded. The very fact that the motion is before the House tonight, and that it is supported by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee—the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon)—shows that it is at the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion, a suggestion with which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed.

Furthermore, it is not the case that the Comptroller and Auditor General can be appointed either by my right hon. Friend or by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne. On the contrary, he can be appointed by the House,

and by the House alone. Hence, it is pure humbug for the Opposition to assert that here is another example of the Executive seizing power from the House.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: No, I will not.

I detect that the House would like to come to a decision on this matter. It is perfectly right and proper that it is to this House alone that the Comptroller and Auditor General is accountable and that the House should appoint him. I join the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in supporting the motion.

10.49 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I promise the House that I shall be brief.

Twenty-five years ago last month the House appointed me to the Public Accounts Committee and for five years I served under Lord Wilson, Douglas Houghton, and John Boyd-Carpenter. I am grateful to all three Chairmen, and not least to Sir Edmund Compton, then Comptroller and Auditor General, who was an expert in tutoring young Members in the ways of Whitehall. I am deeply grateful for that experience.

On 7 December 1987 — given that experience — I asked the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), answering for the Public Accounts Commission,

"what criteria the commission uses in appointing an accounting officer for the National Audit Office under section 4 of the National Audit Act 1983."

I had warned the hon. Gentleman of the question and he gave me a long, courteous and considered reply that I will not inflict upon the House. In a supplementary question, I asked whether the Public Accounts Commission agreed that the successor to Sir Gordon Downey as Comptroller and Auditor General should help Parliament to scrutinise the £1,000 million budget of the security and intelligence services.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): That is a good idea.

Mr. Dalyell: It might be helpful if I say that it is not my idea—the stable from which ideas come is often rather important—it is the idea of the outgoing Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey. It was reported in the serious press that he would like to offer his help for the "scrutiny" of the "£1,000 million budget"—those are his words—of the security and intelligence services.

In reply, the hon. Member for Horsham said:

"That is not a matter for the Public Accounts Commission. The hon. Gentleman may, however, wish to pursue his inquiry with his right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 15-16.]

I do not normally write formal letters to my parliamentary friend of many years, but I have done so on this occasion to ask for his opinion.

This is also the opportunity to ask someone else's view—an important one—the view of the Prime Minister. Would the Prime Minister care to reflect—such things should not be answered off the top of the head—on Sir Gordon Downey's suggestion? Does she have any sympathy with the idea that Sir Gordon, or his successor, should offer their services to scrutinise the security and intelligence services?

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would appear that the hon. Gentleman is beginning to veer away from your strict instructions——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Please allow the Chair to decide on that.

Mr. Dalyell: I will not, on purpose, deal with any contentious matters, and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury—a former Minister at the Ministry of Defence—will be relieved to know that I will not mention any of the things that he might expect me to mention.

I ask the Prime Minister for her view—she may wish to put it in writing or make a statement at some convenient time—on the serious question posed by the outgoing Comptroller and Auditor General. We know that he does not make such remarks or gestures without thinking about them. He believes that the £1,000 million budget of the security and intelligence services should be scrutinised. On such an evening as this it is legitimate to ask for the Prime Minister's view. I will leave it at that, without being contentious.

10.54 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): In common with other hon. Members who have spoken, I should like to begin by wishing the retiring Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir Gordon Downey, well. He is a distinguished civil servant and, as our Comptroller and Auditor General, a distinguished Officer of the House. In welcoming his successor, Mr. John Bryant Bourn, to what will be his new post, the House will want to emphasise the distinction between a civil servant and an Officer of the House. The Comptroller and Auditor General is our official, and we expect him to operate independently of the Executive, especially of the Treasury.

The partnership between the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee is linked with an all-party Committee of the House, which prides itself on the unanimity that backs its reports. The independence of the Executive and procedure by consent sit here alongside each other; they are necessary partners. Without independence from Government — publicly perceived independence from Government—the Public Accounts Committee could not scrutinise the Administration with complete and unquestioned integrity.

Alongside that point sits a less obvious one: without all-party consent, the authority of the Public Accounts Committee's conclusions would be devalued. The material under consideration would be less than the weighty and considered view of the Committee.

There is the quite distinct issue of getting the Government to respond to the Public Accounts Committee's conclusions, and that is a matter of controversy. However, it does not undermine the importance of having a Public Accounts Committee that can provide Parliament with a detailed, thorough, factual basis for our controversies in these matters. It is important in the Committee's investigation and certification work — the recent investigation into the Property Services Agency is a good example of that—and it is even more important in the Committee's consideration of value for money in sectors such as defence procurement and public investment in Northern Ireland.

Recurring issues such as the evasion of vehicle excise duty, which we discussed in the House recently, throw light

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on a completely different aspect of the Committee's work. Whereas it is for the Committee to discover a state of affairs, it is for Government to respond and for the Committee to reply if the Government response does not meet the point.

For all those reasons, the independence of the office of Comptroller and Auditor General is important to the House. That importance lies behind the amendment tabled by my hon. Friends. The House has regard and respect for my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) in his work as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I know that he will take careful note of the amendment and the sentiment that lies behind it.

At some later stage, after further consideration has been given to these matters, perhaps an opportunity will be found to give the House a chance to consider the issues involved in changing the method of appointment. For the parliamentary Opposition, the key principle is independence of the Executive. I think that that would be the point of view of all parliamentary Oppositions. The Labour party intends to give effect to this principle when in government. We shall seek to change the method of appointment so that there is no ambiguity between the role of the Executive and that of the House.

Having made that statement of principle and commitment, I make it clear that my remarks are directed at the principle alone. To Mr. John Bryant Bourn I extend a warm welcome to his new job and assure him of our whole-hearted support as he investigates the Government.

10.57 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I join hon. Members in paying tribute to Sir Gordon Downey. Everybody agrees that he has been outstanding in his job. The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) referred to one Comptroller and Auditor General who had described himself as "an instrument of the Treasury." That description certainly could not be applied to Sir Gordon Downey.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) for his remarks about Mr. Bourn, who I am sure will be an extremely worthy successor.

Many of the comments that have been made concerned the procedure for the appointment. The procedure is new. It is the first time that the appointment will be made in this way. As the hon. Member for Norwich, South said, the procedure stems from the National Audit Act 1983, in which he played a considerable part.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South referred to the history of the Comptroller and Auditor General as one of continuous encroachment by the Executive — the Treasury — on his empire. Even the hon. Member for Norwich, South would have to concede that 1983 was a break point and a step forward. The legislation underlined the independence of the Comptroller and Auditor General and provided for Parliament and Government to have a say in his appointment. The arrangements that are being criticised now are different from those that applied in the past — for example, when Sir Douglas Henley was appointed in 1976, it was purely a Government decision. The arrangements that have been criticised are not what the hon. Gentleman argued for at the time, but they received something of a welcome from Lord Barnett at the time. He acknowledged that an improvement had been made and thanked the Chief Secretary to the Treasury "for recognising and implementing in his new clause, broadly what I should like to see." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee C*, 9 March 1983; c. 61.]

He accepted and welcomed that arrangement at the time.

The new arrangements provide for the House to be involved in two ways. First, an obligation is written into the legislation for the Government to consult the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) confirmed that that happened. Secondly, there is the procedure for the motion for an address to be moved by the Prime Minister in the House. This is the first time that the new procedures have been used. We believe that they represent an improvement. They represent the joint and legitimate interest of Parliament and the Executive in the decision and in the address to Her Majesty.

Mr. Dalyell: I appreciate that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is in no position to give an answer to my question about scrutiny of the intelligence and security services, but are the Government at least prepared to consider the matter? I emphasise that the suggestion comes from the outgoing Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mr. Lamont: Accountability for the security services was fully explained on 19 January by the former Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission in response to a question from the hon. Gentleman. The former Chairman said:

"The duties of the Comptroller and Auditor General in regard to the security services are covered by long-standing arrangements that were endorsed by the Public Accounts Committee. Expenditure on the secret service is accounted for by the Cabinet Office. The Comptroller and Auditor General does not examine the records relating to this expenditure, but, instead, receives personal certificates from the responsible Ministers of the Crown to the effect that the payments were properly made from the secret Vote in the public interest. He then certifies the Appropriation Account to this effect. If there is other expenditure on intelligence and security services that might be borne in other Votes, they will then be subject to full audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General." — [*Official Report*, 19 January 1987; Vol. 108, c. 593.]

That is the procedure, and it is long-established.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall not add to that. I have responded as fully as the hon. Gentleman could reasonably expect.

I was making the point that the procedure is for shared responsibility. Contrary to what was argued by the hon. Members for Norwich, South and for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), it is right that it should be a shared responsibility. Government and Parliament have a shared interest in value for money. That is the first point. The second point is the Comptroller and Auditor General's unique access to Government papers. The third point is the Comptroller and auditor General's independence. Hon. Members have referred to his independence from the Executive, but we must also consider his independence from Parliament. It is not appropriate that the Comptroller and Auditor General should be directed, either by the Executive or by the House. The Comptroller and Auditor General enjoys a high degree of independence because of the professional task that he has to undertake.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister concede that the Comptroller and Auditor General is an Officer of the

House—in name, at least—and therefore that it would be logical for the House to appoint him? Does the Minister agree that since 1983 any fears that the Government—especially the Treasury—had about the National Audit Office have been allayed by its operation in the intervening years and that the watchdog veto that the Government now have could easily be relinquished so that Parliament could appoint its most senior financial officer itself.

Mr. Lamont: I agree that fears have been allayed. However, I stick to my point that the Government have a legitimate interest.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What is it?

Mr. Lamont: I have already outlined the three reasons. I stick to my point that it is extremely important that the Comptroller should enjoy a high degree of independence. That is embodied in the existing arrangements under which he operates. He is subject to certain financial controls by Parliament but not to Parliament's operational control. The Comptroller determines the National Audit Office examinations to be carried out, and their extent and content are for him to determine. It is because of his independence that his salary is paid directly from the Consolidated Fund without the annual approval of Parliament. It is to underline his independence that he appoints his own staff. It is for the same reason that he can be removed from office only by Her Majesty the Queen on an Address from both Houses of Parliament. All those arrangements are designed to emphasise his independence not only from the Executive but from parliamentary direction.

Sir Peter Hordern: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the estimates of the National Audit Office have to be approved by the Public Accounts Commission and that that gives an element of parliamentary control?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will recall that I said that the Comptroller was subject to a degree of financial control by the House of Commons, but not to operational control.

Mr. John Garrett: We shall scrutinise the right hon. Gentleman's words very carefully tomorrow. Is he making up policy as he goes along? What he has just said takes us back to before the 1983 Act. He now claims that the Executive has a legitimate interest in appointing an Officer of the House whose job it is to examine the financial management of Government Departments. That is outrageous.

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting what I said. In no way do we wish to turn the clock back to before 1983. I went out of my way to welcome the 1983 Act, and to say that it was a step forward. All that I would say is that the Government have the same interest in value for money as the House. There is also the legitimate question of the independence of the Comptroller and Auditor General. That is the key point and that is why the responsibility has to be shared.

The procedure ensures that no candidate can be appointed who is not acceptable both to the House and to the Government and helps to secure the independence crucial to the discharge of this very high office. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 178, Noes 9.

Division No. [redacted] **[11.10 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Day, Stephen
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Galbraith, Samuel
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haynes, Frank
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McFall, John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Paul
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret	Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*	Watts, John
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*	Wheeler, John
Thorne, Neil	Whitney, Ray
Thurnham, Peter	Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*	Wiggin, Jerry
Tredinnick, David	Wilshire, David
Trippier, David	Wood, Timothy
Twinn, Dr Ian	Yeo, Tim
Waddington, Rt Hon David	
Wakeham, Rt Hon John	Tellers for the Ayes:
Wallace, James	Mr. David Lightbown and
Waller, Gary	Mr. Richard Ryder.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Parry, Robert
Allen, Graham	Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Cohen, Harry	
Fyfe, Mrs Maria	Tellers for the Noes:
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*	Mr. Dennis Skinner and
McAllion, John	Mr. Ian McCartney.
Nellist, Dave	

Question accordingly agreed to.

OFFICE COSTS ALLOWANCE (SPECIAL CASE)

Resolved,

That, in the opinion of this House, the Resolution of 21st July 1987 (Office Costs etc. Allowances) should have effect in relation to Mr. David Blunkett as if the limit on the office costs allowance specified in that Resolution for any year were increased by 50 per cent.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

LIAISON COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put,

That Sir Antony Buck, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Frank Field, Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Terence L. Higgins, Mr. David Howell, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Ron Leighton, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Michael Mates, Sir Hugh Rossi, Mr. Robert Sheldon, Mr. Nigel Spearing, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Kenneth Warren, Mr. John Wheeler and Mr. Jerry Wiggin be members of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Speaker: Objection taken.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you can help the House. The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), having said in the debate that he would vote for the appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General in the division, voted against it. As he is spokesman on the Opposition Front Bench, I wonder whether he will be sitting on the Front Bench tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: It is patently not a matter for me; I have no idea how people vote.

PETITIONS

Rating Reform

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I beg leave to present a petition from Nottingham residents, showing the effects of the proposed poll tax upon the people of Nottingham. It will be unfair, expensive, inefficient, divisive and damaging; therefore they are asking that the House rejects the proposals to impose a poll tax upon the people of Nottingham and Britain.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of the provost, councillors and 2,464 citizens of the constituency of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. The petition shows

that the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act provides for the introduction in Scotland of the system of community charge or poll tax, which will impose upon the people of Scotland the system of local taxation which will take no account of the ability of the citizens to afford such taxation and will cause hardship to many who are already poor.

In my constituency, a household of three adults will pay £254 more per year and a household of four adults will pay £519 more per year. The community charge or poll tax will cause the redistribution of resources away from poor areas into areas which are already prosperous. It will be expensive to operate and its collection will entail invasions of privacy and the allocation to each adult Scot of a personal computer identification number.

This week, three leading churchmen have declared against the poll tax: Archbishop Thomas Winning, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow; Bishop Derek Rawcliffe, the Episcopalian Bishop of Glasgow; and the Rev. Maxwell Craig, the Convenor of the Church of Scotland church and nation committee. The petition ends:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I am pleased to present a petition of the constituents of Govan on the introduction of the community charge and poll tax in Scotland, imposing as they do on the people of Scotland a system of taxation which is unfair, will discriminate against the poor in favour of the better-off, and in its implications and operations has serious implications for personal privacy. My constituents therefore protest against the implementation of this tax in Scotland and end the petition by stating:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House will repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Pension Books

11.24 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I am pleased to bring to the House two petitions that have been organised separately by two Dundee pensioners, Mrs. McDonald and Mrs. Grieg, which between them contain more than 1,100 signatures of pensioners and citizens in Dundee, including the Lord Provost of the city of Dundee.

The petitions arose as a result of a front page article in a Scottish newspaper, the *Sunday Post*. The Petitioners ask that this House ensures that

> The Government does not force pensioners to switch from pension books to plastic cards to cash their pensions.

They further ask that the Government

> guarantees to pensioners the choice . . . to cash their pensions through their pension books at post and sub-post offices.

I am grateful to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security for giving an immediate assurance that the Government have no intention of doing any such thing. However, it is important to recognise the work that has been carried out by those two ladies in Dundee in organising the petitions that have been presented to the House, and it is also important that this becomes a matter of record. If the Government should consider such a step in future the proposal will meet fierce resistance in Dundee and across the United Kingdom.

To lie upon the Table.

Pearson Report

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

11.26 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I am grateful to have this opportunity to argue the case for updating the recommendations in the Pearson report of 1978 on civil liability and compensation for personal injury.

Almost every week we read of somebody being awarded damages against a surgeon, doctor or anaesthetist because of some physical or mental disability that they have suffered through professional negligence. Sometimes the cause has been a failure to recognise the correct symptoms of what was wrong and in other cases the treatment has been seriously defective. In many of the cases, a disability has been created, too often of a kind that will last as long as the person lives, with all the attendant difficulties for those who will look after them, including the mental anguish of seeing the person that one loves changed from a normal human being into an invalid requiring constant attention. Such a person is bound to impose a physical and psychological burden as a result of the unknown suffering endured by the victim.

I think that some actual cases will illustrate more effectively than any words of mine exactly what I am talking about. A woman gave birth to a brain-damaged baby after delays in treatment and after hospital staff failed to move her quickly enough from a private room to a delivery suite. The health authority involved paid half the £600,000 damages. A boy of nine who had swollen eyes, headaches and sickness was not properly examined and went blind. Two simple tests might have alerted the doctors, but they were not undertaken. The boy received nearly £120,000 in damages. A woman aged 49 had both breasts removed following a wrong diagnosis and she received £98,000. In June this year, Samir Aboul Hosin —described as a brilliant student—received £1,032,000 because he had a cyst removed from his brain when he was 18 and suffered brain damage during post-operative care. He is now said to be like a zombie and he is still only 23 years old.

Those are just four examples of recent cases of medical negligence. In them, as in so many other cases, two factors are common. First, the time that they take to be resolved is similar. On average, this kind of litigation takes five or six years. Secondly, they are similar with regard to the sums awarded in damages and to cover the legal costs. Those seeking damages have to be prepared to pay out huge sums to cover their legal expenses, and the defence organisations that protect the interests of doctors are gradually pushing up their subscriptions to meet the costs of the defence and to pay whatever award may be made in the event of negligence being proved.

In a recent case involving a young girl who suffered a brain injury, damages of £550,000, including costs, were awarded to the plaintiff. But the family was still left owing £65,000 for other expenses incurred. Suing in suspected cases of medical negligence can be undertaken only by those who are very well-off or on legal aid. For the rest of us, it is too expensive to contemplate, unless we are absolutely convinced that there has been professional negligence.

In consequence, many claims are never made, and no redress is provided for the would-be claimants, although

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

they are the victims of medical accidents, if not negligence. It was for that reason more than any other that the British Medical Association set up its working party to consider an alternative compensation scheme to the current one. Of course, I agree that simply because someone is the victim of a medical accident does not mean that his misfortunes were the result of negligence, but should that automatically deprive him of compensation?

By definition, hospitals are places where sepsis and infection abound, but if someone contracts septicaemia, do we describe that as a natural hazard? By the same token, if someone has serious side effects from a drug, is that just bad luck and unavoidable? Whether it be septicaemia or a drug side effect, the probability is that the patient will be hospitalised, perhaps for weeks, as happened in my case.

That causes support difficulties for the family of the patient and, much more important, if the patient is self-employed, it could mean his or her business going bust. Yet no compensation is available and hospitals will seldom, if ever, admit to a mistake. To do so might make them liable, and the defence bodies urge their members to say nothing on the issue of legal liability.

What was described to me by a patient as a wall of silence exists between the victim and the hospital—a wall of silence that can be broken down only by lawyers and, occasionally, by a Member of Parliament. No wonder that the body which calls itself Action for Victims of Medical Accidents is handling an increasing number of cases. Most people simply want to know what happened to them. Action for Victims of Medical Accidents estimates that 60 per cent. of the cases brought to it fall into that category — not a search for financial compensation, but the desire for a simple explanation of what went wrong.

Some people believe, mistakenly, that the National Health Service Ombudsman has a role to play in this area. Sadly, he is not allowed to investigate clinical complaints. Therefore, either the victim goes to law, or he puts up with what has happened. Such a system lacks equity. Because of that, and because of the time that litigation takes and its expense, the rising cost of defence subscriptions and now the size of damage awards, many professional bodies are querying the findings of the 1978 Royal Commission, and especially the way in which it brushed aside the no-fault compensation schemes which existed in New Zealand and Sweden.

I admit that, at the time, such schemes were in their infancy, and perhaps critical scepticism was the proper reaction. But nine years on, considering the Swedish system especially, one is bound to ask whether something similar would not be worth considering here.

I have not taken the time of the House to advocate any system to replace the present regime. The National Health Service is different from the health services in New Zealand and in Sweden. I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to recognise that my comments have the support of the British Medical Association, the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales, Action for Victims of Medical Accidents, the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales, the Medical Defence Union and may thousands of patients who have suffered medical accidents.

There are hon. Members on all sides of the House who believe, as I do, that a new look at Pearson, and the issues covered by his report, is now required—some form of fully comprehensive inquiry into the thorny and complex subject of medical compensation.

I recognise that a simple no-fault compensation scheme which contained no element of inquiry into the skill and ability of the medical staff involved would be defective. There must be a disciplinary body to judge professional standards, as happens with both the New Zealand and the Swedish schemes. By the same token, there are those who consider that the compensation offered them by whatever compensation authority might be set up must still retain the right to sue for negligence, although I suspect that the legal costs will be a considerable disincentive.

Perhaps I should strike a note of caution. I am told that one third of those who have sought financial compensation under the Swedish scheme have been refused. That only goes to show that a strict definition of what is a medical accident needs to be spelt out, and underlines the difficulty of defining those words.

If we leave matters where they are now, nobody doubts that subscriptions to medical defence bodies will increase, simply because more claims are being made, legal costs are rising and damage awards are increasing. As I have said, we have already broken through the £1 million barrier for damages. That in turn is likely to lead towards defensive medicine, as practised in the United States, simply because doctors will seek to protect themselves against the charge of negligence.

All this increased expenditure, including legal aid, falls on the general public. The doctor's subscriptions are part of his salary and are tax-deductable. The damages paid by health authorities come from public funds. The net result is that medical negligence is costing the taxpayer somewhere between £100 million and £150 million per annum, and the figure is rising.

I suggest that this matter is now reaching proportions where it is reasonable to suggest, as I am doing tonight, that a working party should be convened to reconsider the recommendations in the Pearson report. Nine years have elapsed since the report was published and, as I have shown, the situation has changed for the worse, both in the cost of medical negligence and in the fact that so many victims of medical accidents carry their scars to the grave, with no hope or possibility of financial compensation.

I do not believe that that should continue, and I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to consider setting up an inquiry with the following terms of reference: to consider the effectiveness of the present method for compensating those who are the victims of medical negligence and to make recommendations for improving the present system by introducing a form of compensation which would be available to all victims of medical accidents.

11.37 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on his success in the ballot and on addressing this very difficult and thorny subject, as he described it, which I know is of pressing interest to patients generally, whose interests my hon. Friend represents with such dedication, and to the medical profession as a whole. He referred properly and vividly to some poignant cases, the consequence of medical negligence. The fact that these cases exist is common ground.

The Pearson commission carefully considered the case for alternative methods of compensating those who suffer medical accidents. Two of its recommendations were to the effect that, with one exception, the basis of liability in tort for medical injuries should continue to be negligence and that a no-fault scheme for medical accidents should not be introduced. The report also said that the progress of the two different no-fault schemes in operation in Sweden and New Zealand, to which my hon. Friend has referred, should be studied and assessed.

These issues have been kept under review, as have the overseas schemes. It is notable that, at the time of the Pearson report, the view of the medical profession, as expressed by the British Medical Association, was firmly opposed to a no-fault scheme on the basis that such a scheme might undermine the independence of the profession, in particular, by obliging doctors and surgeons to defer to their employers, the health authorities. However, for the reasons which my hon. Friend has set out, there has been some shift in the view of the profession since then. It may be helpful first to summarise the arguments considered by the Pearson commission when it decided not to recommend the introduction of a no-fault system for medical accidents.

The commission looked first at the cost of a no-fault system. The costs involved are inherently difficult to assess precisely but, if the scale of the compensation envisaged were to be anything like that applicable when negligence is established under our present scheme, the costs would undoubtedly be high. The commission considered that the second main difficulty in the way of a scheme was, as my hon. Friend has recognised, how to establish causation — what has happened — because it is by no means always possible to identify the cause of an injury. There will frequently be difficulty in distinguishing a medical accident from the natural progression of a disease, or from a possible side effect of treatment. A no-fault scheme might seem to effect an improvement by achieving equal treatment of all parties suffering injury as a result of accident, but in a significant number of cases it would be seen to operate no less unfairly than a fault-based scheme in making a new distinction between accident cases and natural progression cases.

I noted that my hon. Friend said that the Swedish experience seemed to call for a precise definition of what is meant by medical accident. But these definitions inevitably give rise to comparison and distinction. I remember in the old cases of the Workmen's Compensation Acts, which were introduced in the 1920s precisely for this reason, seven or eight volumes of Butterworth's "Workmen's Compensation Law Reports" were filled mostly with cases that sought to distinguish different definitions of what was meant by "in the course of employment". So I take my hon. Friend's point, but I am afraid that definitions do not necessarily mean that one dispenses with subsequent litigation.

The Pearson commission noted in its review of foreign practice that the Swedish experience at that time was that one claim failed for every two that succeeded. High cost has always been an important factor in the operation of the New Zealand no-fault accident compensation scheme. That scheme, which came into force in 1974, provides rehabilitation and income-related benefits — financed largely by levies on employers, the self-employed and owners of motor cars — for disabilities resulting from accidents. It is not limited to medical injuries, but covers all accidents. The New Zealand Law Commission has recently referred to

"unexpected and considerable increases of costs in real terms".

The scheme applies only to disabilities that are the result of accident, yet the very definition of that term appears to have caused frequent litigation about its application in particular cases. Disabilities caused by accidents in New Zealand in the course of medical, surgical and dental procedures are expressly included within the definition of personal injury by accident, but compensation is generally refused when the disability results from the known risks of the particular medical procedure in question. To many patients, however, such disabilities must be seen to be no less the product of an accident.

The Swedish scheme is a voluntary one operated by a consortium of insurance companies under an agreement with the health care authorities and health professions, which pay the premiums. The scheme does not compensate for injuries which are the normal outcome of a disease. There is no compensation for injuries that are unavoidable complications of treatment selected for proper medical reasons, unless it can be shown that the patient could have been treated effectively in another way. Notably, the average level of awards is just over £2,000.

Perhaps I may now revert to the current position in the United Kingdom. My hon. Friend commented on the difficulties that a potential plaintiff can face in seeking to put forward a claim for compensation. He referred in particular to the problems of delay and expense. They are indeed real. As he will know, an investigation of what can be done about these matters has been undertaken. In February 1985, the civil justice review was set up to examine possible improvements in the machinery of civil justice and, in particular, to reduce delay, cost and complexity by means of reforms in jurisdiction, procedure and court administration. The review examined arrangements for five classes of civil business, including personal injuries, on which a consultation paper was issued early last year. A report on the review as a whole is due to be put before the Lord Chancellor in the early part of 1988.

My hon. Friend has also highlighted fears, which I am sure are shared by the British Medical Association, that the level of awards of damages in negligence claims following medical accidents may reach the enormous heights now apparently not regarded as unusual in the United States. In this context, he quoted a number of individual cases where particularly high awards were made. It is fair to make two points about this. First, when the effects of inflation are taken into account, the real value of such awards, for example in relation to a patient rendered quadraplaegic, may not have increased greatly in real terms over the last 20 years.

Secondly, the great majority of awards are at a relatively modest level. I noted the valuation of £100 million to £150 million that my hon. Friend said was the cost to the taxpayer under our present arrangements. We find that difficult to reconcile with the evidence available to us. It shows that the compensation arrangements here still have a relatively modest financial effect on the National Health Service. The total compensation paid by the health authorities in 1986-87 amounted to £9·3 million, not all of which related to accidents suffered by patients.

[The Attorney-General]

Even taking into account ancillary costs, including legal aid about which my hon. Friend spoke, it seems that the total cost is probably under £50 million a year.

It is significant that in the United States juries determine the amount of damages awarded in personal injury cases, whereas here the award is almost invariably the reasoned decision of a single judge applying a tariff established by comparable cases. This fulfils the need for justice between one plaintiff and another. Moreover, the United States jury has power to award punitive damages, with the object of penalising the wrongdoer. The power to award punitive damages in this country is, by contrast, very restricted and I have never heard of its application in any personal injury case. It is also relevant that the contingency fee system in America encourages speculative actions and encourages higher awards. Therefore, it is possible to overstate the risk that awards for medical negligence damages in this country may reach the admittedly astronomical figures in the United States that we read about. I do not think that that risk is very high. I appreciate the formidable hurdle that litigation presents to an aggrieved patient. To use my hon. Friend's phrase, there can seem to be a wall of silence. However, I suggest that health authorities and doctors cannot be expected to admit liability without first consulting their legal advisers or, where appropriate, their insurance companies.

My hon. Friend will be aware that under the Act that he inspired in 1985, arrangements are being made to give statutory force to the present informal procedures for complaints about hospital treatment. He will also know about the voluntary system which operates in connection with complaints about strictly clinical matters. In any action for negligence of this kind, the court has power to order the disclosure of documents whether or not they are held by a party to the litigation. In the exercise of this power, the courts have recently emphasised that health authorities and medical practitioners ought to respond readily and promptly to any requests for disclosure, so that unnecessary expense and delay may be avoided. Whether the scope of that power ought to be extended is classic material for the civil justice review.

My hon. Friend said that he and a number of organisations believe that an update of the Pearson report is now required, but we do not believe that that is called for at present. The whole matter of compensation in connection with medical accidents is under review by the Department of Health and Social Security, and discussions are planned between officials and the BMA about a possible pilot scheme for no-fault compensation.

We have to balance the need for fair and sufficient cushioning, to use a neutral word, from the consequences of misfortune against the practicalities of providing money from whatever source. Since the Pearson commission reported, there have been significant improvements in the way in which cases that have to be brought to trial can be processed. The Lord Chancellor has in train the civil justice review, which is looking at the process of civil litigation, including litigation of this kind. The discussions to which I have referred are evidence of the Government's genuine concern about the matters to which my hon. Friend devoted his important speech. In wrestling with these complex issues of great importance to many people, the Government will be much assisted by my hon. Friend's speech and by his continuing and highly informed interest.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 17 December 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL

THE VICE-CHAMBERLAIN OF THE HOUSEHOLD reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address as follows:

I have received your Address praying that John Bryant Bourn Esquire, CB, be appointed to the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General. I will comply with your request.

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *(By Order)*

Considered; to be read the Third time.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered upon Thursday 14 January 1988.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [10 December], That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 14 January 1988.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 14 January 1988.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

1. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of recent discussions in the European Community on the common agricultural policy.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reported to the House on Tuesday 8 December on the outcome of the European Council held in Copenhagen. I regret that final agreement could not be reached there on the issue of agricultural stabilisers, despite the support that had been built up for that approach in negotiations during the autumn. The main issues in these negotiations are now clear. I am, however, ready to make further efforts with my colleagues in the Agriculture Council on any issues, such as set-aside, where that Council can contribute to preparing the way for the resumed European Council on 11 and 12 February, and to increasing the chances of agreement there.

Mr. Callaghan: I thank the Minister for that reply. In view of the huge EEC mountains of beef, butter and flour, which are sold to countries outside the EEC at cheap rates or are allowed to rot, is it the intention of the Minister and the Government to see that the old and the needy in this country, and in my constituency in particular, are given free food hampers from that mountain this year?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that it is right to get the surpluses and mountains down. That is the purpose of the discussion on stabilisers and the current discussions, which go wider than that issue.

Agreement has been reached in the Council that individual member states can introduce a free food scheme under the regulations that have been agreed. It is a complex matter. As the hon. Gentleman will know, we introduced a free food scheme last year. There were many criticisms of that scheme. We are now holding urgent discussions with the charitable organisations which participated last year to assess the implications of the regulations that have just been agreed. We were criticised last year for some of the effects of the scheme, which resulted from the haste with which it had to be introduced. Therefore, it is important that we have discussions with the charitable organisations.

Mr. Boswell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that what is required in Europe is a balanced package involving stabilisers, set-aside and other measures, including the welcome environmental developments that my right hon. Friend has pioneered in Europe, and on which he is to be congratulated?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his concluding remarks. I agree that a balance is required — a balance in stabilisers to reduce the surpluses, a balance in proposals to reduce and depreciate the stocks, and, of course, a balance in the other matters to which he referred, such as set-aside and the environmental measures. We have made a good deal of progress,

especially on the set-aside scheme, with which I am very much involved. I hope that we can reach agreement on it early in the new year.

Mr. Geraint Howells: Is the Minister in a position to inform the House of the latest developments regarding the sheepmeat proposals?

Mr. MacGregor: The sheepmeat proposals have not been discussed since the Agriculture Council meeting prior to the European summit. At the moment, therefore, the position is twofold. First, discussions on stabilisers in relation to sheepmeat must be taken up again in the new year, and we shall have to see what happens in relation to the summit meeting on 11 and 12 February. Secondly, there is to be a wider review of the sheepmeat regime, on which we have not yet embarked, at the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting.

Mr. Marland: I know that my right hon. Friend will agree that the main problem with the enormous cost of the CAP is the storing of surpluses. May I urge him, as others have done, to take every possible measure to reduce the enormous amount of food that is in store? If it cannot be given away to hon. Members' constituents, can my right hon. Friend think of some way of disposing of it elsewhere? Surely the object of the CAP is to maintain the rural communities, not to maintain intervention store-keepers.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the objective should be to maintain our efficient agriculture and its contribution to rural communities to ensure that we meet as many of our food requirements as possible, competitively and efficiently, without leading to the problem of surpluses. We can reduce the surpluses in a variety of ways. Indeed, I am glad to say that as a result of some of the measures that have already been taken by the Council of Ministers, the level of intervention stocks for products such as butter, cereals and skimmed-milk powder is coming down substantially. However, we need to take further measures to ensure that they continue to come down and that surpluses are not built up to replace the stocks that we are trying to get rid of.

Dr. David Clark: Will the Minister confirm that under the new free food for the needy scheme the administrative costs of charities can be met out of European Commission funds? Is he really telling the House that needy people in France, Germany and Italy will receive free food, but that those in Britain will not? If that is the case, he is the No. 1 nominee for the Mr. Scrooge of this Christmas.

Mr. MacGregor: It is correct that some administrative costs can be met under the current regulations. However, I am sure the hon. Gentleman will recognise that last year the needy in Britain who benefited from the scheme did so to a much greater extent than those in many other European countries.

However, the problems are substantial. First, there is only about £10 million of food potentially available in this country. Therefore, there are problems in targeting and deciding who should be the beneficiaries. There are many practical problems, such as distribution. There are also problems relating to the way in which we implement the regulations, if we decide to do so. We are urgently exploring these problems with the organisations that were involved with us last time.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend is considering the European common agricultural policy with his European colleagues, will he bear in mind the representations that he has received from the National Farmers Union of Scotland, and especially those from Mr. Ian Grant, the president of the Scottish NFU? Those proposals are not only realistic, because they accept that change is essential and necessary, but seek to ensure that the United Kingdom, and especially the livestock sector in Scotland, receives fair treatment.

Mr. MacGregor: I had some extremely useful discussions with the president of the Scottish NFU when I was in Edinburgh recently. I see him quite regularly and I agree that he is taking a realistic and sensible approach to CAP reforms. Yes, we keep in mind the needs of our livestock sector, and that is why we have been fighting so strongly for the removal of the ceilings proposed by the Commission on headage payments on ewe premiums which would adversely affect our livestock sector in the less-favoured areas.

Dairy Industry

2. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next hopes to meet the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the future of the dairy industry.

Mr. MacGregor: My colleagues and I have regular contacts with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss various issues affecting the dairy industry.

Mr. Jones: The Minister is aware of the concern in Wales at the sale of milk quotas, which adversely affects the balance of the industry in that area and may have an effect on some processing plants. Will the Minister consider representations to introduce regulations to restrict the sale of quota outside specified regions? Will he consider setting up a special quota bank for young entrants into the industry so that they have an opportunity to acquire a quota, which at present is denied to many of them?

Mr. MacGregor: I am aware of producers' concerns about quota transfers, and the position is carefully monitored. However, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that, to date, less than 2 per cent. of quota held by Welsh producers has been transferred out of Wales. The idea of a quota bank has been discussed on a number of occasions, but there are considerable difficulties with it. I do not deny that one of the problems about quota is new entrants into the industry. However, the suggestion of a quota bank has been opposed by most of the industry's organisations that have considered it. As regards the effects on processing plants, it is necessary, when supply and demand are being brought into balance, to realise that there must also be adjustments in the processing industry to reflect that change.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what assurances he gave to the Milk Marketing Board about the future of the small dairy farmer? Will he accept that those farmers play a vital role in the rural communities of this country?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of the small dairy farmer. I have had several discussions with the Milk Marketing Board, but

that matter has not been a topic of recent discussion. However, I assure my hon. Friend that I agree with him on the general point.

Mr. Barry Jones: Small dairy farmers in north-east Wales and in my constituency are worried and are facing difficulties. Those farmers, and not least my constituent Mr. George Blockley, are discontented and upset about the nature of the quota. What will the Minister do to help the small dairy farmer in Wales?

Mr. MacGregor: In the early stages of the quota regime a number of measures were taken to help the small dairy farmer. My clear impression is that the vast majority of dairy farmers want the quota regime to continue and certainly do not want it to be abandoned. The hon. Gentleman will know that in the past two years the incomes of dairy producers have risen quite reasonably.

Mr. Wells: Did my right hon. Friend discuss with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board the problem that has arisen in relation to cheese making in this country? We are facing a shortage, with the result that the consumer, who is rarely considered by the agriculturist, is paying a high price for ordinary English Cheddar cheese.

Mr. MacGregor: I assure my hon. Friend that producers are extremely conscious of the needs of consumers and that marketing and meeting consumers' needs feature prominently in my discussions with farmers. I recognise that there were some difficulties during this year's seasonal trough period—August and September, when milk production drops for natural reasons—in meeting the requirements of cheese producers. We have been in touch with the Milk Marketing Board and the milk industry about that matter and the industry has agreed to changes in the milk supply and pricing arrangements that are aimed at avoiding similar problems next year.

Food (Radioactivity)

3. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the arrangements for protecting the population from food contaminated with radioactivity after a nuclear accident; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) on 30 June, new national plans for dealing with the consequences of any future nuclear accident have been drawn up. My departmental responsibilities have been covered in those plans.

Mr. Ingram: In relation to those new plans, what has the Minister to say about the 39 farms in Scotland which were brought into monitoring in August of this year, but which had not been subject to restrictions for the 16 months after the Chernobyl disaster? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] The reason why I raise this matter is that that news stunned me, and I would hope that it would stun Conservative Members.

Hon. Members: Reading.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It does not help.

Mr. Holt: Well, stop him.

Mr. Speaker: Well, shut up — *[Interruption.]* I apologise.

Mr. Holt: I am grateful for the apology.

Mr. Gummer: I believe that it is perfectly right that we should continue the monitoring. There will be occasions when the monitoring produces examples for which extra restrictions must be provided, but those restrictions are made extremely carefully. They are designed to ensure that the safety limits are high, and we are doing our best to make sure that there is no damage to public health. The public can be wholly reassured by the measures that we take.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Litherland, question 4.

Dr. David Clark *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sorry. We have missed it now.

Butter

4. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much butter was in intervention stores in the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): On 31 October 1987 accepted intervention stocks of butter totalled 184,816 tonnes. On the same date in 1986 the equivalent figure was 258,781 tonnes.

Mr. Litherland: With all this butter in store, will the Minister explain the logic of why we can sell this produce to the Soviet Union at 6p a pound, when my pensioners cannot afford the market price of more than £1 a pound? The stocks sold to the Soviet Union have been subsidised by the taxpayer by 82p in the pound—that does not include storage charges. Is not this economic madness an insult to pensioners and taxpayers?

Mr. Thompson: The sooner we can get rid of these huge stores of butter and other materials, the sooner pensioners will be paying less to keep these huge mountains of food in store. That will directly benefit us all.

Sir John Farr: Can my hon. Friend say whether there will be a more effective scheme for giving surplus butter to pensioners this winter? Last winter the scheme did not work very well. As we have considerable amounts in stock, will my hon. Friend try to improve the scheme so that all pensioners receive their share?

Mr. Thompson: Last year this country spent most of the money that was available in Europe, and this year the limit will be £10 million. If the scheme is taken up, we shall discuss with the charities and other bodies the most cost-effective and efficient scheme by which to distribute the butter. At present, we are discussing the whole scheme.

Surplus Food

5. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest total volume and value in pound sterling of surplus food and drink in the EEC; and what is the cost of storage in pound sterling.

Mr. Gummer: A note on levels of Community intervention stocks is deposited in the Library of the House each month. The latest estimate of the book value of these stocks is about £6·3 billion, and this year it will cost about £900 million to store them.

Mr. Canavan: How can the Minister and his colleagues come to the Dispatch Box and continue to try to justify, month after month, the spending of millions of pounds of public money on the hoarding of food supplies that could be distributed to pensioners and others in need in this country, and could make a contribution to feeding starving people in the Third World? If the Common Market continues obstinately to refuse to scrap the common agricultural policy, is it not time that the British Government took unilateral action to withdraw from such an insane and immoral policy, which is making a mockery of the Christmas message of peace and good will?

Mr. Gummer: Before the hon. Gentleman asks the Government to do that, he should get his own party to support that view. It does not take the view that we should withdraw from the European Community, nor do the Government. The benefits for us, for the rest of Europe and for the world are far too great to withdraw from the Community. The Government have been effective in getting, for the first time, major reductions in the amount of food going into store, especially dairy products, on which, because of actions initiated by the Government, we now have much firmer control on production. We are the leaders in Europe in getting these changes. In addition, we are great supporters of the expansion of aid to the developing world. As the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, Oxfam and other charities say that the need is not for food aid but for extra technical aid and money. We have taken that view also.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the stabilisers policy which he and his colleagues are pursuing in the European Commission is the best approach to reduce the amount of food in storage? It also represents the best policy for farmers, consumers and taxpayers to get the European Community budget into balance.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that that is right, for the simple reason that every country in the developed world has a system for supporting agriculture, both to ensure continuity of food supply and to see that the land is properly looked after. Other countries have more expensive systems than we have. However, we all have the problems of adapting those systems to the new situation of surpluses. For the Opposition to cat-call when we are talking about the livelihood of many millions of our fellow Europeans shows how uninterested they are in the rural economy.

Venison

6. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give an estimate of the amount of venison sold in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: No central records are kept. However, we estimate that about 2,300 tonnes of venison are produced annually in the United Kingdom of which about 1,700 tonnes are exported.

Mr. Galbraith: Does the Minister agree that although only small quantities of venison are consumed in Britain, large tracts of land are designated as deer forests? Does he also agree that these large tracts of land have a deleterious effect on tourism, because access to that land is restricted, especially during the stalking season? Therefore, will he consider reducing the amount of land designated as deer forests and restricting the extent of the stalking season?

Mr. Thompson: No, Sir.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the Minister reconsider the answer that he has just given to my hon. Friend? Does he not recognise that as venison is a low-cholesterol red meat there would be considerable advantage to public health if his Department encouraged its production and consumption? Can he tell the House whether his Department has considered introducing support mechanisms such as those for sheep and beef production?

Mr. Thompson: The first supplementary question went entirely contrary to that and suggested cutting down on the amount of venison that is available. Venison is a useful and low-cholesterol meat. A wide range of grants are available under the agricultural improvement scheme for approved investments in deer enterprises. Grants are also available for certain environmentally beneficial works. Leaflets setting out the eligibility for these grants are available from the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

Fish Farms

7. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions officials of his Department have recently held with local authorities and other interested parties regarding the siting and development of fish farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: There have been no recent discussions involving my Department about the siting of fish farms. However, my officials recently met representatives of the National Farmers Union to discuss the Government's intention to extend water abstraction licensing to all fish farms and we have regular contact with the industry and other interests about a range of issues concerning fish farming.

Mr. Graham: I am sure that the Minister and all hon. Members welcome the growth of fish farms. However, there are two areas of concern—the planning and siting of these farms in places of great scenic beauty, and the pollution of our lochs and rivers. What measures are the Government taking to deal with these matters?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we want to encourage the provision of jobs and the wealth that comes from fish farming. We are concerned to ensure that damage is not done to rivers, which will happen unless we are careful about water abstraction. We are taking such measures as are necessary to keep it under control, but we do not want to control it so strongly that we do not have the expansion that we want. The balance is about right, but we shall keep a very close eye on it.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend's reply to the first question is welcome. Will he ensure that the legislation for fish farmers to have abstraction licences for the use of water in inland waterways is in place before the water authorities are privatised?

Mr. Gummer: Our intention is for the legislation relating to a National Rivers Authority to cover that. I think that that will help my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister agree that the planning and leasing of fish farms around the coast of Scotland

should be removed from the Crown Estate Commissioners, who are charging rates of Rachmanite proportions? Does he agree that that operation should be returned to local authorities?

Mr. Gummer: I do not have any evidence whatsoever of that. It is improper for the hon. Lady to use a phrase such as that about the Crown Estate Commissioners. It is not true, and the hon. Lady's statement is wrong. I have no intention of making any such changes.

Mr. William Ross: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is a huge demand for salmon in Europe, and that the best way to meet that demand is by salmon ranching, especially as there is widespread poaching of salmon beyond the 12-mile limit? Will he take steps to increase salmon ranching and to decrease poaching, especially by boats from the Irish Republic?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that recent legislation has had a major effect on poaching. There have been some extremely good examples of poachers who have been caught and heavily fined as a result of their activities. When we bring in the dealer licensing scheme, which is the next stage of the legislation, that will help considerably. As for further intervention in the salmon industry, I warn the hon. Gentleman that already private businesses have spent considerable sums to extend the provision of salmon and as a result the price of salmon has been remarkably stable over the years. This is one of the best ways to ensure that we get the necessary supplies. We do not want to expand the supplies so that they exceed demand.

Agricultural Stabilisers

8. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on progress made towards the implementation of agricultural stabilisers within the European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: As I mentioned earlier, the European Council considered the Commission's stabiliser proposals at its meeting on 4 and 5 December. Progress was made, particularly on cereals, oilseeds and protein crops, but more is needed if agreement is to be reached on all aspects of the future financing negotiations at the next meeting of the European Council on 11 and 12 February.

Ms. Quin: Can the Minister confirm that the European Commission is considering withdrawing its agricultural stabiliser proposals because of lack of progress? Does the Minister agree that unless decisions are made swiftly on curbing agricultural production, farmers and farm workers will have to operate in a climate of cruel uncertainty and the general public will believe that the problems of surpluses will never be tackled effectively?

Mr. MacGregor: No, I do not think that the proposals on stabilisers will be withdrawn. I think that it is important to build on the progress already made. I entirely agree with the point raised by the hon. Lady on the uncertainty that this creates for farmers and farm workers, which is why I am so keen to reach agreement on stabilisers, not only to remove the uncertainty, but to get the surplus production and the associated subsidies that go with them cleared from the system, so that agriculture can have a more stable future.

Mr. Curry: Will my right hon. Friend exert pressure on the Commission to ensure that no proposals for farm price increases are brought forward in the absence of an agreement on future financing and stabilisers at the European Council?

Mr. MacGregor: We shall have to look at the price review in the normal way, and the Commission will bring forward its proposals for that, as is necessary each year. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important to reach agreement on the stabilisers as quickly as possible, because without them there is a risk of continually increasing surpluses and subsidies, which cannot be in the interests of agriculture. Without that progress, what happens in price reviews is much less important than getting agreement on the new reform.

Milk Quotas

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the European Commission's report on the operation of milk quotas.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Commission's report on the operation of milk quotas is still under discussion. In the present circumstances, however, it is realistic to continue with the quota system.

Mrs. Michie: When the Minister is trying to reduce the surpluses, will he remember that in the less-favoured areas of Scotland, such as Argyll and Bute, milk producers are not contributing to the surpluses or butter mountains, because all milk is used for liquid consumption and making cheese? Does he agree that the loss of creameries that produce Scottish Cheddar would cause a great deal of unemployment?

Mr. Thompson: I would welcome any creameries producing cheese, but I would not welcome creameries producing butter which then went into intervention to add to the mountains. It is with some disappointment that we notice that butter production has increased this year in Scotland. The creameries are an important part of the countryside, and I am sure that both the Scottish and the English Milk Marketing Boards have them in mind.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my hon. Friend include in his response about the operation of milk quotas the fact that milk quotas have made a considerable difference to the dairy industry, in providing security, and have done much to help to establish a secure market for the small dairy farms, which are so vital to the British countryside?

Mr. Thompson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Milk quotas have given to that section of the industry the security for which most other sectors of the industry are looking. The number of people leaving the milk industry has fallen from 2,500 a year before 1983 to 1,300 a year now.

Mr. Tony Banks: To judge from the Minister's stately girth, he has obviously been doing his best to reduce butter mountains on his own. Would he like a bit of assistance? Would he welcome help from some of the pensioners of Newham, for example, if they were allowed to get at the butter mountains that exist in my contituency in Stratford? Does he accept that because of the price of butter, beef and other foods in intervention stores, there is no question of the people who get that food for free going out to buy more? Therefore, it is no argument for the Government to say that giving food away will only cause more food to go into intervention.

Mr. Thompson: It was shown last year when we distributed £60 million worth of free food that it did make a difference in retail outlets. However, I know that the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Newham appreciate the fact that food price inflation is less than inflation generally and has continued to be so. The range of food available to people makes it possible for them to enjoy a balanced diet at a very reasonable price.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that the three diversification grant schemes to be introduced next year will do a great deal to reduce surpluses in this country? Will he consider issuing a statement on the ability of farmers to apply for more than one diversification scheme or to switch between them?

Mr. Thompson: I am sure that farmers and farmers' organisations will be adroit and acute enough to consider all the schemes that they may apply for.

Sheepmeat

10. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, following the latest meeting of the Council of Ministers, he will make a statement as to his policy on sheepmeat.

Mr. MacGregor: My aim in these complex discussions is to avoid discrimination against United Kingdom interests, to achieve fair and affordable support to the sector, including a budgetary stabiliser, and so enable the United Kingdom to capitalise on its natural advantages.

Ms. Armstrong: Does the Minister recognise that if the Commission's proposals were implemented they would have a devastating effect on the incomes, particularly, of upland farmers in my constituency and elsewhere in the country? Will he therefore give the House a categorical assurance that he will not support any of the proposals put forward by the Commission on the sheepmeat regime?

Mr. MacGregor: That is a very wide-ranging question. We might well want to support some of the Commission's proposals. I believe that the hon. Lady has in mind proposals that are particularly discriminatory against the United Kingdom, and we are fighting against them. I have already said that we are endeavouring to remove the proposal for a ceiling on headage limits in the less-favoured areas, which would be discriminatory against some of the farmers about whom she is concerned. We have had some success so far in that. We shall continue to ensure that we receive an outcome to the wider sheepmeat regime that is totally fair to United Kingdom interests.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister acknowledge the importance of the sheepmeat regime to the rural economy, especially in Scotland and in my constituency in the Borders? Will he also acknowledge that it would be helpful if he could give some idea — I know that there are difficulties about this — of the timetable for the budgetary stabilisers to which he referred and the wider review of the sheepmeat regime, so that there can be some stability and framework in the market for the coming months and years?

Mr. MacGregor: I acknowledge that the sheepmeat regime has been helpful, although we also have to acknowledge that its costs are now projected to rise at more than 1 million ecu next year. That is why we have to accept budgetary stabilisers. The stabiliser mechanism for sheepmeat will have to be dealt with on the same timetable as stabilisers as a whole. We shall have to await the outcome of the meeting on 11 and 12 February. A broader review is likely to be discussed later in 1988, so there is a problem about the start of the marketing year. It is clear that those changes cannot now take place before the start of the marketing year.

Fishing Industry

11. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what meetings he has recently had with representatives of the fishing industry; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State and I, since the beginning of September, have had several meetings with representatives of the fishing industry, including earlier this week at the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels, the outcome of which I reported to the House yesterday in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister ever heard of a company called The Barclay Sound Shipping Company, which was awarded a licence to fish in Falklands waters, following the announcement in Parliament in November last year? Is he aware that that company, at the time of that announcement, had never fished anywhere in the world and had no ships at all when it obtained that particularly remunerative licence? Will the Minister find out how it was able to secure that licence to fish in the Falklands exclusion zone?

Mr. MacGregor: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that the management of the Falklands fisheries is the responsibility of the Falkland Islands Government and is not a subject that I discuss with our fishing industry.

Mr. Harris: At the meeting in Brussels, did my right hon. Friend raise with his Spanish counterpart the disgraceful situation in which Spanish boats which are on our register, have used up a large part of our quota for certain species, so preventing, or casting doubt on the ability of Cornish fishermen, to catch those species?

Mr. MacGregor: I recall that my hon. Friend raised this issue in our debate on fisheries. I raised the matter with the Spanish Government and with the whole Council at the recent meeting, and protested at the way in which the control and reporting of some of these fish landings take place. I agree that it is intolerable for the management of our fisheries. I am glad to say that I was supported by a number of other member states and the Commission, and I hope that there will soon be progress on the matter.

Mr. Mans: When my right hon. Friend meets representatives from the fishing industry, will he reassure them that, next year, quotas for fishing, particularly to the west of Scotland, will be smoothed out, and that there will not be a repeat of this year's situation, when quotas were drastically cut in the latter part of the year, causing distress to many fishermen, especially at ports such as Fleetwood?

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom had a very satisfactory outcome from the Fisheries Council, which helped us in a number of respects. With regard to the management of quotas throughout the year, we try to operate a system which enables fishing to be carried out

fairly throughout the year. It depends to a considerable degree on the extent to which fishermen do not overfish at various times of the year.

Mr. Salmond: Can the Minister expand on his comments in today's *Official Report* concerning the 4 deg west line for mackeral quota and the lack of flexibility around it? Why is the Minister so encouraged by the results of the Council of Ministers meeting, when the report contains only a postponement until the end of May?

Mr. MacGregor: I was encouraged because we are making progress. We have made it clear that we think it is important to have that flexibility, which was agreed in the Norwegian agreement. We do not think that undermines the common fisheries policy in any way, but ensures that it is implemented as it was intended. After prolonged negotiations we managed to persuade the Council that this should be the subject of a report by the Commission, and we are committed to taking decisions by the end of May. The hon. Gentleman will know that the problem arises only in the last three months of the year. That gives us time to sort it out.

Mr. Cyril Townend: In his meeting with the industry, did my right hon. Friend discuss the possibility that, in future allocations of North Sea cod quota, special provisions should be made for ports that are primarily dependent on that one species, such as my constituency of Bridlington?

Mr. MacGregor: That did not arise in the Council discussions. It was not part of the new package, but I did manage to obtain an assurance from the Commission that if the scientific assessment changed during the year in relation to cod it would be prepared to look at that and come to the Council with proposals.

Dr. Godman: Does the Minister agree that there are some rough edges to the deal? Given that cod is fetching between £900 and £1,000 per tonne, the cut in the cod quota will harm some of our east coast fishermen. Therefore, will the Minister seek to change that decision, and the Clyde herring decision, in 1988? Are we not to have a regional withdrawal price scheme for herring? On the flexibility agreement for mackeral, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that British fishermen do not lose out to the Danes and others?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that we must take account of the scientific advice on cod. The agreed quota has gone up from the proposal of 148,000 tonnes to 160,000 tonnes, and it is important that we have that in mind for the future conservation of the fishery. However, as I said earlier, we have reached an agreement that the Commission will come forward with further proposals if the scientific assessment in May proves favourable so that that particular TAC can be raised. In view of the time, perhaps I may correspond with the hon. Gentleman on the other matters.

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet (Collective Responsibility)

Q1. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to change the operation of Cabinet collective responsibility; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): No, Sir.

Mr. Allen: Since not even one member of the Cabinet will oppose the Prime Minister on her heartless policies towards the National Health Service, and nor will one stand up and fight for Britain on the flat rate poll tax, now appropriately christened the "Tory tax" — [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."]

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the last Prime Minister's Question Time before the recess, so it is precious time.

Mr. Allen: As the right hon. Lady says, hon. Members do not like it, do they?

Does the right hon. Lady agree that this is the most gutless, sycophantic Cabinet in which she has ever served?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will find that collective responsibility is vital to produce a prosperous Britain, a good Health Service—*[Interruption.]*—and to be returned for a second, third, fourth and fifth term. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to pursue this Question Time in silence and with mutual tolerance.

Mr. Chapman: In commending the doctrine of Cabinet collective responsibility, particularly when tackling inner-city problems, can my right hon. Friend reassure the House that there is a Minister with overall responsibility for that and there is not interdepartmental squabbling, so that the Government's commitment and resolve to urban regeneration are in no way diminished, and may I wish her the compliments of the season?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend, and I reciprocate his good wishes. Our inner-cities policy is one of collective responsibility. It concerns a considerable number of Departments and we meet regularly to co-ordinate policies. The inner-cities policy is doing well.

Engagements

Q2. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Buchan: Given her actions in this period of goodwill and charity, will the Prime Minister keep in mind the many hundreds in my constituency who are living on an income of £2,000 a year or less? While the giving of gifts is in the right hon. Lady's mind, does she not consider it obscene that she and the rest of her Cabinet will be awarding themselves gifts — in her case, about £2,000 tax-free? When we talked about charity at home, we were not thinking of Dulwich.

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman will extend what he has said to the whole House, as I recollect.

Mr. Holt: Given the excellent unemployment figures announced today, and the continuing trend towards more employment, will my right hon. Friend join me in expressing appreciation to the job club and to all who have worked in my constituency to help lower the figures in what was once one of the worst unemployment black spots in the United Kingdom, but where, since 1 January, there has been a 15 per cent. fall in the figures?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out. Unemployment has now fallen for 17 successive months. Over the past year all regions have shared in that fall, and unemployment has fallen faster in Britain than in any other major industrial country. We should congratulate all who work in industry and commerce on their enterprise, because it is they who are providing the jobs that are extending all over the country.

Mr. Janner: Will the Prime Minister give attention to the plight of junior hospital doctors and their patients? Doctors have to work intolerable hours without breaks or sleep, causing danger to patients and harm to themselves. How will the latest health money assist those doctors, if at all? Will the right hon. Lady bear in mind that they are unwilling to complain because there are not enough consultancies, and they are afraid for their futures in a deteriorating service?

The Prime Minister: The number of hospital doctors and dentists has risen by some 6,200 in the hospital and community services, and by some 7,000 in the family practitioner service. There are, therefore, more highly skilled doctors, and increasing resources have been made available over the past eight years. The Health Service is operating more efficiently and treating more patients, for which we should say thank you to the doctors and nurses.

Q3. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply which I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that this is the first time in this Parliament, or the last, that I have tabled one of these rather odd questions? Will she ponder, during the course of her busy day, that, despite all the gloomy verbosity from the Opposition, in the famous Addenbrooke's hospital in my constituency so many young people are seeking to train as nurses that the hospital is unable to take any more until the end of next year?

The Prime Minister: It is good to know that a considerable number of young people are coming forward to train as nurses. My hon. Friend will be aware that there are some 64,500 more nurses than there were eight years ago. Their pay is very much better, and their standard working week is down from 40 to 37½ hours. The basic rate of tax that they have to pay is also very much lower.

Mr. Kinnock: Yesterday's announcement on National Health Service funding was very welcome. In the spirit —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: In the spirit of Christmas, will the Prime Minister convey the congratulations of the whole House to her monitors for their perspicacity in spotting the crisis only nine months into the financial year? Have her monitors told her that the supplementary sums allocated yesterday will ensure that during the remainder of this financial year no more beds will be lost, no more wards closed and no more operating theatres left unused, and that there will be no more shortages of nurses? Have they told her that the crisis is now over?

The Prime Minister: The announced increases for this year and the allocations for considerable increases next year have been widely welcomed. My advisers tell me that this year, taking into account my right hon. Friend's announcement yesterday, National Health Service spending will be £843 million more than last year. Contrast that with 10 years ago when the Labour party was in power, when National Health Service spending was being cut by £400 million.

Sir Bernard Braine: As the season of good will is nigh, is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us are recalling her remarkable achievements of the past year in enhancing the international standing of our country, and that we wish her a restful Christmas and a fabulous new year?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. May I warmly reciprocate his comments, and extend them to all people of good will in this House.

Q4. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Barnes: Is the Prime Minister aware that the much-needed new maternity and gynaecology unit at Chesterfield hospital has been placed in mothballs because Trent regional health authority is skint? Has the Prime Minister a message of good will for my constituents, those of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—who no doubt would like to take part in this Question Time — telling of an improvement in matters there? Has she a message of good will for the 15,000 people in the area of Trent regional health authority—the worst-funded health authority in this country—who have been on waiting lists for over one year?

The Prime Minister: I understand that for the year 1987-88 the Trent regional health authority, has been allocated £989 million—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am not merely reading it out; the taxpayers had to provide it. What is more, the share of the extra money announced yesterday that will go to Trent is £5·8 million. Contrast that with 10 years ago.

Mr. Fairbairn: In this great period of the year between the feast of St. Andrew and the feast of St. Nicholas, will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks of the people of Scotland for what she has put in their stocking this year: 40 per cent. of regional grant for one eleventh of the population; £127 per head for every £100 spent on an Englishman and £80 per head spent on a Northumbrian; the announcement of an increase of £7·6 million for our hospitals and health services, which is a vast increase in our budget one last year; and for taking Scotland's industrial wage from the bottom of the league to the top not only of this kingdom, but of Europe? May we say that Scrooge Socialism is not something that we want?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I could not have put it better myself, and I am sure that Scotland is quietly very pleased with these results.

Q5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 17 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cohen: Will there not be record levels of homelessness in London this Christmas because of the Government's policies? Will not the bed-and-breakfast hostels be full? Is that the Government's contribution to the Christmas story—no room at the inn?

The Prime Minister: The number of homes is far greater now than it was at the beginning of this eight-year period. There have been many Government steps to tackle homelessness, and young people can benefit, particularly from our hostels initiative. We have made it easier for council tenants to sublet. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, in London there are nearly 27,000 empty homes, and 10,000 of them have been empty for more than a year. Three boroughs — Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets — have more than 5½ per cent. of their stock vacant.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the increase in manufacturing output of 6½ per cent. in the past 12 months announced earlier this week holds out good prospects that the encouraging downward trend in unemployment, confirmed by the figures published today, will continue?

The Prime Minister: Yes, manufacturing has had a very good year—it is now 6½ per cent. over and above what it was a year ago—and so have other industries such as the construction industry, coal, oil and commerce in general. They are earning for this country a record standard of living and a record standard of care in pensions and social services.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for the first week after the recess?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): The business for the first week after the Christmas Adjournment will be as follows:

MONDAY 11 JANUARY — Second Reading of the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

TUESDAY 12 JANUARY—Progress on remaining stages of the Social Security Bill.

Motion on the Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) (No. 2) Order.

WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY—Completion of remaining stages of the Social Security Bill.

Second Reading of the Income and Corporation Taxes Bill *[Lords]* which is a consolidation measure.

Motion relating to the Scottish Affairs Select Committee.

THURSDAY 14 JANUARY—There will be a debate on a motion to approve the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement.

FRIDAY 15 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Leader of the House give us a firm indication today of when in the new year we can expect to debate the televising of the proceedings of the House of Commons?

Could the right hon. Gentleman ensure a further statement on the implications for benefit payments of the error in the retail prices index calculations?

Last week I asked the right hon. Gentleman about consultation with hon. Members about the new immigration rules. Could he now ensure an early debate and give us some idea of when it will be?

Following last night's approval of an increase in office costs allowance for my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), will the Leader of the House accept that my hon. Friend and all who want proper provision for disabled people so that they can enjoy the full rights of citizenship are grateful for what he has done? However, will he confirm that this is an interim arrangement and that further special provision to help my hon. Friend will be made when the full extent of his special needs have been quantified and when a statement can be made to the House?

The Leader of the House knows that there is considerable concern about the way in which the Government are using and misusing prior restraint, pre-publication censorship and the laws of confidentiality to constrict the rights of reporting and broadcasting to an extent not really justifiable on grounds of national security. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us a guarantee that soon after we return in the new year he will give a day of Government time to a debate on these matters so that we at least can exercise complete freedom of speech?

Finally, I wish the right hon. Gentleman the compliments of the season.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall start with the last point and reciprocate warmly by giving my best wishes to everybody in the House for Christmas and the new year.

I cannot announce a date for a debate on the televising of Parliament. I have indicated that I hope that the debate will take place about the end of January, and I hope that I shall be able to be very clear about that in the first business statement when we return after Christmas.

On the matter of the retail prices index my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled will make a statement in the House tomorrow before we rise for the Christmas recess.

On the matter of the immigration rules, as the right hon. Gentleman will know, the Opposition have prayed against the statement of changes in the rules. I shall certainly look for an opportunity for an early debate in the new year.

The Government motion passed last night on the matter of additional assistance to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) in his office costs allowance was an interim measure. The Services Committee is looking into the case for a higher figure and, if necessary, the House will be asked to reconsider it in the new year.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the question of broadcasting and related matters. I understand that the High Court this morning rejected the BBC's application for a discharge of the injunction. Therefore, the matter remains sub judice. We can consider the possibility of a debate once the matter has been settled.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): As one who has been reasonably in favour of making progress in the matter of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, may I ask my right hon. Friend to bear in mind the report of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection and perhaps in future leave it to the House to decide what steps to take?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall table a motion after the recess to which amendments can be tabled. My hon. Friend is right in saying that it will be a matter for the House to decide.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to look at early-day motion 415 regarding the effect of electricity price increases on those in poverty, particularly the elderly?

[That this House condemns the proposed 9 per cent. increase in prices in electricity; notes that this increase is more than twice the rate of inflation; regrets the example set by the previous Labour Government of increasing electricity prices by 30 per cent. more than inflation; calls on the Government to recognise that the people affected by this increase will be the old and the cold, the poor and the sick, the 1,200 who die as a result of energy poverty each year and the 90,000 who have their electricity supplies cut each year; and further calls on this Government to implement a proper conservation programme in order to conserve our natural resources for future generations.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) there has already been an anomaly under the new severe weather payments in which neighbouring communities have qualified in one case but not in another? Will the right hon. Gentleman say whether, after the recess, there will be an opportunity for a debate on fuel poverty and that, if further anomalies arise out of the new regulations for severe weather payments, the Secretary of State for Social Services, who we hope will be restored to full health by then, will come to the House and make a statement on needed changes?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise an early debate on the matter, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has already made a full statement on electricity prices. Even following the price increases in April next year, industrial and domestic electricity prices will be lower in real terms than they were six years ago.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Will the Leader of the House provide time as soon as possible after the recess for a debate on the crisis in the National Health Service in Northern Ireland where, despite the emergency payment of £2·1 million to meet the present shortfall, the health boards face the prospect of closing hospital wards and lengthening waiting lists for operations? That is a grim situation which is made even worse by the fact that discrimination is practised by the Government against Northern Ireland in that Northern Ireland will receive 1 per cent. less for the next financial year.

Mr. Wakeham: Northern Ireland certainly received a share of the increased resources announced yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health. However, I shall certainly refer the hon. Gentleman's comments to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that the treatment by the pharmaceutical company, Eli Lilly, of people in Britain who have been damaged by the drug Opren has been disgraceful? After paying American claimants, it has forced British claimants to go through our legal system. Many of those claimants are old and gravely disabled. The consequence has been a lawyers' paradise in which the claimants receive less than the lawyers representing them and the claimants are gagged for life. May we have a debate on improving the system for the payment of compensation to people damaged by drugs?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern and interest that the right hon. Gentleman takes in these matters. I cannot promise an early debate, and I do not think that it would be right for me to comment on the substance of what he has said, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): While wishing my right hon. Friend a happy, successful and trouble-free new year, may I express the hope that there is no truth whatsoever in the rumours that certain private Members' Bills will be the subject of three-line whips?

Mr. Wakeham: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his good wishes, particularly the wish for a trouble-free new year, which I reciprocate strongly. However, as he knows, matters of whipping are not for me but for my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): What plans has the right hon. Gentleman for the important subject of speech therapy provision in our schools? Does he agree with me that many parents throughout the country, including in my constituency, are very distressed and worried because schools do not have sufficient staff to help their children with speech defects? Is it not tragic that these youngsters will not have the expert attention that they need while they are at school when the problem could be solved? What will the right hon. Gentleman do to help us?

Mr. Wakeham: The matter does not fall within my responsibility directly, but it is an important issue. I cannot promise time for an early debate on the subject, but I shall certainly bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's request.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Given that there are 80 people who wish to speak in today's debate on the rates reform Bill, will my right hon. Friend consider bringing back the ten-minute rule which was so successfully run in the last Session of Parliament and enabled many more hon. Members on both sides of the House to contribute to important debates?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there is a wish to do this in a number of quarters of the House, but, when we tried before, there was a degree of controversy. We shall see whether we can make progress in the new year.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): May I draw the attention of the right hon. Gentleman to early-day motion 461 which deals with the threatened closure of Newbattle Abbey college?

[That this House condemns in the strongest possible terms the announcement by the Secretary of State for Scotland to withdraw Government funding for Newbattle Abbey College, Dalkeith, thereby effectively bringing about the closure of the college; notes that the decision has been taken without any consultation whatsoever and without any regard to the outstanding contribution made by the college over many years to adult education; and urges the Secretary of State immediately to enter into discussions with the college authorities with a view to reversing his damaging decision.]

Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that this is a national matter in Scotland because it is the only adult college of that type in Scotland? Will he convey to the Secretary of State for Scotland and his staff the fact that great discourtesy seems to permeate the Scottish Office, as it announced the withdrawal of funding for that college and never even had the courtesy to notify the local Member of Parliament—myself—about that decision?

Mr. Wakeham: I apologise if there has been any discourtesy to the hon. Gentleman; I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend would not have intended it. I shall look into the matter for the hon. Gentleman.

Government grants for Newbattle Abbey college will be withdrawn from the end of the 1988-89 academic year. Continued support can no longer be justified, given the great increase in opportunities for mature students to enter further and higher education since Government support was introduced. Funds released by the withdrawal of support from Newbattle Abbey college will be devoted to encouraging wider access to further and higher education in Scotland in ways more relevant to current needs.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, towards the end of the last Parliament, we had an excellent general debate on agriculture and countryside problems, after a good deal of nagging from the Conservative Benches? As debates on agriculture now tend to get stuck in the ploughed field of EEC documents, will he consider having another general debate on the subject?

Mr. Wakeham: I remember the nagging, the debate, and my hon. Friend's contribution to it. I shall certainly bear in mind what he says, but I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): May I bring to the attention of my right hon. Friend the fact that our right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is now in Brussels negotiating the quotas for the steel industry in this country and for Europe in general, and that that discussion is taking place without a debate having first taken place in the House? Our right hon. and learned Friend is therefore unaware of the opinions of those hon. Members with steel-producing constituencies and wider interests affected by steel quotas. He has had a recommendation from the Select Committee on European Legislation for such a debate in good time, and a debate could have been held so that he could have had those views in front of him. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that this does not happen again and that we shall have a debate as soon as we return from the recess?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise a debate as soon as we come back. I have a feeling that my right hon. and learned Friend is well informed about the views of most hon. Members. If my hon. Friend wants to make sure that he is, there will be Question Time on the Wednesday after we return.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Will the Leader of the House, as a matter of urgency, arrange for a debate on the old and the cold? People are adopting a cynical attitude towards Members of Parliament who, year after year, shed crocodile tears about the plight of the old and the cold, yet every winter we are faced with the same problem and no solution. It is a matter of absolute urgency that the House should debate the matter while winter is with us and find not a short-term solution but a long-term solution to the plight of the old and the cold.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not know about crocodile tears. I cannot find time for a debate, but I should welcome one. We on the Government side could show a substantially better record than that of the Government that the hon. Gentleman supported.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the Leader of the House explain why, as yet, the House has had no opportunity to debate the Government's attitude to their golden shareholding in Britoil? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, under the provisions of Britoil's articles of association, there need only to be "reasonable grounds" for supposing that a bid for control is taking place? Does he consider that, with BP now owning 25 per cent. of Britoil, and Arco holding a further 15 per cent, such reasonable grounds exist? Will he explain why the Government are hiding from the House of Commons on this issue? Bearing in mind the commitments that were made in the 1982 debate about Britoil's independence, will he guarantee that the Government will hold their golden share until the House of Commons has had an opportunity to discuss the issue?

Mr. Wakeham: The decision that was taken by BP in that case was a commercial one. It was taken by BP itself. No proposals have been put to the Government for moving further to a takeover bid. If any bid were made, the Government would consider the circumstances and whether to use the powers of the special share.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Given my right hon. Friend's responsibility for the allocation of funds through the House to political parties, and given that my right hon. Friend is well aware that civil war has broken out between the rump of the Labour party and the Trots in Watford, and, doubtless, in other parts of the country as well, will my right hon. Friend say what action he intends to take in that regard?

Mr. Wakeham: I am conducting a review of the matter, and any evidence or information that my hon. Friend wants to give me will be considered.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that next year will be the 40th anniversary of the National Health Service? Therefore, will he reconsider the answer that he gave about the need for an urgent debate when we come back? We could then try to ensure that the National Health Service is kept in being beyond its anniversary date in July. There is obvious uncertainty on Government Benches. On Tuesday, the Prime Minister said that the National Health Service has enough money, on Wednesday the Minister for Health said that it is £95 million short, and most people in the country believe that it is £2 billion to £3 billion short.

Mr. Wakeham: If they listen to the hon. Gentleman, I am not surprised. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman does not understand the figures or whether he does not like them, but the Government's record on the Health Service is extremely good, and is a lot better than that of the Government he supported.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The decision of the European Court of Justice on whether British industry and commerce should be obliged to pay VAT on gas, electricity, water and sewerage and on all new industrial and commercial buildings will be published in mid-January. It is likely that it will be the first time in the history of our Parliament that a foreign court will have instructed a British Government on what taxes they should levy. Will the Leader of the House promise us that, if the case goes wrong, we shall have a debate on the burden on industry and on what will be a massive new loss of sovereignty for Parliament?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's continuing concern in these matters. I honestly do not believe that it would be right for me to anticipate any decision that any court might make next year.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): It would be helpful if we could have a debate on the care of the elderly. Late last week, one of my constituents, an elderly person, left his home to get a newspaper. When he went back, he found that the electricity board had gained entry to his house, cut off the electricity supply, and put a padlock on his door. The poor man was so confused that he wandered the streets for hours and was admitted to the local hospital until the matter was sorted out by his social worker. Surely, the House should not tolerate such high-handed manners from an electricity board. We should discuss the matter because it is shameful that our elderly people are treated like that in the winter.

Mr. Wakeham: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that high-handed action by anybody is not tolerable. I cannot promise an early debate, but if he will write to me I shall ensure that his letter is passed to the appropriate person.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a lot of time in the House is spent on the affairs of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but that it has been a long time since a debate was held on the

northern region? Will he bear in mind that there are 30 hon. Members, from different parties, representing over 3 million people, who would very much welcome a debate on the north-east?

Mr. Wakeham: When I became a Member of the House, I thought that we spent rather a lot of time on Scotland and Wales. It has ever been thus, and I guess that it always will be. However, the northern region should certainly not be neglected. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Leader of the House aware of repeated allegations about mistreatment of and cruelty to elderly and confused people in Kent? Is he further aware that, although Kent county council has met and discussed the matter, it has not taken any initiatives and is ducking the issue? I have called for a public inquiry into this by the Department of Health and Social Security. Will the right hon. Gentleman press that Department because up to now it has refused to institute an inquiry? What will happen to those people? Are they to be neglected?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that Kent county council is well able to discharge its duties and responsibilities in this matter. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence to support his allegations, no doubt he will ensure that that is passed to the appropriate body.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was wrong the last time that he made that allegation and he is totally wrong to repeat it. I could not agree more with my right hon. Friend that the hon. Gentleman should be asked to produce the evidence on which he is making the assertion that Kent county council has done nothing whatsoever about the allegations. Most of the problems were put right before the programme was shown by the television company, which did not even bother to consult the social services department before finding out whether it was telling the truth. However, if we are to discuss the matter more fully, perhaps we should have a debate on it.

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as I am sure that the House is, for his comments. However, I cannot promise an early debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Leader of the House remember our exchange last Thursday on early-day motion 429?

[That this House calls for the profits made by the House of Commons Refreshment Department, including the Kiosk, during the week 14 December to 18 December inclusive, to be donated to the Ethiopian Famine Appeal.]

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of any decisions or recommendations having been made by the appropriate Committees? Is he aware of the importance of an announcement being made before the appeal closes at the end of this week? I should like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your sympathetic interest in this matter.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government have made their concern clear about the suffering in Ethiopia. However, there is nothing further than I can add to what I said to the hon. Gentleman last week.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on the wider issues of the organisation and structure of the National Health Service, not so much on the narrow point raised by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), but on the whole issue of the way in which it should be financed, organised and be made accountable?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right in saying that we shall want to return to those issues. Although I cannot promise an early debate, I believe that it is an important subject.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Given the promise of a debate on the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs, we are left to assume that a deal has been cobbled up through the usual channels. Would it not be an absolute scandal if English Conservative Members, who gained no votes in Scotland, were press-ganged on to the Committee when Scottish National party Members, who have votes in Scotland, are deliberately excluded? Would not such a deal also represent a betrayal of the Scottish electorate by the Labour party?

Mr. Wakeham: If a deal has been cobbled up between the usual channels, I hope that somebody will tell me about it. So far as I am concerned, it is a matter for the House to decide, and that is what will happen.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 350?

[That this House extends its best wishes to President Mangope and to the people of Bophuthatswana on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of their Independence; applauds their successful efforts to establish a non-racial, democratic, free-enterprise society; and looks forward to the day when their achievements receive greater international recognition.]

It congratulates President Mangope and the people of Bophuthatswana on the 10th anniversary of its independence from the Republic of South Africa. The motion now carries 110 signatures and there are 22 signatures from Opposition Members to an amendment that is not altogether unsympathetic towards that country. May I also draw my right hon. Friend's attention to a leaflet published this week by the Foreign Office entitled "British Aid to Southern Africa"? Will he provide time early in the new year for a debate on southern Africa, with particular reference to the British Government's policy towards the front-line states?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise an early debate on that subject. In fact, the British Government, in common with the rest of the international community—with the exception of South Africa — do not recognise that country as an independent state.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Given that the major national issue for the past two or three months, if not longer, has been the Health Service, does the Leader of the House accept that it is unsatisfactory that the only time we have had to debate that subject has been on an Opposition day? Will he reconsider the various requests that have been made for a debate? Will he also bear in mind that, even if £6·7 million is given to the West Midlands regional health authority, Shropshire alone needs £1 million to prevent massive hospital closures, yet it has no chance of receiving that money from the sums allocated. Will the right hon. Gentleman accede to the national concern, if not the concern in this House, and provide time to debate the issue?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend the Minister for Health made a statement yesterday, and I believe that it was well received. The comments that I have read in the national press and others suggest that he responded well to the concern and difficulties about the Health Service. I cannot promise an early debate on the subject.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I pick up the theme of freedom of speech mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition and ask for an early debate to investigate the circumstances in which, two days ago, the Strangers Gallery came to be full of homosexuals and lesbians during the debate on the Local Government Bill? It should be noted that those people tried to suppress contributions from Conservative Members and to support and cheer loudly the contributions from Labour and Liberal Members. May we have an inquiry into how they came to be in the Gallery in such numbers and why they were allowed to continue to attempt to interfere so vociferously with the proceedings of the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall certainly consider what my hon. Friend has said, and will write to him. I understand from the Serjeant at Arms that there appeared to be a large number of members of the public in the Gallery whose interest in the debate on Tuesday night was such that they tried to interrupt it. I congratulate the Doorkeepers on their action in containing the disturbance.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motions 264 and 333?

[That this House pays tribute to the staff of BBC Radio London for their invaluable contribution to the cultural life of London over many years; views with considerable concern reports that Radio London faces closure; and calls upon the BBC to make a clear statement of intent to maintain Radio London with the necessary resources to enable the station to enhance its coverage of activities in the capital city.]

[That this House views with concern the reported plans of the BBC management to abandon their Radio London Service; notes that Radio London has a quarter of a million listeners a day in Greater London, and another quarter of a million in the home counties and runs on a tiny budget compared with the other two London radio stations, and yet during some parts of the day attracts a larger audience; further notes that it has programmes directed towards the blind, the elderly, the Jewish, black and Asian Communities; further notes that since 1982, 10,000 people have found work through Radio London Job Search, more than 10,000 blood donors have been recruited through Radio London Bloodline, and that last year Radio London raised more than any other local radio station for Children in Need: £170,000; and calls upon the Home Secretary to make it clear to the BBC that if Radio London were scrapped, London would no longer be receiving a proper service from the BBC.]

There are many rumours that Radio London will be closed down. One of the early-day motions is signed by Labour Members and the other by Conservative Members. No one on the Opposition Benches, and, I hope, no one on the Conservative Benches, although there are a few, would wish to interfere editorially in the affairs of the BBC. However, as a public corporation, surely the public of London should be consulted about the future of an extremely popular radio station. In view of the threat not only to Radio London, but to local radio generally, may we have an early debate so that at least the BBC board of management knows what public representatives are saying about some of its decisions regarding the future of local radio?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunity" explains the Government's view. There continues to be a case for BBC local radio which provides a distinct service alongside the major developments proposed for independent radio. However, the Green Paper made clear that it is and must remain for the BBC to decide, within the financial limits and other resources available to it, how best to carry out its obligations under the charter.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Will my right hon. Friend take time to look at Monday's Order Paper and note the motion in my name to discuss the Peak Park planning board? Is he aware that, of the 23 people appointed to the board by councils, only three live in the area, which is a disgrace? Will he find time to have a debate, or go one better and promise me time to examine a Government Bill to put right this outrage?

Mr. Wakeham: This is an important matter. Perhaps my hon. Friend will try his luck with an Adjournment debate, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): In view of the long-standing and continuing discrimination in Northern Ireland in employment, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the recent SACOHR report and the Government's response to it?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that there are particular problems in Northern Ireland, but I certainly do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. However, I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I cannot promise an early debate.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that for decades the defence of our country has depended crucially upon a deterrent system that has allowed for no winners? Does he also accept that one of the side effects of the INF agreement is to create the expectation that that may be replaced by a system that would allow the temptation of winning? Is not that such a crucial fact that it is deserving of a major debate in the House, rather than merely an Adjournment debate?

Mr. Wakeham: It is certainly an important subject, and we shall find time to debate it in the new year, but I cannot promise an early debate.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me in my usual spot.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a compliment to be called first or last.

Mr. Corbyn: I was giving you a compliment, Mr. Speaker, as I know at what time I shall be called.

Will the Leader of the House reflect on the fact that record numbers of people are living without a decent roof over their heads and sleeping on the streets of every major city? Many families are forced to spend five years or more in bed and breakfast accommodation, with all the attendant dangers for their children and the difficulties of bringing them up in such circumstances. There are also record low levels of building for rent—only building for

sale is going on now. In the light of that, and instead of ignoring the problem, will the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent debate on this crucial issue as soon as we return in the new year so that we, as a society, may consider housing as a right and not as a privilege for those who can afford it?

Mr. Wakeham: The Government's Housing Bill, which is at present before the House, directly addresses some of these issues. The speedy implementation of a number of its provisions will help immeasurably in this area.

Tullyally Estate, Londonderry (Bombing)

4.4 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the bombing of the predominantly Protestant Tullyally housing estate by Republicans in Londonderry last night, resulting in the death of one Roman Catholic, the extensive damage of 50 homes and the injury of 15 persons, including a child of three years of age."

In the Republican Bogside, a taxi was hijacked. Later, it was returned to its owner. It drove to the Tullyally estate and three bombs were planted indiscriminately in that estate. A wake was being held in one of the houses, and that house was blasted. The mourners were showered with glass and had to be taken to hospital for treatment. There are three Roman Catholics in the estate, and one of them was killed. One child of three was also injured.

At this time of the year, when we are thinking of goodwill and peace, surely the House should consider the rapidly deteriorating security situation in Northern Ireland, and should take time to discuss a matter of vital importance that affects both parts of our community.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"last night's bomb outrage in Londonderry".

I have listened with concern as, I am sure, has the whole House, to what the hon. Gentleman has said about this matter, but he knows that the decision that I must take in granting a Standing Order No. 20 debate is whether to give it precedence over the business set down for the day. I regret that the hon. Gentleman's application does not meet with the criteria for Standing Order No. 20 debates, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

FIREARMS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Secretary Hurd, supported by The Prime Minister, Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary King, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. John MacGregor, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Richard Luce and Mr. Douglas Hogg, presented a Bill to amend the Firearms Act 1986 and to make further provision for regulating the possession of, and transactions relating to, firearms and ammunition: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 75.]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1957, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Scottish Development Agency Act 1987.
2. Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Act 1987.
3. British Waterways Act 1987.
4. British Railways Act 1987.

Local Government Finance Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time—*[16 December]*—to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'this House declines to give a second reading to the Local Government Finance Bill because of the absence of any grading in the rate of community charge in proportion to the ability to pay and because of the absence of a comprehensive rebate scheme which would also take account of ability to pay.'.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Speaker: Before we resume the debate, may I remind the House that I have a very long list of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate? The hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) drew attention to the fact that at the moment there is no limit on speeches, but it would help enormously, and would be to the great comfort and general convenience of the House, if speeches were limited to about 10 minutes. In that way, a large number of hon. Members could be called, as well as Privy Councillors.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Does the Chair intend to have regard to those hon. Members who were here yesterday, and not only to those who have turned up today?

Mr. Speaker: Those who sat through yesterday will certainly have some precedence in the debate today.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether it would be helpful to the House if the occupant of the Chair could inform a right hon. Member or an hon. Member who is speaking when he has reached 10 minutes? It is sometimes difficult when speaking to know how long one has taken.

Mr. Speaker: The Chair has no authority to do that. There is no limit on speeches without the authority of the House. Until the motion has been put down and agreed, the occupant of the Chair cannot do as the hon. Gentleman requests.

4.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Peter Walker): The Bill extends to England and Wales, but provides for separate operations in the two countries. There are a number of important differences in the way in which the legislation will operate in Wales, which will reflect the particular needs and circumstances of Wales, and which I hope will be welcomed by Welsh Members on both sides of the House.

I have been impressed by the good working relationship between central and local government in Wales. I have had a large number of meetings, both formal and informal, with representatives of local authorities at all levels. I know that they have views which are sometimes obviously in conflict with those of the Government, and these present proposals are no exception. But, despite differing views, there exists a constructive dialogue on the problems of Wales and ways in which they can be overcome. There is a readiness on the part of local authorities to approach problems in a constructive way. In the same way, they know that there is a readiness on my part to have meaningful consultations and to listen attentively to the points that they have to put across.

Wales has had a separate rate support grant system since 1980, and I do not think that anyone involved in political life in the Principality would dissent from the view that that has been of enormous benefit to local government services and to the people of Wales. The Bill presently under consideration gives an even greater independence to Wales in local government finance, but I and my predecessor have already made it clear that no resources will be lost to Wales as a result of this legislation.

The Bill provides for a separate and completely insulated system to operate in Wales. All the receipts of the community charge will stay in Wales and there will be an entirely separate grant system based on assessments of needs fully discussed with the local authorities. All the non-domestic rates will go into a separate Welsh pool to be redistributed to Welsh local authorities. The benefits that Wales enjoys from having its own separate system and separate consultations will be carried over into these new arrangements. I hope that the House and the people of Wales will recognise what a small proportion of local government expenditure in Wales will come from the community charge.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend cover a point that was raised yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)? It is about the effect of the community charge in giving an incentive to people to put their grandmothers out to grass, to make them go into retirement. We have far too many retirement homes already.

Mr. Walker: I disagree with that analysis. One of the important points about the community charge is that many single elderly people, such as widows and pensioners living alone, will benefit from the legislation and will not be handicapped by it. I shall deal with that later.

On present spending and grant patterns, the community charge would account for only 14 per cent. of local government expenditure in Wales; 19 per cent. would come from the non-domestic sector and 67 per cent. would come in the form of grants. Put another way, total local government expenditure per household in Wales comes to £35 per week. Of this, the Government will put up £24. The business sector contributes £6 and that leaves only £5 to find from the community charge. That is the amount that we are talking about today—not the £35 per household that goes out every week on local services in the Principality.

However, many people would not even pay the small contribution that the community charge makes towards the funding of local government. The Government have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that those on low incomes will be protected.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I am trying to follow my right hon. Friend's argument and the Government's argument about accountability. We are told that the Bill will make local government more accountable to the voters. How will it be more accountable if only £5 out of £35 comes via any local charge? The Government will have at least 75 per cent. control over the money coming in. How will that make local government more accountable?

Mr. Walker: One of the ways in which it will be made more accountable is that more people than ever before will be paying this smaller contribution. At present, many people in Wales do not make any direct contribution to the local authority. Many people will not even have to pay the

small contribution that the community charge makes to the funding of local government. As I have said, the Government have gone to considerable lengths to ensure that people on low incomes will be protected.

A great deal has been said about the impact on the very poor in the inner cities and elsewhere. There is no doubt that in Wales many people depend upon social security payments and other state benefits. However, it must be clearly stated that these people will be paying the average of £5 per week per household and will benefit from very substantial rebates. At the moment, people on the lowest incomes qualify for 100 per cent. rate rebates. Almost all these people will qualify for income support under the new system. This means that they will get an automatic 80 per cent. rebate on their community charge. Therefore, instead of the average of £5 per week, they will pay £1 per week per household. In addition to the rebate, their income support levels will have been uprated by an amount to reflect the average minimum community charge payment for Great Britain.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I recognise some of the points that the right hon. Gentleman is making. How can he possibly justify a tax under which people on his income and people who have far more than the right hon. Gentleman will pay precisely the same as people on modest incomes, who will receive no rebate? Can he explain why the Tory Reform Group, of which he is very much a patron, has been so highly critical of the poll tax?

Mr. Walker: I have had the privilege to be a patron of the Tory Reform Group for many years. One of the privileges that I have had in that capacity is that I have never been consulted on any publication. I have not read the publication to which the hon. Gentleman alludes. The hon. Gentleman has taken a rather bad example, because three of my children are teenagers and are likely to continue to live at home for some time. It may be that under this system I shall pay more, rather than less.

It is entirely appropriate to use Great Britain averages of the minimum community charge payment for the upgrading of the allowances. One of the fundamental principles of the social security system is that it should apply equally across the country. The effects of compensation on this basis will be that people in Wales in receipt of income support are likely to receive entirely adequate support towards the amount of the community charge that they will be called upon to pay.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Even the 20 per cent. that has to be found will be based on what happens locally. We are being told about the national average, but the people of Wales may well have to find more than the increase in the income support grant. How can that be fair?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman has chosen a bad example. It will almost certainly be the other way round. The rebate to those people will be rather higher, and that is likely to be beneficial to the people of Wales. Welsh Members will be pleased at that.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): My right hon. Friend has described the rate rebate scheme that will be available to people on benefit. In the past the Government have described a system of rebates for people on moderate incomes that are just above benefit level. We have not heard anything about that rebate system, and I should like to know what plans the Govement have to help my constituents who do not enjoy benefit and who are on modest incomes. Many of them are pensioners.

Mr. Walker: A whole range of people such as those described by my hon. Friend will benefit under the rebate system. As my hon. Friend knows, many of the people in the category that my hon. Friend describes have a hard time under the present rating system. While there will undoubtedly be people who will have difficulties with the community charge or the present rating system, I do not think that the change in the system will make a great deal of difference to the people that my hon. Friend has described.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Walker: I have given way several times, and in view of Mr. Speaker's request for speeches to be brief I should like to continue with my speech.

In Wales the average community charge will be £5 per week per household in return for £35 per week per household of local government expenditure, and there will be a substantial rebate and increased allowance scheme in operation. In those circumstances, it is difficult to see how the Opposition can maintain that the Government are not protecting people in Wales who are on very low incomes.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Walker: This is the last time that I shall give way.

Mr. Morgan: In the light of the Secretary of State's claim about quite exceptional generosity in the treatment of low-income or no-income people in Wales, will he comment on the statement a month ago by the chief executive of Cardiff city council in his capacity as the electoral registration officer for Cardiff? He said that he was already perceiving through his clerks who are collecting the electoral registration forms an incentive for people, and especially young people, in the inner-city areas, not to register. Can the Secretary of State say whether he thinks that there is now an inducement for people not to take part in the democracy of Britain because of fears about the poll tax even three years before its introduction?

Mr. Walker: There is no such inducement whatever. I certainly do not think that the pronouncement by one official in Cardiff proves a particular case in one direction or another.

Concern has been expressed about the practicalities of collecting the charge. We have not tried to pretend that it would not be more expensive than the present system. In Wales we have just begun discussions with the local authority associations about the mechanics of implementing the new system and the inevitable costs that they will incur in working up to it. When I listened to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) last night, I was surprised at his exaggerated account of the terrible difficulties that would be encountered in preparing the list.

Far from being deterred by the task of collecting the community charge, the right hon. Member should be aware that there has been a major disagreement between the local authority associations in Wales. That disagreement is about who should have this responsibility. The disagreement is not about their not wanting it — they both want it. This is hardly an indication that the practitioners see major problems ahead. I have decided that it would be most appropriate for the districts to retain

[Mr. Walker]

this function, but it was made quite clear to me that each tier was confident of its ability to make the new system work.

Part III and schedules 3 to 6 deal with non-domestic rating. At the moment, formal responsibility for rating policy in England and Wales lies with the Secretary of State for the Environment, who makes all the relevant orders, which apply to both countries. It is anomalous that this sector of responsibility for local government finance does not at present lie with the Welsh Office. From 1990 responsibility for non-domestic rating in Wales will be transferred to the Secretary of State for Wales. I have no present plans to operate the rating system as it will apply to non-domestic properties in any way that is different from the proposed by my right hon. Friend, but the power will be there to enable me to make adjustments for particular circumstances in Wales should the situation arise.

More fundamentally, this part of the Bill establishes a separate non-domestic rating pool for Wales. A separate poundage will be set for Wales, on the same basis as that proposed for England, but which will give a yield equivalent to the resources raised in Wales alone. Non-domestic poundages in Wales at the moment do not differ very greatly. There are unlikely to be major upheavals for business as a result of this change. The maximum increase, again on 1987-88 figures, would be 12 per cent. which would be in Cardiff. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West will wish to know that the business sector in Swansea will gain the most from the proposals, with a decrease of 12 per cent.

The overall contribution made by businesses in Wales to local authority spending will not change, and the move to a national poundage uplifted in line with inflation will be fairer to businesses and give them greater certainty about their future bills. No longer will they be subject to the turbulence and uncertainty that they have faced from the authorities' decisions. No longer will business in South Glamorgan be faced with a massive 24 per cent. increase at a time when inflation was running at around 3 per cent. No longer will business in Dyfed be faced with increases more than three times the rate of inflation. The revaluation will also result in a more equitable and up-to-date distribution of the rates burden.

Taking those two measures together, it is likely that industry will gain in those areas most in need of economic regeneration. The revaluation should benefit older industrial premises, which are a feature of areas such as Mid Glamorgan. This will give a direct and significant boost to the economic regeneration of the valleys and boost employment opportunities. The move to a national poundage will reduce rate bills by 9 per cent. in Mid Glamorgan and reduce the burden on businesses in the valleys by £7 million a year.

As in England, the resources from the non-domestic rating pool will be redistributed to local authorities as an amount per adult. The provisions for this are dealt with in schedule 5. However, separate provision for Wales is made in paragraphs 11 to 14 of that schedule. Unlike England, where the receipts will go into the collection fund, the proceeds of the pool will be paid separately to district and county councils. That part of schedule 5 therefore provides a mechanism for splitting the receipts between the two tiers before they are distributed on a per head basis. We propose to do so in the same way as grant is split, that is, on the basis of relative shares of expenditure. The reason for this different approach is to be consistent with the arrangements that I am making for the payment of grant.

Part 4, which deals with residual rating, will not apply at all to Wales.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walker: I said on the last intervention that that was the last time I would give way. This is the last time.

Mr. Rogers: I thank the Secretary of State for his courtesy. I followed closely what he was saying, but I do not understand how the uniform business rate would generate economic activity in the valleys. I wonder whether he would explain that further.

Mr. Walker: The redistribution of the business rate in Wales would result in benefit to areas which have older premises, so the valleys of Mid Glamorgan would benefit by the amount that I have given. I am perfectly happy to write to the hon. Member to explain in great detail how those calculations are made.

Part 5, which deals with the precepting arrangements, and part 7, which establishes collection funds, will operate along the same lines in Wales as in England. The mechanics will be the same, but the flow of funds will be different. In addition, last week, the Committee of Wales District Councils put to me a paper proposing alternative precepting arrangements to those that we envisage. It felt that its proposals would be more suitable to the approach that I am taking in Wales. It is too soon for these proposals to have been studied in detail, but I will look very hard at them, and if I am convinced of their merits it may be possible later to amend this part of the Bill in its application to Wales.

Part 6 makes provision for grants and here there will be some differences for Wales. In England, grant and the proceeds of the non-domestic rating pool will be paid into collection funds operated by district councils. There will be the same basic framework of a grant system in Wales; there will be a single revenue support grant, which is paid out each year on the basis of a distribution report. However, in Wales revenue support grant and non-domestic rates will be paid directly and individually to district and county councils.

The arrangement reflects the different circumstances of Wales, where there is able to be a much less complex local authority structure and a simpler system of needs assessment and grant distribution. This has worked successfully up until now in Wales, and I do not propose to move away from it. It will get the right message across to voters in Wales. I am pleased to note that the approach has been welcomed by the Welsh Counties Committee. The Committee of Wales District Councils, to my regret, is not convinced yet, but I hope to persuade it.

The introduction of the new system will inevitably mean relative changes in the resources that local authorities will need to raise locally to finance the same levels of expenditure. At the moment, some areas benefit disproportionately from the equalisation in the existing system on the basis of rateable values. It is difficult to defend the present influence of rateable values on the distribution of resources between areas. For example, local

authority spending in the Rhondda is 3 per cent. above grant-related expenditure and in Cardiff it is 3 per cent. below, but average rate bills in Cardiff are more than double those in Rhondda. Of course, average incomes tend to be lower in Mid Glamorgan too, but they are only about 5 per cent. lower than in South Glamorgan. I wonder whether Opposition Members think it is fair that someone in Cardiff who may be on the same income as a person in Rhondda should pay double the local rate bill.

Once we are through the safety net period of four years, the new grant system will instead provide full equalisation of spending need on the basis of objective assessments of need. I propose to base the new system on the present arrangements for grant-related expenditure assessment, which have been developed over the years in conjunction with the associations and generally provide a fair basis for distributing grant.

The needs assessments will be an even more important feature of the new system than the old. They have to be fair and they have to reflect fully the different circumstances of different local authorities and different areas. The Committee of Wales District Councils has put to me some proposals for change. We will be carrying out a full review in the coming months, in conjunction with the local authority associations, of the formulae now used for assessing need. We will be looking particularly at the district council GREs and the proposals put forward by their association. My aim will be to ensure that grant allocations under the new system — and thus relative community charges — fully reflect the differing needs to spend in Wales.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): The right hon. Gentleman may not have had the benefit of reading what I said last night, but this passage is crucial, because the whole argument that I advanced last night was that any distribution formula must have an equalisation element. Will the right hon. Gentleman spell out in greater detail how he intends to ensure that the more progressive aspects of the rate support grant will apply through the GRE experience of the new needs assessment?

Mr. Walker: Having made it clear in my speech that a total review of the needs assessment is fundamental to the new system, that is not an easy task. I cannot say that everybody will agree with the formula that comes out, but the district councils have presented me with a paper, and I have announced in my speech today that I intend to consult local authorities on the future method of needs assessment, so I hope that that will have a positive result.

In the debate there has been a great deal of talk about the importance of the freedom of local government and the proper delegation to local government. I can only say that in the years that I have been priviliged to be a member of the House, under both Labour and Conservative Governments, there have always been occasions when central Government have considered that it is in the national interest to see that a particular form of Government policy is imposed on local government. I remember a long period when the Labour Government used their central powers to ensure that comprehensive education was introduced in this country, frequently against the wishes of the local education officers concerned. I remember when I had the privilege of being Secretary of State for the Environment and introducing housing legislation to ensure that the housing subsidies that were paid were totally devoted to rent allowances and rent grants. Although the Labour party strongly opposes that policy now, it adhered to it then.

The great argument from Opposition Members is based on the degree of financial interference. A study of recent years shows that the peak of financial interference in local government was achieved in the year after the Labour Government had to be bailed out by the International Monetary Fund.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Rubbish.

Mr. Walker: In that year capital expenditure was reduced in real terms by 18 per cent. in one year. Opposition Members continually claim that we increase the rate support grant only slightly ahead of inflation. In one year alone the Labour Government reduced the rate support grant in real terms by 9 per cent.

Labour Members have no right to lecture the Government, when local government expenditure in Wales went down by 4 per cent. under a Labour Government. They have no right to lecture the Government over the way in which we have handled matters. Of course, many people can find objections to any form of local taxation. It was interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) yesterday. When the hon. Gentleman was interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and asked whether he would support the idea of a docker in London having his rates increased by 80 per cent. under capital evaluation, the hon. Gentleman quickly used the phrase:

"I shall come to his point later."

He was then interrupted by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) who asked a similar question, to which the hon. Gentleman replied:

"I shall come to that later." — [*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1130-32.]

There were three more interventions, all of which were met by the phrase "I shall come to that later". We were eagerly anticipating the final passages of the hon. Gentleman's speech. We were waiting for the answers.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. Gentleman was not in the Chamber.

Mr. Walker: Finally, the hon. Member for Copeland said, "Now I have reached the point." We waited and what did the hon. Gentleman say? He said, "I will tell you what our policy is. We will publish a White Paper." That sums up the Labour party's policy. The next Labour party election manifesto will state "Vote for us and you will get a White Paper." That will be the reforming policy. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who is to reply for the Opposition, has been left naked as a result of that. Indeed, the Labour party is naked in that it lacks any positive approach to any form of policy. Labour Members are aware that they are hankering after an adjustment of capital values, and that would be far more unpopular than anything that has been proposed today.

The attack by Opposition Members on what they call interference with local government and their attack on any alternative, has been shown to be completely bogus, as they do not have any alternative themselves. I recommend the proposals to the House because they are positive for Wales.

4.33 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden) *rose*——

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This Bill applies exclusively to England and Wales.

Mr. Dewar: No, it does not.

Mr. Benyon: Why are we to be lectured by a Scottish Member?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) is wrong. I would have been much more impressed by the dramatic account of the tensions on the Government Front Bench at the start of yesterday's debate if the Secretary of State for Wales who gave that account had been present to experience it.

Mr. Peter Walker: The hon. Gentleman has said that I was not here. I was. I was sitting on the Government Front Bench. I heard all the interventions that were made during the speech of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham).

Mr. Dewar: I certainly withdraw what I said. However, I am informed that the Secretary of State for Wales was not present when his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment opened the debate. I entirely accept the word of the Secretary of State for Wales. As an explanation, may I state that the right hon. Gentleman has become so inconspicuous in British politics over recent months that he was not seen yesterday either.

I do not believe that the speech made by the Secretary of State for Wales was marked by any ringing defence of the principles that lie behind the poll tax. That was conspicuously absent. I am not surprised, because we are being asked to endorse a low-yield, high-cost tax which has been born out of opportunism and panic. I approach the debate with some feeling of guilt. At least the origins of the present adventure are partly to be found in the private and often obscure in-fighting that we call politics in Scotland. We bear some responsibility for what has happened.

No doubt the House will recall that the Government have been flirting with rating reform for many years. They produced White Papers in England and Scotland in August 1983. We were told north of the border that the rating system was fundamentally sound and that no radical change was required. The Department of the Environment in England and the Secretary of State for Wales specifically rejected the poll tax as an option. There was no messing about and no ambiguity. At that stage, the public face was mirrored by private conviction. We know that from the comments made yesterday by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) with his rather engaging glimpse of domestic life around the Cabinet table.

However, revaluation occurred in my country. There was a revolt by the Scottish bourgeoisie and the whiff of grape shot was seen in the streets of Eastwood and Newton Mearns. There was a convulsive spasm in the Scottish Office and it threw up—if that is the right elegant term —the poll tax. That it happened is beyond dispute. Why it happened remains something of a mystery.

The main charge that we make against the tax is that it is unfair and unjust. That is an essential truth and it is widely recognised despite the Government's best efforts — despite the speeches, press releases, leaflets and adverts in nine national Scottish newspapers and 119 local newspapers all bringing the good news about the poll tax to every corner of the kingdom. You may be surprised to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that mixing with the Christmas cheer, whether in the *Inverurie and District Advertiser* or the *Largs and Millport Weekly News*, there is a ministerial pep talk about the virtues of the poll tax. That would take the bang out of anyone's Christmas cracker and it will.

The facts about the poll tax are there for everyone to see. I will use my constituency as an example. I represent a very large housing scheme. There is not a great variation in rateable values in the scheme. The average household rates bill is £430 for the present financial year. In Kelvindale, where I live, an area of Glasgow only about three quarters of a mile from the housing scheme, the average rates bill is more than £1,000. The contrast between a married couple living in one area and in the other is painful. If we assume that their incomes are above the rebate level, a married couple will be paying about £600 a year in poll tax. In the oppressed housing scheme of Drumchapel they will be about £170 worse off, while in Kelvindale just down the road the couple will be pocketing a profit of about £400. The reason for that is self-evident. However incomplete, there is a rough link between income and rates bills. The wealthy tend to live in exclusive and expensive property in up-market areas and they pay more. The poll tax represents a shift against areas that are already disadvantaged by the Prime Minister's popular capitalism.

The argument was conceded almost from the beginning by the Scottish Office. The Secretary of State for the Environment has been fond of lecturing us about the out-of-date, corrupt rating system. He suggested that it is some payoff for political loyalty and that by implication, the poll tax will right that imagined wrong. I shall leave the bizarre political theory, but there is an implicit admission that there will be a swing against areas that he considers to be politically hostile, such as inner cities and housing schemes. By venting his spleen, the right hon. Gentleman reveals all. It is a joke that Ministers from the Scottish Office or from any Department should pose as sea-green incorruptibles.

In Scotland, the poll tax was designed to cement the crumbling Tory vote. At the general election, Strathkelvin and Bearsden, Aberdeen, South, Edinburgh, Central and Edinburgh, South—a whole range of constituencies—joined the already embarrassingly long casualty list. Present public opinion polls in England and Wales show that 57 per cent. of people are against the poll tax. I predict that that percentage will increase, because the arrival of legislation concentrates the public mind wonderfully.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: I shall give way to the hon. Lady in a moment.

Ministers may try to launder the facts, but the stain of discontent will spread. In Scotland, we know from experience that information and knowledge are our allies and the Government's enemies.

Only this week I noticed that the paper produced by the Tory Reform Group—I accept that the Secretary of State for Wales is not personally responsible for statements by his hon. Friends—stated:

"Support for the community charge is dropping as fast as a stone over a cliff."

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: May I point out to the hon. Gentleman that support for the community charge will grow as people realise exactly what will happen. In answer to a written question, from the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the Minister made it very clear that the maximum 80 per cent. rebate will be available for everyone receiving income support, and that gets over another problem, because the demands will be made net and not gross. That will put a lot of fears to rest.

Mr. Dewar: I agree with the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) that there may be a point where public opinion will deteriorate no further. If the Tory Reform Group is right in saying that the support for the community charge is falling like a stone over a cliff, it will ultimately hit the bottom and achieve a rating of nil.

Despite the rebate scheme, the community charge will hit the most vulnerable people in our community. The Minister has argued that the worst off in our community will benefit, but that is a form of sleight of hand. It is a dash of dishonesty added. It gives a new meaning to new maths. The Government assume that a pensioner on supplementary benefit living alone will find that 20 per cent. of the poll tax is less than 20 per cent. of the original rates bill. That assumption is based on appalling dishonesty. The Government are not admitting that they are responsible for the new system which abolishes the 100 per cent. housing benefit and introduces a 20 per cent. rule. That is hypocrisy.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The hon. Gentleman spoke about information being given out. The Labour party's briefing note, "Campaign for the Facts on the Poll Tax", states:

"There is a country where the right to vote was won after years of long and bitter struggle.

The present Government wants to change that right.

They are making all adults pay to be registered.

They will issue identity cards and check up on citizens every year."

Where does that appear in the legislation?

Mr. Dewar: If the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), continues reading Labour party policy, it will do him a good deal of good. I accept that those who take such a position are interested in long-term solutions. However, there is a strong correlation between the right to vote and the fight against the poll tax. A disincentive to register is built into the system. Many people who wish to avoid the poll tax may decide that the first essential precaution is to make sure that they do not register to vote. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is a step forward for democracy in Britain, his principles are very strange.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): The hon. Gentleman has been challenged by a leaflet by his own party which says:

"The present Government want to change that right"—

that is, the right to vote. Will the hon. Gentleman say that his party has no part in that and does not believe that it is true, and will he repudiate the leaflet?

Mr. Dewar: The Secretary of State obviously took some time to read the pamphlet, because he has not been listening to what I said, which is that there is a correlation and a connection between the poll tax and the right to vote. We are entitled to protest and to campaign about that.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that it is clear that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way,.

Mr. Dewar: I wish to make one or two points, and perhaps hon. Members will wish to comment on them.

Mr. Cormack: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. If there is such a good case against the poll tax, why is it necessary for the Opposition to resort to untruths?

Mr. Dewar: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that a disincentive to register to vote is built in to the system. That is extremely dangerous and we are entitled to protest.

I now move to the matter of accountability on which the Government place such weight. The idea that unless people pay their local taxation personally, they cannot be trusted to vote responsibly, is an odd argument which would have odd results if it were applied to income tax and the parliamentary franchise. It shows a distorted view of the family and suggests that in some way the family does not work together, but is a fragmented collection of individual units who do not co-operate in any way.

Mr. Ridley *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: On the subject of accountability——

Mr. Ridley: The leaflet goes on to say:

"They will issue identity cards"—

that is, the Government—

"and check up on citizens every year".

I give a categorical assurance that the Government will not issue identity cards. Will the hon. Gentleman now repudiate that leaflet?

Mr. Dewar: I am glad to have an assurance that the Minister is departing from the strong hints in the original Green Paper that there would be identity cards. I welcome that departure. The Minister knows that there will be a very complicated and complex computer-based tracing system which is in itself an invasion of privacy. The answer to the question "What did you get from Mrs. Thatcher's third term, daddy?" is "An alogarithm—a computerised identity number that goes with me everywhere." That justifies not just the concerns, of Labour Members, but the directly expressed fears of the Data Protection Registrar who was never consulted and who has made strong adverse comments about the way in which the matter has been organised.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: If the Secretary of State imagines that this is some sort of Labour party ramp opposition to the poll tax, let me draw his attention to the comments on accountability in a statement that was issued this week by Archbishop Winning, the Archbishop of Glasgow, Bishop Derek Rawcliffe, the Episcopal Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway, and the Rev. Maxwell Craig, convenor of the Church of Scotland church and nation committee. *[Interruption.]* The Government Front-Bench Member who shouted, "Oh God," in a rather bored, dispirited way, should be ashamed of himself.

[Mr. Dewar]

That impressive group of people warn us:

"Ignoring the wishes of the Scottish people on such a fundamental change can do nothing to maintain respect for the democratic values of which we are justly proud."

They go on to express concern that the new tax could damage family life and that young people may be encouraged to leave home.

They say:

"Caring families will be penalised financially for their commitment to look after an elderly, ill or disabled relative."

They conclude:

"In expressing these concerns we are prompted by considerations of social justice which is an imperative of our Christian faith."

It is not a narrow political argument; it is a moral and ethical concern about what is happening.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): It is strange that a Scotsman should be introducing a debate on an English Bill when he does not find Englishmen acceptable on Scottish Bills.

If the hon. Gentleman objects to a standard charge for the services of local authorities—which, let me remind him, is already the law in Scotland—how does he stand in the situation——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We want to get on with this intervention.

Mr. Fairbairn: How does the hon. Gentleman justify the fact that last week the BBC, which levies a standard charge on the pensioners of Perthshire for their licence fee even if they do not want to watch the BBC, sent up five people—at a return fare of £144 each with two nights in the Sheridan hotel and dining in the best places—in order to take one photograph of my house, which has one income coming into it and no local services, to compare it with a council house which has five incomes going into it in order to justify the idea that the standard charge is wrong?

Mr. Dewar: If the hon. and learned Gentleman has any complaints, he should take them to the BBC. But I think that that was to illustrate the admirable point that those who earn large salaries and pay high rates bills will receive an enormous advantage from the introduction of the poll tax.

The hon. and learned Gentleman raised the Scottish matter, so let me say that Scottish experience is of some interest to the House and introduce a Scottish comparison for him. He will remember that the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Association produced a report on its general election performance in which, after lamenting the fact that, on the poll tax, the Opposition had

"effectively exploited its weak points and successfully made it unpopular",

it went on:

"it was inadequately explained"

and, sadly, it concludes:

"indeed, it probably could not have been adequately explained".

I do not often have sympathy with Scottish Conservatives, but I have a deep sympathy with them on that problem.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North) *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: The Conservative and Unionist Association has a complex problem which needs ingenuity. It is unlikely that the hon. Gentleman will solve it.

Let me say a brief word about the problems of collection and compilation. There is no doubt that the system will be cumbersome, expensive and a threat to privacy. There is a touch of farce about some of the points that have had to be debated. There has been a long and protracted discussion, of almost theological nicety, about whether a bicycle can have four wheels. That becomes important in the looking-glass world of the poll tax. I am prepared to confide in the House that the answer, though we have not seen the order, is yes, a bicycle can have four wheels.

We are being asked to debate whether a beach hut or a buffet is a domestic hereditament. In many ways such questions are better than the Christmas quizzes with which some of us entertain ourselves over the Christmas season. But the point is that it is not a game; it is deadly earnest.

When one looks at the problem of the running registrar, the problems of canvassing on a day-to-day basis to keep it up to date, the way in which the records will be pillaged—housing benefits and education—for cross-referencing, the fact that 1·8 million people are being added to the register in Scotland who were not on the valuation roll and the 800,000 changes a year that will have to be traced, picked up and pursued, one begins to see why computers are being purchased and staff hired. My regional council is hiring 100 extra full-time staff on the clerical side alone and over 300 extra part-time staff for canvassing duties. If the Tories want to salvage something from the debate, that proves that there are occasions when public expenditure can be a wicked waste of money.

Mr. Devlin *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: No, I shall not give way. I have given way a great deal.

It is no coincidence that this experiment in fiscal archaeology is almost unique to the western world. I can claim—I suppose that this is blatant boasting—that I started to run the rumour that the poll tax was alive and well in Papua New Guinea in a Scottish Grand Committee debate in April 1986, and I am glad to notice that it is still up and running. Let me now repent and recant. That was a slander. The good people of Papua New Guinea have far too much sense to run a poll tax system and are not doing so. In the few parts of the world that had experimented with it, it has been abandoned.

I notice that there was an outbreak in Canada, but it was almost killed off in 1970 in Nova Scotia. I took the trouble to read the debates in the Nova Scotia legislature on that point, particularly the speech of the then leader of the Liberal party. Arguing, successfully as it turned out, because the tax was abolished the following year, he said:

"of all those against whom the poll tax is levied not more than 60 per cent. ever pay it."

Quite prophetically from a Scottish point of view, he went on to worry and express concern about the young single person, when he said that there is always the question of whether he is

"really living at home . . . or . . . over in New Glasgow working."

Those are exactly the kind of questions that we must face: where are they, how can they be traced, how can they be pursued? He ended:

"Income tax is a fair tax because it only taxes those that earn. Property tax is a fair tax because it only taxes those who own, but the poll tax is a tax which really goes against the grain, the Magna Carta and the British system".

It is rather ironic that it is from Canada that we get those warning words, but the House should heed them, even so.

I suggested that panic was an important motivation for the scheme that we now see. There is also an element of vendetta. The Government want to squeeze local government and undermine local democracy. There is a feeling that the man from Whitehall or the Scottish Office knows best. That is well illustrated in the essentials of the Bill.

Let me take one interesting example from my part of the world. In Scotland, we shall freeze the industrial and commercial rates. There will be no increase above the retail price index. That means, as every hon. Member knows, that all the buoyancy will be concentrated upon the poll tax and the unfortunate people who pay it. It means, almost inevitably, that built into the poll tax is an escalator on which we will all have to rise.

We calculated on the Government's own figures what would have happened to the poll tax in Scotland, given the freeze on commercial and industrial rates, if the whole system had been in operation. Let me take one example. I take it because it is a fair example. Inverness was precisely on guidelines in the given year; the Highland region, which is the other contributor to the rate burdens, was less than 0·5 per cent. over guidelines. Inverness was a model authority, and no doubt, an example to the whole nation in the eyes of the Secretary of State.

To meet the guidelines, rates in Inverness had to rise by 16 per cent. But if the new formula, were applied, with the freeze in commercial and industrial rates, the result would be an increase of 33 per cent. The poll tax would go up twice as much as the rates.

Faced with those figures, the hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang) had to have recourse to telling the truth. For those interested in the small change of British politics, the hon. Gentleman is the Minister of State, Scottish Office. When it was pointed out to him that, if his own arithmetic were applied, it would mean twice as high a rise in the poll tax as in the rates, the hon. Gentleman said that the main fallacy underlying such calculations was that the community charge system would have no effect on the spending behaviour of local authorities. He added:

"I very much doubt whether authorities would dare to maintain their spending policies at levels which would lead to community charge increases at some of the high levels mentioned."

I object to the Minister's arrogance in saying that no local authority would "dare", when it has a democratic mandate. It reveals that the Minister is attempting to force local authorities to dismantle services. Where is the humanity or justice in that?

Even more significant, if Inverness did not "dare" to raise the poll tax—as the Minister suggests—to accord with the budget on which it had decided, the inevitable consequence would be that it would have to claw its expenditure down below the guidelines that the Scottish Office itself had said were necessary. A particularly cruel squeeze is built into the system.

The crisis in local government has certainly come. It is well documented, and no Opposition Member will deny it. Let me give the House a quotation:

"Any further measures to constrain or limit local spending from the centre would virtually spell the end of local government as a separate elected element in the land."

It is a terrible comment on the state of affairs that we have reached that nearly every hon. Member would agree with that statement by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 26 September this year. The right hon. Gentleman must know that if we have reached the point of no return at which local government has almost disappeared as an elected element in the land, that is the direct result of his policies over eight or nine years.

The trouble is that persistent cuts have left the local authority financial system bearing a burden for which it was never designed. The answer must not be a poll tax, which is unwanted and unworkable, but to reverse the policies that have done the damage. That is the simple conclusion which should be drawn from the Secretary of State's own remarks.

Let me remind the House of a tale that has been going the rounds in Scotland. A nine-year-old girl in Paisley, when asked to comment on the character of the Prime Minister, said that she was the kind of woman from whom, if your ball went into her garden, you would not get it back. The truth is that this friendless system is being sustained only by the Prime Minister's strong obstinacy and prejudice.

A feeling of widespread concern—a fear that we are being faced with a fundamentally unfair system — is shared by many people who do not take my political stance and, indeed, by many who may benefit financially, at least in the short term, from the change. It was put concisely and brutally, and, I thought, effectively, in yesterday's debate by the right hon. Member for Henley, who referred to the strains, stresses and discontents that were bound to arise from the new system. He went on:

"All of these resentments will build on a platform of crude regression which seeks to make equal in the eyes of the tax collector the rich and the poor, the slum dweller and the landed aristocrat, the elderly pensioners living on their limited savings and the most successful of today's entrepreneurs."
—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1141.]

That has the ring of truth, and there is added authority in the source from which it comes. It is to the right hon. Gentleman's credit that he put his view so clearly and so strongly. Only the toughies, the tankies in the Prime Minister's new model army — and, of course, the placemen working their tickets—would dispute that. At the end of the day, their political reward for their obstinacy will be a martyr's crown.

The resentment that is already felt in Scotland, and will come and grow in England, goes beyond ordinary political debate. Parliament did not linger overlong on the poll tax when it was proposed for Scotland; it must now learn its lessons from that. Nearly a year ago, the right hon. Member for Henley voted cheerfully for the poll tax in Scotland, a year after his escape from the Cabinet. This time, to his credit, he is standing up to be counted.

Already there is anger and dismay in my part of the country, where the poll tax looms. I warn hon. Members that that will soon come south of the border. In Scotland, pressures are being imposed on legality and on the acceptability of the law on an unprecedented scale. It is bad for the system, and bad for Parliament. That is why I believe that the House must now reflect the concern that is so widespread. Hon. Members have a duty to speak out, and parliament and democracy will be the poorer if that opportunity is passed up. I recognise the inevitable pressures on Back Benchers, but I believe that many of them should resist those pressures.

We shall start our fight against the Bill in the Lobbies tonight. I very much hope that those who share our reservations will have the courage to join us.

5.6 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Perhaps by intervening for what I hope will be only a few moments in my customarily low key I may restore a rather more sober note to the proceedings than was imparted to them by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

In the speech that he made yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that the Bill's characteristics were that it was fair, workable and, above all, accountable. I have seldom heard three greater fallacies put forward in the House with such little conviction. The fact is that the Bill runs counter to all the long-accepted tenets of the principles of taxation.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, in his exuberant opening speech today—his voice rising even higher, with its customary Welsh lilt—may not have done much to persuade the Welsh, but he certainly persuaded us, the English, that if the Bill ever reaches the statute book the Welsh will get a much better deal out of it than we will, owing to his unexampled skills in negotiation.

Let me say a word about each of the characteristics of the Bill that my right hon. Friend mentioned. The first is "workable". Every authority agrees that the Bill is far less workable than the rating system, that it will cost at least twice as much to run, and that the means necessary to implement it fully would be abhorrent to most of us. For that reason alone, it stands condemned.

Secondly, it is said that, above all, it is accountable. The point has been made many times that that statement is inexplicable. The amount coming from local government towards its costs will be lowered enormously, but that is said to be one of the reasons why we should support the Bill. However, that is not accountability, and accountability for businesses will be removed entirely. Let us accept those facts, but we should not say that accountability is a powerful argument for the Bill.

Before coming to the point of fairness, I should refer to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), in which he recalled the origins of this great debate 13 years ago. The autumn manifesto of the Conservative party said clearly:

"Secondly, in the normal lifetime of a Parliament"——

that is within five years, not in the first Session of Parliament——

"we shall abolish the domestic rating system and replace it by taxes more broadly based and related to people's ability to pay."

That was our undertaking, and it is still the right one for any Government with regard to local taxation.

It is true that at that time any thought of a poll tax was banished from the mind, in the same way as my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley said it had been banished ever since until the Bill was brought forward. When I say that the Bill is not fair, I do so because it is not related to the ability to pay. In fairness to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, he has declared in speech after speech that the tax should not be related to people's ability to pay [HON. MEMBERS: "Absolutely right."] My hon. Friends are absolutely wrong, and I shall tell them why. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about rebates?"] The more that my hon. Friends or the Secretary of State give way to pressure for rebates, the less fair they are making the tax. If it is fair to have a poll tax, as soon as it is changed the fairness is removed. I believe that the poll tax is unfair in any case, so I can, therefore, advocate changes in it.

If the Bill reaches the statute book, I hope that students, nurses and those in similar positions will be exempted. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why? Don't they use local services"] Yes, but it is an unfair burden on them.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Heath: Last week, during the debate on the Education Reform Bill, it was possible to give way because there was not sufficient time to make speeches. However, today there is plenty of time for hon. Members to make speeches.

I shall quote what the Secretary of State has said on the matter:

"We also believe that redistributive taxation should be a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer."

That basic point shows a complete difference of philosophy and political belief between the Secretary of State and those who support him and the political parties in this country and, above all, the Conservative party. We have always believed that redistributive taxation should take place through the rates and the property and income tax systems.

There is no doubt about the Secretary of State's view on this matter, because he has made it clear publicly on many occasions. This is the question that my party must answer. I am not interested in the Labour party because it has no power, and is unlikely to have any in the future. However, this is what we must face. Are we to change the philosophy of our party for the past century and the tenets of taxation for far longer and move to a position in which we cannot use the local government system for redistributive taxation?

Mr. Fairbairn: Had the fairness of the prices and incomes policy when compared to the ability to earn not eventually ended in my right hon. Friend's Government, and he had, in the five years of Parliament, introduced the scheme that he has read out, may we hear what it would have been?

Mr. Heath: Yes, I am coming to that. If my hon. and learned Friend now accepts that local government will be financed according to ability to pay, I shall tell him exactly what our view was. It was outlined in the Green Paper of 1972 and discussed in a Special Committee. We proposed that national taxation and social service benefits should be amalgamated, and that required the complete computerisation of the system. It was worked out by Lord Barber, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his assistants, but to my great regret, in the Special Committee, the Labour party objected to it. It would have saved, in the Treasury and Inland Revenue alone, nearly 20,000 people. That was a sensible method of saving manpower in the Civil Service that would have simplified matters for every citizen in this country with regard to direct taxation and social security benefits.

We planned that that could be done by 1979. That computerisation required an immense effort. It still does, yet we are nowhere near reaching that position. It is the right way to handle direct taxation and social security benefits. Having computerised national taxation and social security benefits, it would have been simple to move to a local income tax, which could have been combined with the national system. It would still cost far less,

produce what is required and work according to people's ability to pay. It would be a much better solution than the poll tax.

Mr. Ridley: I am excited and interested to hear that it was a local income tax that we were proposing at that time. The rate of the local income tax in the borough of Camden, according to the present level of spending, would be 25·6p in the pound, whereas in my right hon. Friend's constituency it would be about 5p in the pound. How would he prevent people leaving Camden and settling in Bexley because of the enormous effect, which could be measured in thousands of pounds, that that would have on their net pay?

Mr. Heath: This is not peculiar to local income tax. If Camden has high taxation, people can move to boroughs with lower taxation. The borough of Bexley, of which my constituency is a part, has had stable rates since 1983, yet we have had precious little reward for it. We have heard only constant attacks on local government by my right hon. Friend from the Front Bench. Why? Because of a handful of loony Left councils. Does my right hon. Friend expect reliable, responsible people to enter local government, bearing in mind the future that they can foresee?

One of the most discreditable aspects of the Front Bench is the way in which it has constantly attacked local government, without questioning its efficiency. Bexley has been penalised by low payments for Bexley health authority, which has meant that we cannot sufficiently man our new hospital, Queen Mary's, as I have told the House before.

To say that differences in taxation between boroughs is an argument against a local income tax is completely fallacious and completes my right hon. Friend's quartet. The poll tax is unfair and unworkable. It does not increase accountability and it will be immensely damaging to the Conservative party. I am not concerned about the attacks from the Front Bench on the Labour party. What concerns me is the future of the Conservative party. This measure will always be held against us.

We should look further ahead into the future and make the necessary adjustments in the way that I have suggested. That is only sensible direction to take for national taxation and local government finance.

5.19 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): This tax represents the most massive act of maldistribution in centuries. It is manipulative in purpose and mendacious in presentation. The Secretary of State for Wales is like Gaul; he is divided into two parts. He is animated and vigorous when he attacks the Labour party, but he talks in rather dull Civil Service speak when he defends all aspects of Government policy, and so it was when he defended this infamous poll tax. The fact is that, like the majority of his Cabinet colleagues, he does not want the poll tax. The genuine majority in the House does not want the poll tax and the majority of people in this country do not want the poll tax. It is being forced through against people's basic belief that tax should be an assessment of what is fair.

Most hon. Members—probably every one of us—ought to declare an interest. I shall declare mine. I shall benefit substantially from the poll tax. But I should not be its beneficiary. Indeed, none of us should, and we all know it.

The tax also goes against the basic argument that I thought was now agreed by both sides of the House—that it is time something was done about inner-city deprivation and urban policy. There is no doubt that if the Government continue with their deep-seated animus against local government, we shall not be able to renew the inner cities and we shall not be able to restore good local government to this country.

There was a time when the Conservative party stood for good, sound local government. I have lived in Devon all my life. For most of that time the local authority, although independent, has been controlled by Conservatives. For a substantial part of that time, the city of Plymouth has been controlled by Conservatives. I have opposed them vigorously and disagreed with them on many policies, but, with one or two exceptions, they have been dedicated to good local government. It has to be admitted that the rebuilding of the city of Plymouth was carried out first by exceptional Labour councillors and later by Conservative councillors.

This nonsense that there is no good whatever in local government has got to be stopped. The responsibility to stop it still rests heavily with Labour Members and, in fairness to them, it seems that they are trying. At long last the damage done to the good name of local government by a minority of hard-Left Labour-controlled local councils seems to have got through to them. Should that damage mean that we should distort our whole tax system? This legislation will be difficult to repeal; I only hope that it can be done. Does that extremism mean that we have to change the very basis on which local government and central taxation have been founded?

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) is right. It has been accepted that progressivity and fairness in taxation can apply both centrally and locally. We all know that the rating system was becoming increasingly discredited and that reform was essential. Reform will involve, first of all, the integration of tax and benefits—we all know that that has to come—and preferably the abolition of the national insurance contribution, which hits the low-paid wage earner particularly hard. Once that has been achieved, we may be able to find a way of grafting on this system so that it has the progressivity of the banded community charge proposed by the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young).

The Secretary of State for the Environment, who has now left us, spoke about his hon. Friend in derisory terms, and we are used to that from the Secretary of State. He said that his hon. Friend was not even in a bespoke suit but in an off-the-peg suit. What sort of suit is the Secretary of State wearing? It is not his usual Savile row suit; instead, the proposal owes everything to Smith square. The tax has been tailored in the belief that it will help the Tory party. I agree with the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) that this will be called "the Tory tax".

The Government thought that because practically every Tory voter would gain from the introduction of a poll tax, it would be popular. That assumption is not completely true, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) pointed out. A substantial number of Tory voters are pensioners, and pensioners, particularly single pensioners will suffer. Age Concern says that one third of single pensioners will be worse off under the poll tax, and that applies to some married couples, too. Furthermore, it has not always been the well paid who have voted

[Dr. David Owen]

Conservative in the past, as many of us know to our cost. Many people on council estates have voted Conservative for many years. That is the first thing that will have to be realised. The poll tax is not quite so well tailored as the Government thought. It does not have quite the proportional tailoring of a Weatherill suit. It owes everything to Thatcherism and Tebbitry and nothing to the true Conservative party. It shows no real understanding of where the votes will start to eke away from the Tory party.

I am not in favour of unfairness. That is what I dislike about the poll tax. It is not only unfair but virtually unworkable and unaccountable, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said. I do not like the spirit that lies behind it. I do not like the feeling that only the Chancellor can decide the level of taxation and that everything has to be decided by this Government, as though they had a God-given right to occupy the Government Benches in perpetuity. They confidently think that they have.

It looks as though this debate will be like the many debates that we have had over the past six or seven years in which the vote does not follow the voice. We have become all too used to having speeches against a measure and votes in favour of it. The time will have to come—in this Parliament—when the Government are checked, as they properly should be checked, in the Division Lobbies. That ought to happen tonight and it should be done with the assistance of the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton on his principle.

One can argue about details of banding the tax, although it will not be easy to do. It would be much better to integrate it as part of an integrated tax and benefit system. If the Tory party thinks that the poll tax will increase its standing in this country and that in the long term it will increase its vote in the part of the country in which it has undoubtedly been eroded over time, it will have to think again.

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: I shall not give way. I said that I would keep my speech to 10 minutes and I shall do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] I give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Howard: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us how fairness for the people of Camden will be achieved by his party's proposal of local income tax? They will be faced with a 25p local income tax and with plummeting property values as people leave Camden for neighbouring authorities. Will he tell the House how that will help with the problems of inner-city deprivation to which he referred?

Dr. Owen: That is a classic illustration of why one should not give way to the monkey when the organ grinder has already used exactly the same argument. The answer is quite clear. Income tax is broadly fair; poll tax is basically unfair and everybody knows it. The Government will push the Bill through in the Division Lobbies tonight, but they will regret it in future years.

5.28 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): As always, I listened with great interest to the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). As he knows, I have shared a number of his views in recent years. However, I choose to disagree with him on this occasion.

There is an obvious difficulty with our present system of local authority finance. There is also a difficulty with any of the available alternatives. Politicians had better be straightforward about this; people outside the House are not convinced by easy denunciations of Government proposals, particularly when such denunciations are not backed up by any sensible proposals of alternatives from Opposition Members. If there was a straightforward and easy alternative to the present local authority financial system, it would have been found 30 years ago. The fact that no alternative has been found and the fact that this afternoon and yesterday we have heard a number of different solutions put forward only convinces the electorate of the difficulty of finding an answer to the problem we face. It would be better if politicians addressed this matter fairly and straightforwardly and acknowledged that they are dealing with a difficult area in which easy solutions cannot be found.

Bearing in mind the different jobs we now expect local authority taxes to do, the difficulty of finding an alternative has been much compounded. My electorate in Bury will be deeply dissatisfied with the paucity of argument from the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. It is not sufficient for the Labour party merely to claim that it will produce a White Paper. It is not sufficient to rely on a policy that was unformed and ill thought out in June and expect people outside to be convinced by it now. I do not think that we should be surprised that the policy is unclear and ill thought out, but I do not think that the Labour party should expect any great support for its policy from the country.

Most people's reaction to the proposed community charge has, understandably, been based on their own practical experience — whether they will pay more or less. The question that was always posed, "Shall we reform the rates?" was a false question. People did not mean that. They really meant, "Can we pay less?" That was what was behind the argument. That cannot always be done. If we accept that a fixed sum of money has to come from the Government and if we accept that local authority expenditure will continue to rise, it is simply not possible to reform local government finance without there being winners and losers. Therefore, with these proposals, as with any alternative, that can be expected.

Although people's response to the community charge has been based largely on their own pocket, there are wider considerations behind the Bill and I should like to deal with three of them. I want to look at the damage being done under the present system to the relationship between central and local government, at accountability and the flat-rate concept and at the failure of any of the alternatives to deal with the real problems facing local government.

First, I shall deal with the damage being done to the relationship between central and local government by the present rate support grant system and the general system of local authority financing. I have had two close experiences with local authorities. Each has illustrated a slightly different problem of the present system and each was serious in its own way.

My first experince of local government was with the London borough of Haringey where I served for two years

as a local councillor. I learned a great number of things in that borough. I learned to respect good Labour councillors and good officers in that borough who were trying their best to deal with an outer-London borough with inner-London characteristics. There were many problems. However, I saw another side to the local authority. I saw the gradual collapse of decent people in the Labour party in that borough as some of the stranger and more militant elements of the local Labour party began to take control. I saw the heartbreak. There is not a single Conservative councillor on that borough who does not know of a good, former Labour colleague who has left the party and the council because of the activity of other Labour councillors.

I saw the failure of the existing system of control. I saw the gradual deterioration of that borough. I saw confrontation and outright hostile intolerance of those with an opposing view, whether in government, or among councillors opposing the militant controlling Labour group within their own party. I wondered in despair what could be done in a borough such as that to restore some normality and decent local responsibility.

My second experience of local government has been through my relationship as a Member of Parliament with my local authority in Bury. The problem was rather different there. The metropolitan borough council in Bury is thrifty and frugal. It is slightly less so now under Labour control than it was under Conservative control until 1986. However, for a metropolitan borough it is a tight and efficient authority.

Bury and Haringey share a problem. The way in which the existing local authority finance system works sets up a problem of relationship between town hall and Whitehall. Over the years the various measures used to control local authority spending have hit both those authorities in different and slightly unfair ways. Haringey deserved it, Bury did not. I maintain that the way in which the Government have sought to control local authority finance, whatever the decent intention behind it, has fundamentaly damaged the relationship between central and local government.

I listened with care to the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) yesterday. He suggested that rate capping had been effective to a certain extent and that it might continue as a reasonable way of controlling local authority finance by central Government. I disagree. In the short term it might be an effective way of keeping local rates down, but only at the cost of further damaging the relationship between central and local government and of further undermining pluralism in our society. I believe that that is too great a price to pay.

We all believed that rate capping and measures such as targets and penalties set by central Government had only a limited shelf life. It was worth while and useful to make the attempt because there were great problems about local authority spending that had to be tackled. However, ultimately the tension between Whitehall and the town halls and the damage being done to relationships was too great. I do not believe that we could have carried on with rate capping and targets and penalties. Therefore, I have to disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley and say that it was not effective at all. It was ultimately going to lead to disaster.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Will my hon. Friend add that rate capping has had limited effects? It has been substantially applied in London where it has had an effect, but it has not helped domestic ratepayers or, more particularly, businesses in many of the industrial areas of this country where it has not been applied? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is business in areas such as his that will benefit from the uniform business rate being introduced by the Bill?

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. The effect of the uniform business rate in my constituency in the north of England will be largely beneficial. It will be enormously helpful and will help to bring about further jobs.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): Rate capping is an ingredient of the Bill. The fact it is in the Bill shows a lack of faith in the system that the Government are putting forward.

Mr. Burt: I hope that rate capping will not be used. I fully appreciate that it is in the Bill, but I genuinely believe, like many others on both sides of the House, that decisions on local finance must be made as locally as possible. We know that central Government have a role to play. That has been admitted on both sides of the House. We know that when the Labour party was in government in 1976 it first began to take strict control of local authority finance by reducing rate support grant to put pressure on local authorities. None of us would want the role of central Government to be exclusive. I hope that the way in which the new proposals will work will increase the opportunity for local authorities to control their own finance and, therefore, remove the need to consider rate capping or anything like it. Although it may be in the Bill, I hope that it will not need to be used.

Bury's dissatisfaction was not with the system of rate capping, but with the way in which the rate support grant was calculated and worked and its feeling that it was an efficient authority which was being penalised along with the inefficient and profligate authorities. It was never able to make a satisfactory case on its own and never able fully to be in charge of its own spending. Therefore, it suffered under the rough decisions when other local authorities deserved those decisions rather more.

Many local authorities controlled by the Conservative party throughout the country would echo that complaint. We have had rate support grant statements in the House during which Conservative Members have been up in arms at the way in which the system has worked and their authorities have suffered. I hope that they will see the legislation as a possible way out of that problem. I hope that it will command their support on that basis alone.

The problems of accountability and the way in which the RSG has worked will be assisted by the effect of the new community charge. The RSG will be simplified and I welcome the paper which the Government have put forward showing how the new grant system will work for local government. I hope that, in the calculations, some consideration will be given to qualitative rather than quantitative decisions, so it will be possible for good authorities to be distinguished from bad. Ultimately, that decision must be made at local level.

The Government's proposals will improve local accountability. It is difficult to ensure a better link between the local vote and local decisions. Many people are influenced in voting at local authority elections by the performance of the Government and by national factors,

[Mr. Burt]

but it is defeatist merely to assume that that must go on. It would be far better to work to create a better system of local linking so that, when people go to the ballot box at local level, they know that their decisions will have an effect on their local authority. I do not believe that that happens now or that it works well. These measures aim to improve the position.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend has a reputation for fairness which we all admire. Does he think that everybody, regardless of income, should pay the same? Is it right for the managing director of the biggest firm in his constituency to pay the same as the vicar?

Mr. Burt: With respect to my hon. Friend, I shall turn to that point in a moment. There is not a good enough link between expenditure decisions made by local authorities and the local ballot box.

Mr. Morgan: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Burt: No, I shall not give way. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) asked a question about fairness. If there were no other contributions to local authority finance but a flat rate poll tax, the short answer would be no. However, bearing in mind that there are other sources of local authority finance, particularly the major part contributed by the national Exchequer, a major part of which is in turn contributed through a progressive income tax element, a flat rate charge has its place.

Central Government sought to control local authority finance through targets, penalties and rate capping. Those methods were ultimately unsatisfactory and doomed to failure because accountability at local level could not be guaranteed and because the voters were not aware of the proper link between the two. The community charge and the flat-rate element will put it right.

The flat-rate proportion can be altered in two ways. If we are so concerned about the effect of that flat rate upon those who will be paying it, we can try to ensure that that flat rate becomes an increasingly smaller proportion of what is spent by the local authority. That can happen in two ways. Local authorities can become more aware of the marginal impact of their decisions on the flat rate, thus controlling their income more tightly because they have no desire to see the community charge rise. All authorities will have a vested interest in keeping that flat rate down. If they do so, the proportion of that flat rate in respect of the rest of the money contributed to local authority finance will fall.

The flat-rate proportion would also fall if central Government increased the money which they put in through the national Exchequer. At the moment, the Government are rightly not tempted to do that because they are not certain about how local authorities spend and they have many examples of local authority profligacy. If, however, this works as they think it will to control local authority expenditure, and the spreading of the accountability base means that local people will make their decisions on marginal expenditure much more carefully, the Government may be tempted to put more money into the pot. That would also reduce the proportion being paid by those who pay the flat-rate poll tax.

If the flat-rate charge was the only way in which people contributed to local authority finance, it would not be fair. However, bearing in mind that it takes its place as a minority proportion of a system in which money comes from other places, there is a role for it and it is not as unfair as some of my colleagues have said.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): How much will the hon. Gentleman get out of it?

Mr. Burt: My wife and I will be better off, but not that much. We must wait and see. I have not worked it out. I live in a three-bedroomed semi-detached house in the metropolitan borough of Bury. If my local authority continues to spend as it is doing now, there will not be that much difference. The hon. Gentleman may wish to tackle other hon. Members about that issue.

I wish to deal with the way in which the alternatives, which have not been given much of an airing, would damage my constituency. A rating revaluation would devastate low-rated terrace properties in the north of England. My constituents would be hammered by that. This problem has not been explained to people. I wish that the Government had made the position clearer in the build-up to discussion of the community charge. If my constituents knew how much they would be paying under a revaluation, they would be shocked and devastated. I am pleased that that will not happen.

I wish to turn to the capital values proposed by the Labour party in its new alternative to our proposals. I do not see how that is any more helpful than the present system. There is no direct link between ability to pay and the capital value of a house. It is not fair that someone on a low income, who has to buy into the London property market, should pay an enormous amount on the capital value of the property, while people with a higher income in my constituency in a much more modest property should pay much less. If the Labour argument is about fairness, how do they square that one? They cannot.

I have served on Haringey borough council and seen how local councils can manipulate finance. My constituents would not be desperately pleased to have a local income tax in the hands of the people who currently control many town halls throughout the country. That would be very damaging. Government figures suggest that the community charge in Bury will be about £244 per head, while the income tax per head would be about £550.

If people admit that it is difficult to reform the system, that it has taken 30 years to do so and that no system is perfect, and if they consider the alternatives and how the Government are tackling the problem, they will recognise that it is a straightforward policy which is worth more than a try. It will succeed in bringing about a better system of accountability at local level. Above all — and this is important to the future of a pluralist democracy—it will help to restore a better relationship between central Government and local government, a link which has been so badly damaged over recent years and for which so much of the blame must be laid at the door of members of the Labour party in town halls throughout the country.

5.47 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House for the opportunity of contributing to this debate after my enforced absence. As we approach the Christmas recess, I wondered whether the BBC would invite us, as the most famous amateur dramatic society in the country, to

present something for Christmas. The most appropriate production would be "A Christmas Carol" but it would be difficult to decide whether the Prime Minister would play Scrooge and the Secretary of State for the Environment would play the part of Christmas Yet to Come.

The poll tax offers the most devastating prospect for those least able to fend for themselves. In my constituency, an increase of 109 per cent. in the amount that people pay on average is in prospect. Hon. Members may cast their minds back to a book called "The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist". Mugsborough would have nothing on Cirencester and Tewkesbury because in the Mugsborough of the late 20th century we shall once again see the ragged trousered philanthropist. Those who cannot afford to pay will not only end up paying more, but will be paying for services which are in the main consumed largely by those who can afford to pay.

Hon. Members should examine any part of the country — any county or city — and consider what happens within such areas. They will find that, in the main, those who are taking up further and higher education come from areas that pay high rates and can afford to do so. Those who live in the best environments pay the most. Those who use library and other services the most live in areas where people can afford to do so. Those who live in more wealthy areas of low density and with long drives — in areas where they do not demand that we put dustbins at the end of the drive — tend to live in larger houses. In my city people in Hallam will get away with paying the same amount for having their dustbins emptied, but they cost the city council twice as much as those in inner-city flats.

Mr. Marlow: They pay income tax, do they not?

Mr. Blunkett: Obviously, they pay more income tax, but that is part of the fairness of the redistribution within our system. If the present rating system has any unfairness — of course it has — it is partly because of the Government's deliberate actions over the past eight years.

There has been a deliberate destabilisation of the relationship between local government and central Government and of the local government finance system. It has discredited the system that has lasted for almost 400 years and would have reached its 400th birthday had we not had 43 Bills affecting local government, over 20 of which affected local government finance. Over the past eight years, the equivalent of 4p in income tax has been taken from people in terms of grant distribution. Penalties and the holdback system have ensured that rates have gone up while services have remained the same or have deteriorated. There has been a deliberate policy of undermining people's confidence in a system that was working, even if it needed updating.

Above all, there has been a failure to go ahead with the statutory revaluation which, under any system, whether it be the present one or capital values, would have given a greater degree of equity in terms of what people pay for different properties in different parts of the country or within different districts, county or city areas. That is what the Government have done. If we had wanted to change the system, we might have laid down some of the principles that have been discussed over the past two days. Is the tax cheap and easy to collect? Is it difficult to evade? Will it be seen to be fair in terms of people's ability to pay? When it is not progressive, will there be some choice?

There is a choice in respect of people's income, housing, property and rates. There is even a choice under the value added tax system. There are those who say that there should not be a choice and that a flat rate should be levied for everyone, whatever their income and needs. Is that applicable to VAT? If it is, the charges that were made against the Labour party during the general election that we were scaremongering about VAT on food and other essential items will be proved to have been dishonest. The Government will justify it in due course, in the same way as they justify the flat rate poll tax now.

Should a tax increase people's dependence on the state, worsening the poverty trap, especially from a Government who preach removing dependence on the state. As the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and others asked, should the tax damage family life? Should it discourage people from caring for each other in sickness and old age?

Should it hit those who volunteer or are employed in caring services? Community Service Volunteers, to name one organisation, actually gets accommodation, meals and a small extra which might be considered to be pocket money on top. But, of course, its workers are not entitled to supplementary benefit or the new income support, and they are not obviously seeking work. Should they pay the poll tax? Under the Government's proposals, they would. So much for those who believe in volunteering. Under the Government's present proposals, they will not receive a rebate because they do not fall into the two categories of being unemployed or on income support. They have not yet been excluded, along with everybody else who will eventually be excluded to ensure that the Tory party is re-elected.

Should the tax hit people's liberty and privacy? Should the tax link democratic rights with the ability to pay? Should accountability and responsibility be seen in terms of a financial contribution to the community?

Unless the hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) reads the Bill, he will be unaware that the icy fingers of "poll capping" are reaching out and grabbing the throat of accountability and responsibility before it has even had a chance to be tested. Let us not talk about a poll tax bringing in those who do not pay so that payment can be linked with citizenship and the right to decide what happens in a community. As a friend of mine pointed out, there might be other ways in which people should be encouraged to make a contribution to the community. Finance is not the basis of our democracy.

If we are in the business of asking questions on what the Government are about, I have a fundamental question. Do the Government say that the Administration are abandoning any pretence that there will be a distributive element in forms of taxation? If there is no justification for it at local level, when will there be no justification for it at national level? If there is no justification at local level for people voting and participating unless they pay — those above income support will be hit hardest by the proposal — when will we no longer be able to justify income tax at national level, never mind reducing it steadily? We must bear in mind that 20 million people do not pay income tax because they are below those levels.

What would we put in place of the poll tax if it is implemented? To begin with, I believe, and Opposition Members would support, that some form of property tax, updated, revised and modernised, is justified and should be progressed.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): When the hon. Gentleman was leader of Sheffield city council, his submission to the Government was for a local income tax. He will have read an article in the Sheffield *Star* of 15 December 1987, which states:

"The days of hand-to-mouth annual budgeting, and ineffectively blaming the Government when grants and financial regulations fail to meet expectations are a thing of the past".

So said the new council leader. You have changed your opinion. You are not saying that it is a local income tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must not bring me into the debate.

Mr. Patnick: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside, (Mr. Blunkett) has changed his stance. He said that it is not a local income tax any more; it is now a property tax. We in this place require stability and an alternative that we stick with all the time.

Mr. Blunkett: If the hon. Gentleman had given me an opportunity to draw a breath, I would have gone on to say that I should like to pick up the words of my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) yesterday. He phrased it slightly less pointedly than I shall. I am in favour of a property tax that is supplemented by a fair tax on incomes. That means a local income tax.

Before someone screeches "Camden" for the umpteenth time in the past two days, a tax that was levied together with a property tax which distributed the burden of income and contribution would be fair if the equalisation system on which it is based—just as it is true of capital values—took adequate account of the problems of the area and ensured that every area received grant. At the moment, the borough of Camden receives no such Government grant. Nobody's income tax goes into the London borough of Camden. The penalty and holdback system has denied it a fair share of national resources. Conservative Members should get their facts straight.

The Secretary of State for the Environment asked whether people would flood across the boundary into Bexley—a new lemming system, led by the Secretary of State, with multiple occupation of the house that is owned by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). It bears no consideration. If people were able to link the valuation system with how much is paid in the pound and a small supplementary income tax, some sanity would be restored to local government finance.

It is necessary to spell out the way in which the present system works. The rebate system is calculated on values and the person's income together. The valuation system then allows local government to levy pence in the pound. However, there are such distortions that various Secretaries of State—not just the present one—have talked about Sheffield as being the second highest rated authority in the country. If I had given the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) time, he might have got round to mentioning that. There is such a gross misunderstanding of the system they operate that they are either inept or sailing very close to misleading the population, including the House. In fact, Sheffield is 61st in terms of the amount paid in rates. It is not pence in the pound that determines what people pay, but the combination of rateable value and pence in the pound. It would help if some of the people who abuse the present system understood the way in which it operates and if they told the truth about its present impact.

I should like people outside the House to hear the truth about the impact of the poll tax. Present statistics have often been used in a way which takes grant-related expenditure assessment into account, but not the actual expenditure of individual authorities. Figures have been used that do not include the removal of the safety net to 1994. Of course, one cannot expect a Government to tell the truth before the next general election or to allow people to feel the full impact of what they are inflicting upon them. I give the Government credit for having enough common sense to know that they must phase in the poll tax so that people cannot feel the full impact of the consequences of the Government's actions.

Furthermore, the Government do not spell out the ways in which the tax will have to be raised to avoid problems of evasion and non-payment. In the notes on the Bill, the Government include something to take account of the fact that there will be increased court costs as a consequence of people being taken to court for non-payment. However, they do not include anything in their calculations for the fact that the amount due has not been paid to the local authorities concerned. The sooner Conservative Members who are at the moment favourably disposed to vote for the Bill calculate in real terms what it will mean for their constituents, the sooner we can overturn the nonsense.

I repeat the warnings that have been given by hon. Members of all parties, including past Secretaries of State for the Environment. It was in 1377 that the first person tried to introduce a poll tax in this country. Four years later, he was hanged, drawn and quartered in the peasant's uprising. The man who opened the gates of London to let him in has been made famous by the presence of the Labour party's headquarters on Walworth road—he was Mayor Walworth. History may be apocryphal in terms of what will happen in four years time.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose*——

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock) *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: As the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said last night, there is nothing— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Janman *rose*——

Mr. Blunkett: I shall let the hon. Gentleman intervene.

Mr. Janman: It is just a small point. I believe that, in the 14th century, the uprising to which the hon. Gentleman has referred started in Fobbing, which is currently in the borough of Thurrock, near my constituency. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that in the 20th century the Government's proposals will not cause any repetition of that uprising.

Mr. Blunkett: I must agree with the hon. Gentleman —we shall not hang, draw and quarter anybody—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]—because some of us will not be able to afford the silken rope with which to do so.

The prime task facing the House tonight is not to inflict on people something against which they will rise up, but to protect them from the consequences of the Government's actions. We may not be able to stop the Bill tonight—I hope that we can—but nothing is more

certain than that this proposal is doomed to failure from the start and, with it, those who are inflicting it on all of us.

6.4 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): Whether we agree or disagree with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) we all concede that he knows a great deal more about local government than most of the rest of us in the House.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said that the Government were behaving as though they had a God-given right to govern. We all know that God is a Conservative — *[Laughter]*. Well, there is a serious point. This legislation will be so unpopular and disruptive that the assumption behind it is that there will not be a change of Government during the political lifetimes of the two current Front Benches, or it would not be introduced. Looking at the Opposition, one is bound to say that that assumption is probably justified. However, it is a dangerous assumption. In the British political system the biggest check on any Government is the fear of being turned out of office at the next election. That fear no longer applies. This legislation is the result of that fairly dangerous, if probably well-founded, assumption.

Although it was not altogether clear from the speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) today, it is generally conceded that there is a disease. However, I do not know whether this is the right remedy. It is not only a question of loony-Left councils. During the past two years, my constituents have faced rate increases of 40 per cent., even with councils that are exceedingly economical and do not splash money about on lavish projects. They have also seen 11 or 12 different systems of local government finance since 1979, nearly every one of which has been worse than its predecessor. The question now is whether this system will be worse than its predecessor.

The community charge has one considerable advantage. I am lucky enough and have the honour to represent one of the richest constituencies in the country. Therefore, a great many of my constituents will do very well out of it. As I have been asked to declare my interest, I shall do very well out of it myself. However, many of the well-off people in my constituency are extremely uneasy and look on this proposal with considerable misgivings. They do not understand why they, who are living in nice houses with large incomes, should pay exactly the same as people who live in less nice houses and who have much smaller incomes. At the same time, the small businesses in my constituency are likely to do very badly.

There seems a considerable inconsistency in the Bill because it seeks to retain a property tax for business but to abolish it for domestic payers. If a property tax is a good thing, surely it should apply to all? If it is not a good thing and is unfair, it should be abolished.

There is definitely a disease. We have heard a little less in defence of the poll tax today by hon. Members saying that it can be described as fair. It seems impossible to do that. As has been said, it bears no relation to the ability to pay. To say that the poll tax is fair is like saying that Mr. Shakoor Rana is a fair umpire. In both cases, using the word "fair" is an abuse of language.

Not only is the community charge unfair, but it is largely unworkable. The Rating and Valuation Association, which is an extremely staid body, not at all given to headline-making predictions, thinks that there will be 5 million summonses every year under the Bill to get people to pay the charge. I have no idea what will happen to the magistrates courts. However, it is likely that there will be that number of summonses because the tax will not carry consent. For hundreds of years one great distinction between this and other countries has been that, on the whole, our people pay their taxes because, with one or two exceptions that have been mentioned, the taxation system has carried consent. To my mind, the poll tax will not carry consent and will therefore be extremely difficult to collect.

How on earth did the Government get landed with the poll tax? We know that there are several alternatives, although we all concede that none is ideal. However, almost all seem to be better than this proposal. It seems to me that a fundamental reason why the Government have got into this position is their hostility to institutions and their attitude to markets. I think that that provides the rationale for the Bill. The Government's hostility to institutions leads them to give the market a monopoly. Of course the market must be an important factor. However, there is no idea of balance, because the market is given a monopoly and must be allowed to prevail in every sphere.

On that philosophy, the people of this country are not so much citizens as consumers. So that their consumer preferences should not be frustrated, our institutions, such as local government and others, are downgraded and weakened. Those institutions are not allowed to stand in the consumer's way. The only institution that is not weakened is, of course, the Government, who are made more powerful by the weakening of the intermediate institutions. Therefore, on this philosophy, everybody is a consumer and the world is a giant supermarket. Life is nothing but a prolonged pursuit of groceries whereby one chooses education from Tesco's and local government from Sainsbury. There is no essential difference between a university and a department store. If the university does not satisfy the customer, who may be the Government or business, it should go under like a shop that does not satisfy demand in the high street.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Given the circumstances that my right hon. Friend has outlined, it appears he is arguing for a progressive tax, but will he concede that only 22 per cent. of local government taxation will be covered by the community charge or the so-called poll tax and that 50 per cent. of that money will come from the Treasury, which in the circumstances, will be means-tested and based on income tax and other taxes?

Sir Ian Gilmour: To coin a phrase from the Opposition Front Bench, "I am coming to that." Schools and universities should spring up and disappear like betting shops or cinemas according to the temporary fluctuations of demand. The short-term market is absolute in every facet of life. On this philosophy we have the consumer and Government, but virtually nothing else. Based on that philosophy, flat-rate community charge is logical. Local government is just a bunch of people selling something — like Marks and Spencer — and the services that it provides are bought like clothes or food.

Just as the rich pay the same as the poor for a television set or a fridge bought in the high street, so they should pay the same as the poor for the services brought from local government. One and all are consumers. The fact that one

[Sir Ian Gilmour]

consumer may be 50 times richer than another is as irrelevant as the fact that many consumers will be victims of the community charge.

That is a logical argument and, as the hon. Member for Brightside has said, it is capable of extension. Who knows, in the next Parliament we may see the abolition of direct taxes on individuals and the introduction of a flat-rate national or state charge that will be the same for rich and poor. After all, the rich, in common with the poor, can only die once, so why should they pay more for defence? That is the principle and the logic of the community charge. It is a defensible view, but it is not one that I share or admire.

In the past, virtually all Conservatives have recognised the great importance of the existence of powerful, intermediate institutions as a breakwater between the state and the individual to preserve political freedom — otherwise, only the Government are left. The Government's hostility to our institutions seems to me un-Conservative, misguided, centralising and potentially authoritarian.

The Bill is unfair. It is wounding to the family and probably unworkable. It will cause great damage to the country and to the Conservative party and I cannot support it.

6.13 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): The hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) yesterday said that the Opposition should support this Bill. Sometimes it is said that the Labour party has the ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory. It does not have the cynical nature to support the Bill. It is true that the Bill is political dynamite and that, in London, it will blow apart the foundations of the seats of a good many Conservative Members of Parliament.

I know that the hon. Member for Streatham (Mr. Shelton) will be thinking that he will get the boot as a result of the Bill. Indeed, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—a Foreign Office Minister—and the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) will have some explaining to do to the darlings of the Conservative party in Wandsworth, who will discover that the average rates burden per person will more than double and that the business rate will increase by 61 per cent. The poll tax is not even fair to Conservative supporters.

I can also see the order of the boot coming for the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). When we first debated this proposal in an Adjournment debate, I said that if the Government had a victory with the tax they would face defeat at the polls. The nature of the opposition from leading members of the Conservative party is indicative of that fear.

I wish to consider the effects of the Bill on an inner-city area such as Lambeth. However, the Lambeth figures are not untypical of what will happen in Southwark, Greenwich and other inner-city areas of London. In Lambeth, the average rateable value is £261. The rate in the pound is just over £2 and the rates per household are £536 a year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Now tell us about Wandsworth.

Mr. Fraser: As a result of the Bill, the rates per person in Wandsworth will be even higher, but I shall deal with that later.

Based on the census statistics, there are roughly two persons per household in Lambeth—typical of inner-city areas. Therefore, the average rates burden in inner-city Lambeth is £270 per person over the age of 18. It is much the same in Southwark. However, the average burden as a result of the poll tax will be £547 per person per year. In Camden the average rates burden per person will be £750 as against £150 per person in Croydon. Therefore, if we want a plan for fiscal migration, the poll tax is it.

The effect in Lambeth, Southwark and similar areas will be that the average burden for an adult over the age of 18 will double. The minimum contribution in Lambeth will be about £2·10p per week — that is, after any element of rebate. It is clear that the average burden will double, but let us consider the poorer standard of house with a rateable value of £150 occupied by a poorer family. If that house is occupied by two persons, they will presently pay rates of £156 each, but under the poll tax they will pay £547 each. The burden on the poorer family will be three times higher than at present. If there is a child over the age of 18 in that house, the burden will be £1,641 a year—five times the existing average burden per adult in such a house.

At the other end of the spectrum there is Dulwich. The Prime Minister and her husband, if they are the only occupants of their house, presently pay about £2,912 a year in rates. Under the poll tax they will pay roughly £1,100 a year. Therefore, the Prime Minister and her husband will save themselves almost £2,000 a year.

Throughout all the inner-city areas, the affluent will be paying less and the poor more. All of us who live in larger and more affluent houses expected a revaluation to increase our comparative burden and relieve the burden on the less wealthy. Nobody expects anything else to happen as a result of a revaluation. In Lambeth, the average burden will double and, at the lower end of the income scale, it will almost treble. However, there will be no relief on the business rate because the universal business rate will be exactly the same as it is at present. There will be no compensation for businesses.

Why will such a sharp, intolerable and divisive burden be imposed on the inner cities? It is sharp because equalisation will end in London. My constituents go and scrub in the City and drive buses and trains to take people to the more affluent parts of London. My people man the hospitals and look after the patients who have heart attacks in the City. If they are lucky enough to find a job, my people type, operate computers, manage and work in other more affluent parts of London. It is in the end of their share of the wealth that they have created which creates su:h sharp divisions in the capital and such heavy burdens in the inner-city areas.

The main feature of the inner city is the polarisation between the rich and the poor. That is the guts of the inner-city problem, particularly in London. Tension and social division arise from that polarisation. The rich, even in places like Lambeth, do not pour their wealth over the borough like golden lava—they do not shop in Brixton: they shop in the west end. The wealth generated by the rich of the inner-city boroughs often does not end up in the inner-city shopping areas in my constituency.

Carefully researched figures fro Lambeth, done by independent agencies, show that the bottom 45 per cent.

of the population was 10 per cent. worse off in 1984 than in 1979. People at the very lowest end of the spectrum are probably about 14 per cent. worse off over the past seven years. That shows clearly the way in which the polarisation that I mentioned is going.

What will the poll tax do? It will add to this awful, contagious poverty. The drop in purchasing power of the lower half of the population means that it has less money to spend in the shops; fewer shops are open, fewer jobs are provided in the retail sector, fewer services are provided, and so this contagious poverty begins to knock down employer after employer. That would be intensified by a poll tax that doubled the average burden.

Of course, the poor quality of some of our local government services adds to the despondency of the inner city. Some of the services are good, but because of restrictions on Government spending, major repairs on housing estates and the provision of enough social workers are restricted. The poll tax will add nothing to the quality of those services which, if poor, add to the despondency and despair in areas such as the one that I represent.

The tax has a contagious effect on the community. It is corrosive, and creates even more embittering poverty and divisiveness between groups. I give the House an example of how it will work. The changes in housing benefit regulations mean that someone in my borough who has saved all his life and has more than £6,000 in the bank will have to pay £547 a year poll tax, with no rebate. He will look at his neighbours, who may be drawing social security and, if they register, only paying 20 per cent. of the poll tax. He will ask himself why he, who has made some provision for his old age or retirement, has to pay the full poll tax, whereas the very poor are evading it or paying only 20 per cent. So there will be even greater bitterness between the rich and the poor, and between those who have not and those who have even less. The tax will intensify the bitterness that is so much a feature of inner-city life.

My community, like many others, needs a degree of cohesiveness and equanimity. What do the Government give us but a multiple fracture when we need to be healed? We want family unity and stability. We want a reinforcing and supportive society, but if a tax that puts twice as heavy a burden as the rates is applied, we set spouse against spouse, partner against partner, mother against son, carer against the cared for, youth against authority, the poor against the law, the rich against the poor and, because of the disincentive to register, we shall set the citizen against the exercise of civil rights. At the very time when we need to provide a stable, resilient and cohesive community we introduce a tax that has turmoil and turbulence built into it.

I have given the official figures for the tax, but they will be even greater because of the difficulty of getting registration to take place. In my constituency, the turnover in population, based on the election register, is between 25 and 27·5 per cent. a year. That is the velocity of change, and many of the people involved are poor. The poll tax will be almost impossible to enforce in a population with that degree of velocity of movement, so the costs of administering it and the residual costs on the rest of the population will be higher. There will be higher costs, coupled with a corrosion of democracy.

With the growth of the assured tenancy, people in the private sector will be paying rents two or three times those that they pay now. Will they volunteer to pay the poll tax at the same time? Will the landlord volunteer to pay income tax by registering? The turnover of 25 to 27 per cent. of the population will make things difficult, too. On the bottom rung of the ladder, impoverishment will increase and the vote will be lost. Will such people volunteer to pay £10 a week for the right to vote? Some of them, as we know, do not have much faith in institutions or authority.

The most awful dilemma will be created for people at the bottom. I, like many other hon. Members, represent people who cannot afford to plan their affairs so that they can pay their gas and electricity bills. We make the biggest management demands on the poorest members of the community. That is why we have things such as "Fuel Direct". There will be some degree of compensation, but not enough. We shall be asking the mother to choose between paying her 20 per cent. of the tax and buying her child shoes — between her child not going to school properly dressed and paying the poll tax. Out of human family considerations, she will choose her family in preference to the local authority.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend has described a world about which most Conservative Members know nothing. That is one of the reasons why there is so much support for what he is saying. If the Government were really interested in democracy and in greater participation in elections, they would do something about the 17 per cent. of people in inner cities who do not get on to the electoral register, and would give local authorities the funds to enable them to get as many people as possible on to it. This Bill has nothing to do with democracy, as I am sure my hon. Friend will agree.

Mr. Fraser: It will have the opposite effect. Its enforcement on council estates in which unemployment among young people aged between 18 and 25 can be as high as 80 per cent. will set those young people against local authorities, community institutions and the police, who will have the job of enforcing the tax among those who will not regard it as fair. Some of them already do not pay tax on their cars or televisions. There is little to show that they will volunteer to pay the poll tax either. The poll tax will be an incentive to break the law in the inner-city areas in which we are trying to encourage respect for the law and integration into society.

Two things emerge from all this — impoverishment, and a disincentive to take one's proper place in society. The tax will engender bitterness and a deeper dislike of the police and of authority, and it will make the ordinary citizen the hostage of the local authority. If, as happens now, a local authority discovers widespread child abuse, or if it is flooded with the homeless, and tries to tackle such problems, the effect of the poll tax, because of the way in which local authority finance is run, will be to multiply by four or five times the increase in such expenditure. So, for every 1 per cent. spent on the homeless or child abuse, an extra 5 per cent. burden will land on those who must pay the poll tax.

The Bill will make the poorest people hostages to the local authority that ought to be looking after them. In a metaphorical sense, it will force local authorities to shoot some of the prisoners in order to feed the rest. It will make people captive gladiators under the Roman imperial rule that introduces this cruel tax. The Bill is a negation of democracy and does nothing to improve the cohesiveness of the inner city.

[Mr. Fraser]

People talk about 1381 and the peasants' revolt, the revolt against the last poll tax. I do not know exactly what kind of revolt will take place and I do not want to contemplate violent revolt in the middle of our cities. I have already seen revolts take place, because one happened in my constituency in 1981, 600 years after the peasants' revolt. My constituency was in flames as a result of a perceived injustice against members of my community. There is nothing in the Bill that will add to the equanimity of the community that I represent. There is everything in the Bill to militate against a peaceful and calm society.

6.30 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I am grateful to hon. Members for their kind remarks about my suits. With my shape, off-the-peg is not an option.

I agree with my right hon. and hon. Friends that the time has come to abolish domestic rates. In choosing a successor, one has to ask why they lasted so long and why they began to lose credibility. Domestic rates embody a principle which has popular support and which should be carried through to its successor. The principle is that there should be a link between the ability to pay and the contribution made to local services. It is the shortcomings in the application of that principle that have discredited the rates and not the principle itself. With this Bill, the Government throw the baby out with the bath water, because in a rough and ready way the rates reflect ability to pay. As the Government have said in their Green Paper:

"It is probably true as a broad generalisation that those people living in the more valuable houses in an area can more easily afford to pay local taxes."

If one looks at the figures, one sees that 83 per cent. of the poor, those earning £50 a week or less, live in properties at or below average rateable values, and that 75 per cent. of people with incomes over £300 a week live in properties with above average rateable values. Therefore, there is a broad relationship, but not a perfect one. It was the lack of accuracy in that relationship that led to the original commitment given by the Conservatives to abolish the domestic rates and to replace them with a local revenue tax based not on property but on people's ability to pay.

In the Green Paper of 1981, under the heading, "Local Taxation: The Main Requirements", one such requirement listed was "individual capacity to pay". The Government have totally abandoned that principle, and it is this that has led to the difficulty. To replace it, the Government have tried to invent another one. They are now trying to claim that we are not talking about a tax at all, although before the wordsmith of Marsham street got to work the Government called it a tax. Now they seem to call it a charge and a new principle has been constructed divorcing it from ability to pay and linking it instead to use.

The Secretary of State described this new principle in somewhat tortuous language in an article in *The Times* on 4 December. It says:

"It is important that a local charge for local services should reflect in a rough and ready way everybody's ability to use local services."

He has carefully avoided the trap of linking it directly to use, because manifestly it is not. The absence of that link was one of the criticisms of the rates.

What is this new principle linking a charge to ability to use local services? The biggest cost to the charge is education. In what way are primary and secondary schools available to be used by pensioners or the childless? How on earth does one explain it to those people who are hardest hit by the Bill—young single people—when they use local services least? The principle is manifestly absurd and indefensible. We are talking about a compulsory payment paid by everyone over the age of 18 irrespective of use. In my book, that is a tax.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir G. Young: No; in fairness to other Members, I should like to make progress.

I suspect that the Government are unhappy about resting their case too heavily on that principle and instead are stressing accountability. The Government maintain that there are high-spending local councils mainly in the inner cities and too many voters are financially insulated from the consequences of voting for them. Remove the cover, the argument goes, expose them to the cold wind and they are more likely to vote for councils that spend responsibly.

Legislation to make councils spend responsibly is no stranger to the Government, and I have played my part in putting it on the statute book. The fact that many councils are now acting more responsibly has nothing to do with the legislation. However, it has everything to do with the fact that our party won the last general election and councils now realise that they will not be bailed out by the Labour party. I shall shortly say something about the electoral consequences of the Bill.

The way forward in the inner cities is to show the people who live there that our social and economic policies work. We should show that by voting Conservative they will help improve standards in the schools, accelerate investment in the rundown estates and diversify tenure. We should show that, by voting Conservative, they will increase jobs and prosperity in their areas. There is ample ammunition in our arguments to win the case. The way to lose support is to sandbag people for being poor. That will have exactly the opposite effect and will undermine confidence in our party and in our policies. Crucially, it shifts the argument away from the social and economic policy arguments, which we can win, to arguments about fairness, bureaucracy, intrusion and means testing, which we cannot win. It does that not just in the inner cities where there is a problem, but over the whole country.

The Government betray a lack of confidence in their argument because the Bill retains the ability to rate-cap. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) said yesterday, the Government will still retain the ability to override local decisions if local accountability does not come up with the answers that the Government want.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) spoke about electoral consequences. I am confident that, due to his diligence, my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) will hold his marginal seat with an increased majority at the next election. But do we not make his task unduly exciting by introducing a policy that his borough treasurer estimates will make 95 per cent. of my hon. Friend's electorate lose money? How does one explain to a retired couple living in a tower block in Finsbury Park

and who may always have voted Conservative that they will pay twice as much as an SDP-voting merchant banker living in gentrified Barnesbury?

I shall now turn to the implications in the Bill for those on benefit, whose numbers the Bill increases by 1·2 million. The Government have spent much time recently attacking exemplifications of alternative systems which show the better-off paying more than under a flat-rate system, though not necessarily more than they are paying at the moment. They have said far less about the implications of their proposals for the less well-off, unfortunately giving the impression that big increases for the better-off are untenable but for the less well-off are acceptable.

Seeking material for my speech from the Whips Office, I found some briefings criticising a progressive alternative which increased the charge as incomes rose. It says:

"Their charge might go up not because council spending increased, but because their income had increased by a few pounds."

Quite; that is exactly what will happen to the poor under the rebate system as the 80 per cent. rebate is withdrawn and their income goes up. For those at or below benefit level, the Bill proposes that they should all be registered, that 80 per cent. should be rebated at source by the local authority and that help for the other 20 per cent. should come from another authority—central Government—which is then paid to the first authority. Whether a person is in or out of pocket will depend on where he lives.

A few days ago, when the House debated the housing benefit regulations, the Minister of State said:

"As I said earlier, housing benefit brought the administration of assistance with rents and rates together under one roof for the first time. . . . It made for far more sensible and efficient administration, in that millions of households had their bills rebated at source for the first time, instead of having to take the money handed out by an arm of central Government and immediately pass it on to the local government offices down the road."—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 1243.]

The process which he quite rightly congratulates himself on having abolished is reintroduced in the Bill.

The interesting thing about the paper chase of money is that at the end of the day the net contribution to the funding of local government is precisely nil. It is self-cancelling, in that 80 per cent. is rebated at source, 20 per cent. of the average comes from central Government, and the Local Government Finance Bill contains huge chunks which have nothing to do with financing local government at all.

It is precisely because the whole charade is totally irrelevant to how local government will be funded that many of us believe that it would be better to scrap it and start from the point where the Government end, at great expense, and say, "If the poor are to make no net contribution because they are poor, let us look at another system which starts from that premise and deals fairly with those who can pay".

My hon. Friends will agree that over the past few years we have introduced policies which have impacted hard on the nearly poor and those just above benefit level, with changes in housing benefit, tapers and capital rules for income support, and policies on local authority rents, prescription charges and charges of some nationalised industries. I have been prepared to support those policies in the Lobbies because behind each one has been a defensible principle.

If we are to spend more on maintaining and improving council estates, rents must go up; if we are to spend more on the Health Service, it is legitimate to look to the user for part of the cost; if the benefit bill is to be contained within limits the country can afford, we must target it on the less well-off; and if we are to put nationalised industries on a sound basis and increase investment, we must have sensible tariff policies. But this Bill puts extra burdens on one group of people, not in return for better services, more jobs or anything else, but simply to reduce the taxes of those who, on average, are better off. The paradox, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) said, is that they do not like the policy any more than those who lose.

After writing an article in the *Daily Telegraph* I have received hundreds of letters, and many of them have three themes: first, the writer had always voted Conservative; secondly, he or she benefits substantially from the Government's proposals; and, thirdly, he or she is totally opposed to them. I suspect that such a reaction could happen only in Britain, but it is none the worse for that.

I turn now to the question of banding. The Government have introduced a banded tax on income—a banded national insurance contribution. At the moment, if a person's income goes up from £38 to £39 per week, they suddenly become liable to pay 5 per cent. of their total income as a contribution. I would like to use the same words as my right hon. Friend used when he criticised my proposal. He said:

"If people earn a little more and thereby fall into the next income band, they would find that the extra amount of local tax that they would have to pay would be more than their extra earnings."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1125.]

That is exactly what happens when someone earns £39 instead of £38 per week; they have to pay over £100 a year in national insurance contributions. There is another band at £65 a week, when it goes up to 7 per cent., and at £100 a week it goes up to 9 per cent. Each time the income moves up a band, a higher percentage applies to the total income.

If it is fair that someone earning £39 a week should have to pay £100 extra in tax when his income goes up by £1, is it totally unthinkable that someone earning 10 times that income should pay £400 a year if he finds himself in the next band? If the argument is not about banding but about the height of the steps or the ceiling, let us sit down and talk it through. It would be ludicrous to dismiss the whole concept simply because of some initial exemplifications, and wrong to describe it as pernicious, if the Government have already done it.

We have been no stranger to radical changes in the House since 1979, many of them long overdue, but we have had public assent behind us to see us through the opposition by vested interests. There has been public assent to council house sales, trade union reform, privatisation, education reform and even rate capping. The tide of public opinion has enabled us to sweep forward, but we have no such assent to the Bill; we have deep unhappiness among some hon. Members who have never voted against the Government before. Our friends in local government are not with us and our supporters are unhappy.

The Bill is inconsistent with our principles, irrelevant to our programme and inimical to our prospects, and for those reasons I shall vote against it tonight.

6.47 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I believe that people should not get something for nothing and that there should be a link between money spent and services provided. If the Government were going down that road, I would travel with them. I am not sure that they have travelled very much further than that general theory, because although the tax, or charge, makes such a linkage clear, and it will have to be paid by all over the age of 18, if they can be found, I do not believe that a single tax can any longer meet the needs of local government.

On a recent visit to the United States I noticed that the many different layers of local and national government all had their own separate tax base. When we are dealing with the multi-purpose local authorities, we should look at a wider base. It is clear from the remarks of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that the Labour party has thought about that, but it is clear, as the debate has developed yesterday and today, that it has not been thought through. If one looks at column 1137 of *Hansard* for yesterday, one sees that we were told by the Opposition spokesman that there were significant arguments for broadening the local tax base.

During one of the shouting matches we were told that Labour would repeal the legislation if it became law, so one must assume that Labour Members intend to go back to some sort of a property tax plus other things, but they have not specified what those things are. They do their supporters and the country a disservice by not being prepared to specify those things.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Mr. Ross: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, because the House and the country would like to hear him.

We were told that the tax should be based on fairness and ability to pay. If it is to be fair, a property tax would require frequent, perhaps annual, revaluations, as is done in the United States. If the tax is to be related to ability to pay, each individual should be treated on their merits. I say to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) that everybody should pay something and that the sum should be variable depending on the amount of money required by the policies of each local government.

The hon. Member for Copeland made it plain:

"we shall review the functions and duties of local government to re-establish sensible links between it and local government finance."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1137.]

If Labour intends to bring the two things into line and to remove central Government intervention, that will drastically reduce and transfer to central Government many of the present functions of local government.

Mr. Allan Roberts: We certainly will not do that. We will increase local democracy and give many functions back to local government. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made it clear that we are in favour of maintaining a reformed, updated and more fair property-based tax. We are also considering other forms of local taxation linked with the property tax in the same form as that described by the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland also said that we would try to achieve a consensus. There will be debates and discussion. The main point about the proposals that we are debating today and most other local government legislation on finance that the Government have introduced in the past eight years is that there has been no consensus. That is bad for democracy and bad for local government.

Mr. Ross: I am grateful for the comments made by the hon. Member, as I have carried forward the Labour party and gained more information from it. No doubt Conservative Members will now press Labour Members on those points. However, I do not want to go too deep into the nitty-gritty of the Government and official Opposition argument about the Bill.

My colleagues and I have another reason for voting against the Bill this evening that is related to the broad assumption put forward by the Secretary of State for the Environment yesterday. The assumption is that the new charge is vastly superior to the present system of rates. However, we were told during the previous Northern Ireland Question Time that 2·5 per cent. of the national population would have to wait and see how the other 97·5 per cent. got on with the new charge before it applied to Northern Ireland. Why are the Government practising that discrimination against Northern Ireland? Why is the Province the one area of the United Kingdom that will be denied the benefits which the Government proclaim for the new system? If those benefits exist, why are we in Northern Ireland being cut out of them?

I believe that all national taxes in a unitary state should be the same, and all other taxes are the same and proceed from the same base. However, the new system, called charge, taxation or whatever, will still come out of people's pockets to pay for local government, but we are being denied the benefits that the Government claim for it. Why should that be so? We must oppose the imposition of the Bill on that basis. Of course, the Government tell us that local government in Northern Ireland is different from that in England and Wales. It is different in Scotland as well, but the Scots are well ahead of the field, are they not? Why should we be denied?

The Secretary of State for Wales told us about differences in Wales and said that income would be split and divided up in slightly different ways. I appreciate that local government in Northern Ireland has practically no powers, as 90 per cent. of the things done by local government in Northern Ireland are administered by central Government. However, at the end of the day, we pay regional and local rates. Are the Government refusing to apply the poll tax, or charge, to Northern Ireland because the system of ratable valuations and local and regional rates in Northern Ireland is vastly superior to what applies in the rest of the United Kingdom, and, moreover, vastly more superior to the proposal in the Bill? If it is, why should the rest of the United Kingdom not follow the lead given by Northern Ireland so many years ago?

We have to consider those questions before we decide how to vote tonight. Indeed, that is why our ranks are rather thin this evening. However, we are putting down a marker. We believe that Northern Ireland has a right to be treated the same as the rest of this kingdom, for good or ill. That is why I make this case before the House this evening as a Member of a United Kingdom Parliament.

6.53 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) certainly struck a new note

in the debate with his plea that the people of Northern Ireland should not be denied the benefits of the community charge. One cannot but be struck by the unrealism that has coloured some of the charges and counter-charges between the Opposition Front Bench and the Government today.

My right hon. and hon. Friends have argued again and again that one of the chief advantages of their proposal is that it will increase accountability. The Opposition Front Bench have bought that argument. Indeed, that is what they object to. Opposition Members fear that the Bill will extend accountability to all sorts of people who will be called to account to contribute to the cost of local services and local government and who they believe should not be called to account and should not contribute. The truth lies in the opposite direction. Far from the Government's proposal leading to too much accountability, as Opposition Members fear, I believe—and I hope that the House will consider my view—that local government will still be not nearly accountable enough—and for reasons that have been made clear today.

Only a small proportion of the cost of local services will be covered by the community charge. The bulk of the rest will be paid for either by our still highly progressive income tax or by the uniform business rate. The percentages are very high indeed. They are high enough for England, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales told us with great confidence that 86 per cent. of the charges of all so-called local services, or services administered locally, would not be met by the community charge. In other words, we all recognise that he was saying that the vast bulk of services are to be financed by means that have been debated elsewhere, and already accepted, but to which the general concerns about the nature of this tax do not apply. The proposal before us covers only a minor fraction of local services.

The reality that 86 per cent. of the cost is already covered in Wales and well over 70 per cent. in England, shows up the flaw in the concerns expressed by my right hon. and hon. Friends—which I understand—from the Back Benches — the flaw in the case for banded charging.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on doing us all a service by bringing those ideas for a banded charge before the House. However, I do not believe that my hon. Friends are prepared to recognise and take account of the enormous and glaring reality that the vast majority of local services are already paid for by a highly progressive system of income tax. The suggestion that we should add to that and worsen the marginal disincentives, which I freely concede already exist, flies in the face of everything that the Government have tried to do over the past eight years. We have tried to lift the curse of marginal disincentives to unwind the enormous burden of discouragement to work and to open up the enterprise economy.

Mr. Janman: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howell: No, I want to finish my remarks within 10 minutes.

I have described the scene. While the Government are trying to improve accountability and perhaps may make some progress, the community charge is still far from underpinning a truly accountable system of local government, for two glaring reasons. First, we are not abolishing or removing the great apparatus of grant support organised by the bureaucrats in Whitehall as a result of the proposals in the Bill. That apparatus will still exist, although it may not exist in such a bizarre or complex form. We may not have all the clawbacks and holdbacks that we encountered in the early 1980s which almost rivalled the Austro-Hungarian empire in their complexity. However, we will still have a quite complicated combined standard of grant plus a needs element. The whole source of the poison in the relationships between the taxpayer and ratepayer and central and local government is channelled there. That will remain and we are not making much progress with this Bill in removing it.

Secondly, we now have a new apparatus of a uniform business rate which is a device for channelling another section of locally generated funds from businesses to central Government, to the Whitehall bureaucrats and around in a great circle back to the support of local services.

While I see the arguments put forward by Ministers for the community charge as a vast improvement on the iniquitous and utterly discredited rates, the truth is that we still have a long way to go. Local government in Britain, in terms of voting support and popular support and understanding, is the feeblest of any system of local government in Europe or in most of the western world. So far, I see no vast improvement in that stucture. When the Bill has been passed, local government will still be a Whitehall show.

So if the community charge is the first step, what will be done to make local government genuinely accountable and effective so that it will cease to be the playground of central bureaucracy and incomprehensible formulae that we have experienced in the past?

The House has been treated to a number of views, and there are instructions on the Order Paper from my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams). My hon. Friend the Member for Kensington has a reputation for thinking very far ahead—sometimes to the fury of his colleagues. He is sometimes rather too illuminating, and the glare is too much for them. His message is simple. It is that the whole range of services which are national, but are called local—he mentions education, police, fire and civil defence—should not be covered by the community charge. That implies that national services should be paid for nationally. If we were to move in that direction—so far we have not examined that option—we would at last see the community charge covering a larger proportion of local services.

Of course, the uniform business rate undoes that aim. Despite the need to protect businesses in some areas from the loony Left, perhaps it would have been simpler to cap the industrial rates more vigorously. That has worked in some areas. But only when we recognise that a wide range of national services should be paid for nationally, will the community charge as the major element of payment for genuinely local services come into perspective.

I hope that my right hon. Friends, having urged us to take the first step, will consider, and indeed implement, the principle of a more national payment for national services, notably on such issues as education, the cost of which more than covers the present rate support grant. But if one cut the rate support grant pound for pound, it would be possible to go some way down that road without any rise

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in income tax. I hope that my right hon. Friends will continue to point out that local government functions can be divested and subcontracted.

I spoke with the permanent secretary of the French Ministry for housing who had travelled to Birmingham and other cities. She expressed amazement that local government should be involved in managing social housing and welfare housing, as the French call it. She believed that it was crazy for such issues to be muddled in with the tasks of hard-pressed local government officials and thought that they should be managed outside the Government structure. I hope that my right hon. Friends will comment on that.

I hope that Ministers will be less dominated by their obsession with the formula of standard costs for standard levels of service. They have been carried along too far by Whitehall bureaucrats and the sticky fingers of Whitehall involved with that formula. I should like a more robust challenge to that centralising jargon. I hope that local government will be allowed greater scope to raise cash in various ways that my hon. Friends have frequently suggested.

I shall vote for the community charge as the first step away from the appalling rates. It is only a first step away from that system. Nothing will be right in local government unless it is reformed root and branch. Before my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) became the Secretary of State for Education and Science, he was planning a major reform of local government which many hon. Members had wanted for years. Can the Minister tell us what happened to those plans which were important and influenced my view on the virtues of the community charge?

My fear is that we will repeat in reverse the mistakes of 1972 when we reformed the structure of local government without looking at its finance, with unhappy results. Today, we are looking at finance, but is the structure to be left behind? If it is, we will be in difficulties again. Nothing will be solved until local responsibility, local funding, local prosperity, and local democracy are truly married together as they have not been in Britain for a century. I would like to hear and see my right hon. Friends rise to that challenge.

7.5 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I listened with interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who suggested that the full costs of some services should be transferred from local government to the national Exchequer. He may be interested to know that his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made similar suggestions on at least one occasion.

Indeed, there have been several references during the debate to the way in which the Government have changed their mind about local taxation. Ministers have changed their collective mind, and they have also changed their individual minds. The most spectacular conversion was that of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Before he took that office, someone sought his views about local taxation and the rating system. He wrote personally to his correspondent saying that he was convinced:

"There is no real alternative as a local tax, to a property tax of some sort, and that in fact means rating."

He went on to say:

"The only alternative is to abolish the domestic rate and fund local government to an even greater extent from the Exchequer. This is the policy of the Government."

That is not the Government's policy now. Clearly, the Secretary of State has changed his mind.

I am not suggesting that there is nothing wrong with the rating system. There are two widespread and justified criticisms of the domestic rate as a means of taxation. First, it is impossible for anyone to understand how the rateable value of his home has been assessed. Secondly, the rebate system is totally inadequate. It is so complicated that it is almost impossible to understand how anyone's rebate has been calculated.

There is no doubt about the need for reform. It would be much easier to understand the rateable value of a house if it were based on its capital value—what the house would fetch on the open market—and no one concerned about fairness in taxation could deny the overwhelming case for a greatly extended and simplified system for rebates. However, the Bill is not about reforming the rating system. The poll tax will simply make matters worse, and I have two main objections to it.

First, it will lead to an unnecessary increase in public expenditure. There is supposed to be much concern on the Government Benches about unnecessary public expenditure, and they sometimes seem to regard all public expenditure as unnecessary. Opposition Members are equally concerned about unnecessary public expenditure, because we would like more money to be directed to social services and other worthwhile public expenses. I come from a city where the social services department has stopped approving any adaptations to the homes of disabled and elderly people because it has run out of money. That is why I am concerned about unnecessary public expenditure.

We all know that it will cost more to collect the community charge than it does to collect the rates. The Bill itself admits that the additional cost to local authorities will be between £160 million and £200 million each year—double the present cost of collecting rates. That will be on top of the cost—between £70 million and £90 million—of setting up the new system. Birmingham's city treasurer has calculated that the collection of the community charge will cost an extra £8 million and require an extra 350 staff. My hon. Friends and I would rather see an extra 350 staff employed in the departments of education and social services than in collecting the community charge.

My second objection is to the basic unfairness of a community charge, which is a flat rate tax. The Secretary of State for the Environment has boasted that it will redistribute the burden of taxation. He has talked about transferring the burden from the widow in a semi-detached house to a family of three or four wage earners living next door. But he has failed to tell us that the poll tax will also redistribute the burden of taxation to the widow in a semi-detached three-bedroomed house living on her pension and savings of a few hundred pounds in an area such as Shard End in Birmingham from a widow in a large detached four-bedroomed house in Sutton Coldfield, living on income from her investments worth hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The Secretary of State has also failed to tell us that the widow living in a one-bedroomed flat or bedsit bungalow will almost certainly find that her taxation burden has

been increased. The Minister for Local Government shakes his head, but I must tell him that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and I know more than he does about the people living in council estates and those estates where houses have been sold in Birmingham. I can assure him that we can provide figures, as we shall in Committee, to show that the burden of taxation for many people living in semi-detached houses, flats and bedsit bungalows will be increased.

The burden of local taxation will also be redistributed to the family living in the house on the other side of the widow in that three-bedroomed semi-detached house—a family where the husband goes to work and the wife chooses to stay at home because she is responsible for looking after their children or an elderly parent. As a result of her care, that parent is saved from going into a home for elderly people, and the council is saved the cost of home helps, meals on wheels and all the other social services that are provided for elderly people who have difficulty coping alone. Because that woman chooses to spend her time looking after an elderly relative, that family will be paying extra tax because they will now pay a community charge, and she cannot earn an income like other people.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): There may be hypothetical cases such as the hon. Gentleman describes, but does he agree that, in the circumstances that he described, a person without income would be eligible for the reliefs available under the system proposed? Therefore, the dire consequences that he envisages would not take place.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman has not read the Bill carefully. In the situation that I have described, the husband will be liable for the wife's community charge. Therefore, the family will pay a community charge for two people, whereas only one income will be going into that household. The wife will not be eligible for a rebate. If that family then take the elderly mother or father into their home, they will pay for the privilege. That is an appalling tax for any Government to dream of imposing on caring people.

The Government's figures show that more families will lose than will gain from the new poll tax. It cannot be denied that the people who gain will include those with the highest incomes living in the most expensive houses. The people who will lose will include those whose incomes are just above the threshold for social security benefits, those who have small private pensions and those who have below average wages — the people who already have great difficulty in making ends meet.

This new tax is a tax on the family, a tax on caring and even a tax on living, because one pays the tax simply for being there. This new tax has been rightly described as a "Tory tax", with all the unfairness, injustice and inequity implied by that description. Everyone opposed to Tory philosophy will vote against it.

7.14 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I hope that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) will forgive me if I do not take up directly his remarks. I noticed that he was in favour of a reform of the present situation.

The debate has at times been dominated, perhaps a little too often, by the technocratic side of local government and a little too much political emotion. What has been lacking is any real discussion of the quality of local government as presently practised. The figures show that local government in Britain is involved to the extent of about 8 per cent. with roads and transport, about 10 per cent. with police, 10 per cent. with social services and 65 per cent. with education. Therefore, if we are to find a solution to a problem which nearly every hon. Member admits exists — the present rating system — we should start not by looking at it as an accountant but by looking at the quality of the delivery and the quality of the functioning of local government.

Let us start with education, since that takes up 65 per cent. of local government expenditure. Local government spends 98 per cent. of Government expenditure on education. Therefore, we are not talking about a service which is even significantly influenced by central Government, and as a recent Minister in the Department of Education and Science I can vouch for that.

The nation cannot be proud of the present situation. But only now have we reached the position where both sides of the House recognise that something is grievously wrong with the standards of education in Britain. That is no longer an hysterical gripe by Tory bigots; it is now admitted in the House and in the country that something is seriously wrong with the standards of education in Britain.

How can local councils, which have had so much control over education over the years, escape their due share of blame — it may even be a lion's share in the case of some local authorities — for the degeneration of education in Britain?

Let me give one example from what I know best. I was a Minister with responsibility not for schools, but for higher education. As I travelled around the universities — I went to 25 of them — I always asked one question: "What percentage of your students come from private schools?" As every hon. Members know, about 7 per cent. of British schools are private and the answer was a dismal one for Britain's education, and, in particular, for local authorities. The answer was that in Britain's best universities about 50 per cent. of students come from private schools, in many other universities about 30 to 40 per cent., and in some cases over 50 per cent.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The hon. Gentleman is making an interesting point, but not only are those private schools selective and can in many cases get the best, but, more crucially, the universities are selective and are not always as willing to take people from every background as they might do. The evidence for that was recently revealed in a report from Oxford university which showed that the results of students from the state sector were significantly better than those from the private sector, despite the fact that many more students came from the private sector than would be merited by the private sector's role in education — 7 per cent. in Britain.

Mr. Walden: I regret giving way. It is simply out of touch with current reality to believe that the root of the problem that I am underlining has something to do with universities' selective attitudes. Universities are bending over backwards because they are thoroughly embarrassed, as indeed they should be, by the figures. The hon. Gentleman is simply out of date.

Let me make a crucial point. When I talked to many university professors about their lamentable state of

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affairs, I was further distressed by what they told me. They said that when people from the state sector got into their universities, they often out-performed those from private schools, because for the first time in their lives they were being adequately taught. What does that tell us about the waste of talent among the 93 per cent. in the state sector, and about the quality of the functioning of local democracy, which has had a near-monopoly of education in this country for so many years?

I hope that Opposition Members will take note of what I am saying, because it is often their constituents who lose out. I also hope, however, that my hon. Friends will remember that the state sector often does not do well in our constituencies. I admit that I am fortunate: in Buckinghamshire, we have grammar schools. We have a responsible county council, and achieve good results. But how many times have I heard ordinary people—not rich people; not everyone in the shires is rich—say to me, "Mr. Walden, we believe in the state sector; we want to use it; we have given it a try. But the old teacher has left, and the new one is no good. The child does no homework. So the wife is going out to work. She will earn £5,000 a year after tax, and that will be enough to send our child to a private school".

I am not making a cheap party point. We have a national education problem, and, whether the council is Labour or Conservative, that problem runs very deep. Only now is the country beginning to recognise the grave international position. Our education record is not remotely as good as we think. So much for the achievement of local government.

Housing is another problem. It should be remembered that the three major Bills that the Government are introducing in this Session are important and sensitive because they touch a good many raw social nerves. They are interlinked. Education is linked with rate reform, and with housing reform. I know less about housing than I presume to know about education, but let me make one common-sense observation. I have travelled considerably in this country, especially in the past few years. Is it really possible for hon. Members to dissociate in their minds the desolate towns of the north — the most desolate in Europe—from the record of local councils over the past 20 years? I should be interested if any hon. Member were able to name a European country with as appalling a record—not only aesthetically, but in human terms—as many of the major conurbations in the north of England.

What has been the record of local government in this country, in educaton as well as in housing?

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Walden: I would rather not, because I do not want to go on for too long.

There has been much talk outside the House about the functioning of local government, and some hon. Members, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), have mentioned the turnout in elections. That is a subject that exercises me particularly. Taken as a whole—obviously, there are exceptions; I have met some very good councillors, both Labour and Conservative—the record is dismal. The powers vested in our local government, particularly in education, are far greater than they are on the Continent. Is it not clear that our system is doubly disabled: by not producing education of good quality, and by having such a miserable turnout —the lowest in Europe?

In 1986, the turnout for the district metropolitan elections was 39·3 per cent. Those districts cover 40 per cent. of the population. I know that exact comparisons are difficult, but here are the figures for the most recent elections in major European countries. The turnout in Italy was 86 per cent.; in Germany, 75 per cent.; and in France, 65 per cent. Something is fundamentally wrong, not merely with the quality of the services provided by many local councils but with the system of local democracy, when we produce a miserable turnout of 39·3 per cent. in our metropolitan elections.

When we have discussed possible solutions, there has been considerable emphasis on fairness. That is a concept that we all understand. I do not believe that it divides the House in the way that many hon. Members have pretended. However, let us be honest: some of the legislation enacted by the Labour party—and we have acquiesced in some of it—seemed immensely fair at the time, but has caused great damage to those whom it was supposed to help.

Let me give two examples. The first relates to housing. Many of us thought at the time that it was fair to give tenants overwhelming legal rights of tenure. But what has been the result? The very people who need rented accommodation nowadays cannot obtain it. That is an interesting example of what happens when we lean over too far to be fair.

My second example again relates to education. What happens when there is an egalitarian education system? Again, I do not blame the Opposition entirely, because Conservative Members acquiesced in it: it was the spirit of the times. But who are the people who lose out? They are the people whom I talked about earlier. Who is hit hardest by a system of low expectations? The answer is the people in the inner cities. I know what I am talking about, because I grew up in an inner city.

The problem goes much deeper than matters of accountancy and sorting out the cash. It is a national problem relating to the quality of the product, and that applies first and foremost to education. The problem will not be solved if we go for the old-fashioned, rather condescending sort of fairness that ends up damaging those who need help the most.

We have heard a good deal of talk about an income tax solution to the problem. I do not wish to continue my speech for too long, but let me make one or two points. This country starts off in a peculiar fiscal position, with one of the highest overall tax burdens. The Opposition have recently complained about that. When tax and national insurance are taken together, the figure is still extremely high. When people say that the poll tax has a regressive element, which is intellectually undeniable, they should see the position alongside the existing fiscal level. It is surely possible in that context to contemplate introducing a community charge system in which people pay for what they get.

When considering how to replace the present rating system, we should have fresh in our minds the unseemly debate that took place in this Chamber a few days ago. How would you have reacted, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if on that evening you had happened to have a guest from abroad in the Strangers Gallery? Suppose that you had

met him afterwards, and had had to explain to him about the proud traditions of British parliamentary democracy. How would you have managed that?

We have no option of doing nothing on the rates. If hon. Members want an illustration, let them think for a moment about where the disturbance the other night came from.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Walden: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman is wasting his time.

The disturbance of the other night occurred because of the irresponsible conduct of some local councillors. I raise it not because I see it in disproportion; I know that there are sensible Labour councillors. However, a certain virus has been let loose in the system, and has penetrated the Chamber, as it did the other night.

Mr. Banks: Rubbish. What about the yobs on the other side?

Mr. Walden: Let me make a final point, returning to the subject of education. It must be remembered that the quality of those in charge of education reflects our present system. It reflects our turnout—39·3 per cent.—and the extent of the power that they have had in the past and have so often misused.

I shall quote a small extract from a speech made by the chairman of ILEA. It says:

"Are we delivering the basics right? Has the move away from formal rote learning—whatever the merits of the new teaching methods — carry the skill of deskilling a generation, by failing to equip them with the hard-headed basic skills of literacy and numeracy which they need to survive? What are our proposals for monitoring the progress of each individual child against their peer group and against national standards?"

[Interruption.]

The hon. Gentleman asks what this has to do with the community charge. I live and pay rates in London, and the reason why I do not send my children to a state school in London is that they are headed by a man capable of writing that. I am in favour of the principle that he is groping to outline, leaving the syntax aside for a moment. But, like Groucho Marx, I would not send my child to a school run by Groucho Marx. That is why I insist we must find a solution to this problem that will take account of the hideous failures of parts of our local government system, particularly in education.

On the evidence that I have seen so far, the only way that we shall get this message over to the people is through something analogous to the community charge.

7.30 pm

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): I shall not follow closely the speech of the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), but I remind him that when he visited Salford as a junior Minister and saw the colleges of higher education and the university he left impressed by the work that had been done by local councillors. When the policies of the Government of the day militated against those institutions it did us a fat lot of good coming down to Elizabeth house to argue the case for justice.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) said that the first Tory proposal to abolish rates arose during the 1974 election but that by 1979 it had been buried. Like the right hon. Gentleman, I believe that that decision was forced on the Tory party when it considered the harsh realities of the matter. The then Tory party—there is a difference in philosophy now—concluded that the alternative to rates was manifestly unworkable, with any genuflection to social justice.

By 1986, an increasingly arrogant Government, flushed by the success of their policies for hitting the poorest and weakest, stepped up their vendetta against local government and local democracy. Forced by a revolt because of rating revaluations among their keenest supporters in Scotland, and with a general election on the horizon, the Prime Minister led the charge to abolish rates. She started from a clean sheet, or, rather, from the back of a clean envelope. Thus, this squalid measure, which is on a par with that which provoked the peasants' revolt in 1381, was to be visited on an unsuspecting British public. The first guinea pigs were to be in Scotland and it was then to be inflicted on the rest. Those who forget history will surely live to repeat it.

Foremost in the charge to create this policy on the hoof was the Secretary of State for the Environment, whose inept and casual performance at the Dispatch Box yesterday will have stunned the country; it certainly stunned the House, including those Conservative Members who were honest enough to show it.

In a democracy, it is a disgrace that such a fundamental change, so regressive a tax and so unfair a burden on the poor can be introduced so carelessly. To say that this measure has been prematurely introduced is an understatement.

Many people — certainly those with a constructive interest in local government—would have understood if the Government had taken the Layfield report from its pigeonhole, dusted it down, and tested its recommendations against the Prime Minister's perceived need to do something about rates. It is true that the Layfield report proposed a continuation of domestic rates, but it did so on a new basis of capital value of property — which has been discussed today — with a local income tax as an additional source of revenue for local authorities. I am not suggesting that it provided all the answers, or, indeed, any of the answers. However, at least the Layfield examination was thorough. It considered a local sales tax, vehicle fuel duties, a payroll tax and several other taxes that escape my memory. It did not consider it worth while even to mention a poll tax.

At least the Layfield report provided a starting block for any future consideration of a change in the rating system, however near or far off. That the Government did not choose to start from that point is now a fact, but the reasoning behind it is worthy of some scrutiny. The Layfield report held at its heart the view that local determination, local accountability and local democracy should be uniquely safeguarded, which was the compelling reason why the Government refused to use it as their starting point.

There is no similar commitment to local democracy from the Secretary of State. Equally, there is no commitment from the Government. That has been amply shown by the welter of anti-local government legislation that my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) drew to the attention of the House yesterday.

Mr. Hind: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the factors that is not being seriously considered—it is one that he, as a northern Member of Parliament like myself, must consider—is that the industrial-commercial

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rate will create many jobs in the north in the inner-city areas, where commercial rates will drop? Surely we should not consider only votes. Hon. Members such as myself, when entering the Lobby, will think not only about that but about jobs.

Mr. Lewis: I have lived and worked all my life in northern communities and I have served on local authorities in those communities. The problem concerns the way in which the Government operate. They see no further than Watford, and anything that goes on in London is visited on the rest of the country. I can argue, and would do so successfully, that local authorities in the north have done sterling work in partnership with industry and local commerce. There is accountability between them, but this proposal does away with that completely.

Yesterday, the House had to endure the Secretary of State boringly reciting a litany of abuse that he heaped on Labour-controlled local authorities. I am sick of hearing from the right hon. Gentleman about the shortcomings, as he perceives them, of one or two London councils, and that goes some way to answering the question of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind).

Efficiently run Labour-controlled councils such as Salford and Wigan, which I represent, and Bolton, where I live, are heartily sick of the gratuitous insults that are constantly heaped on them by this hostile Government. They are sick of the mountains of restrictive legislation that have been imposed on them over the past nine years.

The Bill must be the final straw, striking as it does at the roots of local democracy. It is further bad medicine for the good, efficient, local authorities that I have mentioned. For that reason alone it should be confined to the scrapheap of history. In destroying local democracy, as the Bill surely will, the Government will stand condemned by future generations for dismantling the best system of local government in the world.

That system has produced giants in local government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Like you?"] Like Councillor Les Hough whose boots the hon. Gentlemen have neither the wit nor the ability to lace. That gentleman died not many weeks ago still striving in the service of those whom he represented for years as leader of Salford city council. He was succeeded by Councillor Ken Edwards, who was another giant in northern local democracy. Like — *[Interruption.]* We do not need your protection from the rabble on the Conservative Benches, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We expect this sort of thing when the truth is being put down their throats. The system produced people like Councillor Bernard Coyle, the chairman of the Wigan local authority and Councillor Bob Howarth from Bolton. All four have been sterling workers for their communities. All of them have been respected by business people, by their electors and by their ratepayers—whether business or domestic ratepayers. All of them were far better men than the Conservative Benches could ever produce.

7.40 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) ended his most interesting speech by reminding us that many policies introduced by both Conservative and Labour Governments to increase fairness have ended up decreasing fairness. He cited housing and education measures as examples. The Government argue that this measure will increase fairness. I think that it will have to be added to the list of measures produced by my hon. Friend.

I have examined the impact of the proposed community charge on two wards — Penge and Shortlands — which stand at opposite ends of my constituency in every sense. Shortlands is affluent and prosperous, and in the past 12 months the bulk of the letters that I have received from my constituents in Shortlands have complained that the inspectors of the Department of the Environment have been allowing too much development and that that is spoiling the attractive ambience of that ward. Penge, on the other hand, is beset with social problems. I do not want to pretend that Penge is a hopeless area. It has a strong sense of community, and it has prospered in recent years, but when it comes to housing and employment problems, and problems with social services, there can be no doubt that Penge is a poorer area than Shortlands.

My borough treasurer has gone through the rating lists for Penge and Shortlands and examined the impact that the imposition of the community charge will have. In the first instance there will be an increase of 44 per cent. in the average rates bill from the town hall in Penge. In Shortlands there will be a reduction of about 11 per cent. in that bill. I am anxious for the burden on my constituents in Shortlands to be reduced, but I do not think that one can argue that it is fair that their burden should be reduced by increasing the burden on the inhabitants of Penge.

Unfairness in not the only problem with which we have to deal. There is the question of the practicality of the community charge——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my hon. Friend tell us whether the London borough of Bromley discriminates between Shortlands and Penge, or whether the ratepayers in both areas get the same services?

Sir Philip Goodhart: The inhabitants of Penge get slightly better services than the inhabitants of Shortlands. The inhabitants of Penge might dispute that, and it is a point that I have frequently argued on the doorsteps.

My borough treasurer and his small staff regularly collect 99 per cent. of the estimated rates revenue. He estimates that if the community charge proposals come in unamended his staff will have to double and that the amount of paperwork with which they will have to deal will quadruple. We shall not be able to count on collecting 99 per cent. of estimated revenue, because my borough has a mobile population and it is much harder to keep track of people than of houses and flats. Therefore, we shall be able to count on only 90 per cent. of the estimated revenue, which means that the burden on the average resident in Penge will increase by more than 50 per cent., while the notional value of the decrease in Shortlands will be virtually wiped out.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the 10 per cent. abstention rate that he forecasts is a gross underestimate of the figure that most local government finance experts now accept is likely? Does he accept that every table of figures now published in Scotland, which has experience of these calculations, takes into account the probability of a 20 per cent. abstention rate? Does he accept that for every peson who does not pay, the poll tax will be forced up further for those who have no choice?

Sir Philip Goodhart: The hon. Gentleman is being over-pessimistic in suggesting that there will be a 20 per cent. slippage. Most of the local authority professional bodies estimate that it will be in the neighbourhood of 10 per cent.

The Association of District Council Treasurers, the Rating and Valuation Association, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy — all non-revolutionary bodies whose advice one would normally seek — have argued that the new system will add to administrative burdens. My noble borough treasurer happens to be the chairman of the London Treasurers Association. That association estimates that in London as a whole some 2,000 extra staff will be needed and that the administrative problem will be very serious.

Mr. Butterfill: Can my hon. Friend think of any occasion in which a local government officer, faced with a radical change in what he is asked to do, did not say that he would need considerably increased resources, both financial and manpower, to achieve it?

Sir Philip Goodhart: In this case the Government have acknowledged that there will be a doubling of the administrative burden. It so happens that those directly involved believe that it will be substantially higher than that. The amount of paperwork that the Government acknowledge will be involved is at least four times greater than it is now.

For the past eight years, we have been arguing that it is important to reduce the amount of bureaucratic paperwork that the governmental machine generates. Here, at one stroke, we are proposing — from the Government's own figures — to double it, and many others believe that the actual figure will be much greater. Indeed, my borough treasurer has voted with his feet. As I have said, he is the chairman of the London Treasurers Association, but he has decided to resign and leave local government largely because he does not believe that the system that we are planning to introduce will be efficient or workable. I have to say that I agree with him.

The Government's claims that the Bill will increase accountability are not well founded.

Mr. Janman *rose*——

Sir Philip Goodhart: I think that I have given way enough. I wish to be brief.

The *Financial Times* said yesterday that the introduction of the uniform business rate, which reduces the amount of revenue generated locally from 50 per cent., means that local government is being made accountable to Whitehall and not to local electorates. I do not believe that the Bill will increase fairness, nor do I believe that it will increase the efficiency of local government. I believe that it could be improved in Committee by introducing an element of the banding system, which was argued so persuasively by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). However, I hope that the Bill will not reach the Committee, and I intend to join my hon. Friend the Member for Acton in voting against it.

7.53 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) has just left his seat. That is unfortunate, because I want to comment on his speech, which was as lucid as ever. He said something with which I fundamentally disagree. He mentioned what happened on Tuesday when we were discussing the Local Government Bill. He talked about what he would say to a visitor who had witnessed such scenes and how he would explain the lowering of standards in the behaviour in the Strangers Gallery. Of course, under arcane parliamentary procedures we are unable to recognise that the Gallery exists. However, we all know that it is there and we heard what was being said and what noises were coming from it.

The hon. Member for Buckingham is not in his place so I cannot say this to him directly. However, I hope that he will read it and I will say it to him outside the Chamber. That Gallery was full of many young women whose relationships were being described in the most insulting and derogatory fashion. All they did was to respond with applause when they agreed with a comment and with hissing when they did not. I thought that that was perfectly reasonable bearing in mind what was being said about them.

The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) commented on something that was said about the fire-bombing of *Capital Gay*. She thought that it was a good idea. I found that more insulting to the good standards of Parliament than anything that was going on——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Now that the hon. Gentleman no doubt feels that he has redressed the other side of the argument, I am sure that he will return to the issue before the House.

Mr. Banks: I listened to the speech of the right hon. member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). He had to experience another form of parliamentary procedure that is now growing up on the Conservative Benches and that is to be constantly barracked by one's hon. Friends. That is the way in which the Conservative party has fallen now that the spivs and second-hand car salesmen have taken over. The poll tax is part of the same sad decline of the Conservative party. The Bill is part of the Government's campaign of hatred towards local government. It is led by the Prime Minister and echoed by all the little people who have now taken over the Conservative party. Most of those people are lower middle class — the most contemptible of all classes — such as small shopkeepers. Those people now infest the Conservative Benches.

The poll tax is doctrinaire in its political intent and will be wholly inequitable in its economic impact. It is one further stage in the Government's campaign ultimately to dismantle the whole system of democratic local government and democratic accountability in this country.

Mr. Wilson: To be fair to small shopkeepers, does my hon. Friend agree that even they oppose this Bill? Whatever modest gain they may make in their small shops, they will lose in their domestic poll tax when compared to domestic rates.

Mr. Banks: I was thinking of a particular sort of small shopkeeper—the sort who, no doubt, short-changed the working class when serving in the shop and who now short-change the working class when heading the Government. That was who I had in mind. I fully accept what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Banks: No. I will not give way for a moment.— *[Interruption.]* I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

[Mr. Banks]

Do not worry, I am more than able to deal with any intervention that he may make, but I want to get on with my speech.

There have been some consultations and some papers about local authority finance dealing with this measure. The Government have done the same as they have done with most other proposed changes in local government on which they have deigned to consult. They have ignored all the advice they received. The abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils was opposed by all informed opinion and all that informed opinion is now very much against the poll tax and the uniform business rate.

Even the Conservative party's poodle organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors have expressed their opposition to the uniform business rate. The Government just ignore them. The Government are bloated with arrogance and dripping with venom—*[Interruption.]* I hope that I am conjuring up a nasty picture because it looks very nasty when one is standing on the Opposition side of the Chamber looking at the Conservative Benches. I am pleased to see that some Conservative Members are at least sufficiently animated to want to intervene in my speech.

I wish to deal with the effects of the Bill on the London borough of Newham. The main concerns of Newham borough councils are as follows. First, it is concerned about the large number of Newham residents who will have to pay more—often considerably more—under the poll tax. Secondly, it is concerned about the disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities, women and the low-paid. Thirdly, it is concerned about the inevitable invasion of privacy in preparing the register and the impact of this on the image of Newham borough council. Fourthly, it is concerned about the extra staff needed and the consequent high cost of collecting the community charge.

Most Newham residents will have to pay more. I remind Conservative Members that Newham is the second most deprived local authority area in England, according to Department of the Environment statistics. However, it is fortunate because it is wealthy in its representation by three hon. Members in Parliament. Unfortunately, it is economically and socially deprived.

There will be major disquiet about the large number of Newham residents who will have to pay more under the community charge. At 1987-88 expenditure levels, the community charge would be set at the level of £309 per person. The average rates bill per household in Newham is currently £518, so, while the 12 per cent. of Newham adult residents who live alone will pay less, some 88 per cent. will pay more. How can Conservative Members say that the measure will commend itself to the majority of people in Newham or that it is fair in its application?

Mr. Janman: What is the hon. Gentleman's view of the consequences of the voters of Newham electing the Conservative party to represent them locally in the borough? What does he think would be the consequences for the future trend of the community charge in the area, if they had the sense to do so?

Mr. Banks: I know that it is Christmas, but I do not believe in Father Christmas and I have never believed in Grimm's fairy tales. The hon. Gentleman's suggestion is a complete fairy tale. Newham is a Tory-free zone. Does the hon. Gentleman not know that? There are 59 Labour councillors and one SDP councillor on Newham borough council, so the Tory is a very rare creature in Newham and will remain so. I cannot even begin to understand the hon. Gentleman's hypothetical ramblings.

About 45 per cent. of Newham adults live in households with two adults and would have to pay about 19 per cent. extra. However, the main concern is for the 68,000 adults — 43 per cent. of the borough's adult population—who live in households with three or more adults, who will suddenly be faced with considerably larger bills.

Newham has a particularly high proportion of very large households. More than 27,000 adults—over 17 per cent. of the borough's adult population — live in households of five or more adults. The majority of these very large households comprise people of ethnic minority origin. In many cases, they have decided to live in extended families to ease the cost of buying a house, according to building societies such as the Halifax. As those statistics show, Newham has the fastest rising house prices in Greater London, with an annual increase over the past year of some 38 per cent.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Yes, and the highest swing to the Conservatives from Labour in the United Kingdom took place in Newham, South—8·9 per cent.

Mr. Banks: I shall deal with that point, made from a sedentary position by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). In the constituency of Newham, South, the largest swing in the country took place from Labour to Conservative. Much of that was due to the Conservative party trying to build the Labour party out of central London. Herbert Morrison said that he would do precisely the same thing to the Conservative party. He succeeded, whereas Conservative Members will not. Let me add another small psephological fact to the hon. Gentleman's memory bank. I represent the safest seat in the south of England. I have a 30 per cent. lead over the Conservative party. It is an unassailable lead and I intend to keep it like that.

A six-adult household would have an increase from an average rate charge of £518 per annum to a community charge of £1,854. I remind Conservative Members that Newham is the second most deprived local authority area in the country. The lack of a transition period means that these increases will hit people particularly hard in Newham. An ordinary four-adult household — for example, a middle-aged couple with children aged 18 and 20 — will have an immediate 139 per cent. increase imposed on it, from £518 per annum to £1,236 per annum.

A major effect of the legislation is the vast increase in staff who will be needed to produce the register, collect the charge and recover the debts. The number of separate accounts in Newham will increase from the present 57,000 rate accounts to 163,000 community charge and uniform business rate accounts. As all community charge payers must be given instalment facilities, and each person must be sent a personal bill, the number of payment transactions will increase from 350,000 to 1,500,000 per annum in Newham. It is estimated that the number of summonses issued for non-payment will rise from 8,000 to 35,000 per annum and the number of distress warrants will rise from 6,500 to 30,000 per annum.

Statistics can be exceedingly boring when hon. Members are not aware of the area covered. Conservative Members know nothing about the problems of deprived inner-city areas—*[Interruption.]* As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) says, they do not care about them. If they were really interested in doing something about the problems of inner cities, characterised by the London borough of Newham, they would restore to Newham and to other local authorities the billions of pounds of rate support grant that has been taken away from them since 1979-80.

At that time, the rate support grant represented about 61 per cent. of local authority expenditure. In the current year, that figure is down to about 46 per cent. That accounts for the crisis in local government services. It is entirely the Government's responsibility and the poll tax will only make the problems of Newham and other inner-city areas much worse. It stands utterly condemned, as does the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leight) who has just got to his feet. Unfortunately, I must sit down.

8.6 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, North-west (Mr. Banks) described the lower middle classes as contemptible. No doubt he was looking down on them from the lofty heights of a member of the upper middle classes. His speech smacked of high Toryism when he spoke of the contempt of the shopkeeper mentality. The shopkeepers of Newham created the wealth and prosperity of Newham. No doubt the hon. Gentleman would approve of Burke, who said:

"To tax and to please, no more than to love and to be wise, is not given to men."

I think that 200 years ago Burke said rather more of interest than the hon. Gentleman can ever hope to say.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) insulted the lower middle classes. If a Tory were to stand up and talk about black people in that way, he would rightly be shouted down for discrimination. Does he not think that class hatred is as bad as race hatred?

Mr. Leigh: Throughout the debate we have heard how the Labour party has become the party of reaction. The Conservative party has become the progressive party. *[Interruption.]* I shall not take any comments from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker). We are still waiting for his policy. It is extraordinary that the Labour party should support the present rating system, which results in 40 per cent. of houses with above average rateable values being occupied by families on below average incomes.

Kier Hardie would turn in his grave if he could see his party faced with such a problem. It is not just a tax that does not bear any relation to people's ability to pay: in many cases, the rates are a positive regressive tax against people on low incomes. Kier Hardie would turn in his grave if he could hear the Labour party, on this great issue of the day, saying, "We want consensus. We are going to ask the rich for a consensus on whether we should tax them." That is Labour party policy. It does not add up.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) described it as a Tory tax. I would rather go to my electorate having honestly tried to reform an unfair tax than keep what I think would be a funk tax, which is the present rating system — a do-nothing approach of prevarication 13 years after my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made his pledge. I was a candicate in Middlesborough at the time. I had hoped to be elected. I said that I would carry it out.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Gentleman criticised the rating system and described it as regressive. He did not take account of ability to pay. Over the years housing benefit, although unfortunately reduced, has helped many people who otherwise would not have been assisted. Surely the logic of his argument is that we should put forward proposals for an income-related tax. If the rating system is wrong, how much more wrong is the poll tax? It does not take account of ability to pay. One of his constituents, who perhaps earns £140 a week or less, will pay precisely the same as the hon. Gentleman. What sense would that make?

Mr. Leigh: He will not. As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said in a lucid speech, the community charge will cover a small proportion of total local government spending. Of course, we have progressive income tax.

Yesterday we heard a speech from the leader of the Liberal party. The right hon. Gentleman, who is a star of the two-minute telly chat but a dwarf of parliamentary debate, vaguely waves his hand at points about computerisation. The system is not computerised. Until it is, there is no hope of bringing in local income tax. Another interesting point about the Liberal party is that its members constantly lecture us about independence and accountability. The only way in which a local income tax will be made to work is if it is centrally organised. What would then happen to local government independence? Local authorities would be the slaves of the block grant.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman disagrees. No doubt, later in the debate, as the sole member of the alliance present, he will be able to give us the benefit of his views.

If there is to be local income tax, we shall have all the arguments, which I need not rehearse tonight, about 400 Chancellors of the Exchequer, and so on. The main argument against local income tax is that only 20 million out of 35 million voters will pay it. What attracts me to the community charge is its universality.

Mr. John Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that probably the worst problem with local income tax is that it would be socially divisive? Can he imagine what would happen if the rich in Camden were taxed at unlimited rates by Camden council? They would move out. Rich ghettos and poor ghettos would be created. That would be totally socially divisive and would stop us from creating the balanced communities that Conservative Members regard as desirable.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend has made the point very well.

The other thing that worries me about local income tax is that I am faced with Liberal councillors in my constituency, who currently control the West Lindsey district council, who say that it is their policy to bring it in. They have not told my electorate that a community charge in West Lindsey and East Lindsey would result in

[Mr. Leigh]

about £150 for an adult, and a local income tax would result in £327—a staggering 107 per cent. increase on what people pay now.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I am fascinated by the hon. Gentleman's figures. We have heard about Camden. I presume that the figures are derived from the Department of the Environment brief that was issued to hon. Members on the subject. There are certain peculiarities. For example, why is it assumed that the redistributive measures will be appropriate to the community charge rather than to an income tax? Why is it not assumed that there might be some redistribution on the basis of income distribution across the country? That would obviously be far more appropriate. After January last year we suddenly found that there was a national jump in average income tax from 4·5 per to 6 per cent. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can explain the peculiarities.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman is now in favour of local income tax redistribution, although, perhaps, coupled with clawback and so on. Of course, alliance Members know that they will not become the Government. They always try to put forward a policy that has the aura of respectability, but which, in reality, is a sham, and they know it. They know that local income tax is simply not a runner.

The advantage of the community charge is its universality. The major problem that we face is the weak correlation between expenditure and taxation. If few people realise that every family in the country is paying, on average, £1,500 towards the National Health Service, even fewer really understand how local government taxation works. I suspect that there are probably only two Members in the Chamber now who have a firm grip on the matter, and they are sitting on the Treasury Bench. Years ago, a Secretary of State admitted that he did not understand it. The weak correlation between taxation and expenditure results in a perpetual ratchet effect in favour of ever-increasing Government spending.

Mr. Janman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) spoke about the low turnout levels at local elections. When I have been out canvassing in local election campaigns, one of the most frustrating and depressing aspects has been the low level of participation of young voters. Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the great improvements that the community charge will bring about is that the 18-year-old or 19-year-old who is earning a wage will have to make a contribution towards raising local government revenue? That will start to increase that person's vested interest in taking part in local government elections. Through that mechanism, if through no other, we shall see a much higher level of participation in local government elections and a great and welcome increase in the political understanding of younger members of the community.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend has made his point well. I shall not comment on it.

The weak correlation between taxation and expenditure is a major problem, but the other problem involves the yawning poverty and earning traps. They still trap many people in destitution and unemployment. For that reason alone, I cannot follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) along the route of the banded community charge. However he dresses it up, it cannot be fair if there is a straight banded community charge for a £1 increase in earnings to result in up to a £1,000 increase in banded community charge. A tapered banded community charge would simply result in a local community income tax. I hope that I have shown that that is not a starter.

I have looked at the options and found them all wanting. Although the Government have quite rightly looked at looming revaluation and decided that something needs to be done, the imposition of a straight, flat-rate community charge may be the start of a type of radical restructuring of our entire social security taxation system, of which I have long been in favour, based on flat-rate charges and benefit and a standard rate of income tax. I shall not develop that theme; I shall give it more time on another day. For the reason that there is no alternative, I shall enthusiastically vote for the Bill.

8.18 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The debate is about an important issue. I was saddened when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) made his contribution. In 1970, he led the Conservative party to victory. Indeed, he snatched victory from what opinion polls right up to polling day considered would be a Labour victory. It was sad to see the contempt that some of his hon. Friends showed for him while he made his contribution.

I recognise that there are faults in the present rating system. I do not say, and have never said, that it is a perfect system. However, unless one can find a better system, one should not change the existing system purely for the sake of change.

There is no question but that the tax will be unfair because it will hit hardest the poorer sections in our community. The hon. Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) said that there must be both winners and losers. We all know that the legislation will mean that some are winners but some are losers. However, I advise the Government to analyse who will be the winners and who the losers as a result of the Bill.

A large percentage of those who will be the winners —I do not say all—will be those people who least need to benefit in that way. Indeed, one could argue that they have already benefited the most because of the Government's changes in income tax, which make an indirect contribution to local government expenditure, because they benefited from the biggest income tax reductions. Immediately after the Government were elected in 1979, top-rate taxpayers had a reduction of 20p more than the reduction for those who pay only the standard rate of income tax. The simple fact is that those people have already benefited considerably and contribute less to local government expenditure——

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Pike: No, I shall not give way because several hon. Members wish to speak. In all fairness and to allow those Members the opportunity to speak, I prefer to make my speech. I am sorry, but other hon. Members have been trying to speak all afternoon.

One should seriously consider the reasons why the Government wish to introduce the legislation. It is a

further indication of their dislike and detestation of local government. They wish to destroy effective local government. They have clamped local government continually either by financial means or by legislation ever since they were elected in 1979. The repeated references to Camden by Government supporters illustrate exactly what this legislation is about.

I have always accepted that a Government should have the right to determine how much they are prepared to put into local government expenditure, and have said so in the House on several occasions. Indeed, I said it as the leader of my council before I was elected. I accept also that people have a right to argue that that money is insufficient. Certainly that money has been insufficient ever since the Government were elected.

However, if local democracy is to mean anything, local authorities should have the right to determine how much the local people should be asked to spend on the provision of services at a local level. That is what local democracy is about. It is wrong for central Government to determine what figure they are prepared to put in, but to take that money away if they feel that a council is not carrying out what they wish. However, that is what has happened in many cases recently. I could never defend that.

It has been quite clear all through this exercise that the Government are misleading people in the way in which they are presenting the figures and illustrations. They have referred to a single pensioner paying the same as the family of four that lives next door. That reference appears on page 4 of their leaflet, "Paying for Local Government—the Need for Change". The Government have repeated that time after time.

If the Government really regard that as unfair, how can they justify under their system a person who has just enough money to pay the full poll tax as a result of income — whether that be a state pension or perhaps a company pension in addition—being unable to obtain any form of relief, paying the same as the millionaire who might live a few streets away? The Government cannot justify that. If they believe in fairness, they must accept that that is absolute nonsense and that the direction in which they are asking us to move is totally wrong.

The Secretary of State has often referred to accountability. In an article in *The Times* of 4 December, he stated:

> "Last, and most important, accountability. Of all the arguments for change this is the one which people do not seriously challenge. I believe the community charge will revolutionise local government and local politics in two ways: first, if a crude distinction is made between people who want to see local authorities increase the scope of their services and spending and those who want to keep both to a necessary minimum, the balance will shift markedly to the latter."

He went on to refer to accountability.

How does the Minister for Local Government account for the fact that clause 124 lays down quite clearly that the charging authorities are the district councils and the precepting authorities are a number of authorities, including county councils and parish councils? I shall not read out the full list.

I ask the Minister to recognise the fact that in a non-metropolitan borough such as Burnley, which the Minister has repeatedly described as a high spender, 76 per cent. of the rate that Burnley fixes goes at present to the county, and only 24 per cent. is a borough rate. Ministers have written letters to several of my constituents saying that Burnley is a high spender, but they have never said what we are spending that we should not because they are not prepared to say what we should cut——

Mr. Howard: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is perfectly simple. The bills that will be sent to each community charge payer will show exactly what each precepting authority is spending as well as what the collecting authority spends. They will also show that spending in relation to the needs assessment and the previous year's spending of each authority.

Mr. Pike: That is an absolute nonsense of an answer. The present rate bills and the leaflets that accompany the bills show that quite clearly now. Therefore, people know exactly what they are paying to the county council and to the borough council at present. If the Minister wants accountability, that is what he has got now. Therefore, he cannot justify the change.

Yesterday the Secretary of State referred to the borough of Pendle. I tried to get him to give way, but he was not prepared to do so. I represent a small handful of electors—less than a dozen—who live in the borough of Pendle. That is because of the local boundary changes. However, because of the change made to my parliamentary constituency last Thursday, that will be corrected at the next general election. The Secretary of State said that that borough, which is the lowest rated borough in the whole of England, pays out £700 per adult per year. How has the Minister arrived at that figure? The figures produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy show that the borough pays £72 per head. I accept that the basis of the figures is different because the latter figure also includes children. However, Pendle certainly does not have a population in which adults comprise only 10 per cent.

The comparative figure for Burnley is £78·64. Again, the Secretary of State was deliberately misleading the House. To arrive at that figure he must have been including within those figures the capital expenditure of both the district and county council as well as the revenue figures. The Secretary of State was clearly wrong. The rates figure for Burnley, which again is an extremely low-rated town, is £246 per household. The poll tax will be £239 per person. That is before the safety net provision.

It is clear that considerable numbers of people are not registered at present. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the Government's forecast of £239, with 20 per cent. evasion—it could be only 10 per cent., but let us assume that it is 20 per cent. — could be £299. When the Government publish their figures they repeatedly forget to say that they are based on 1986-87 figures and therefore they do not take account of inflation in the intervening period. The Bill clearly represents a Government attempt, once again, to curtail the activities of local authorities.

On 5 December *The Guardian* published a table on the poll tax charges that showed that a single person in Burnley aged between 18 and 24, earning more than £47·80, a couple earning £125·10 with two children under 11 and a pensioner couple with an income of £103 would pay the full poll tax burden. Therefore, the people with the lowest incomes will be hardest hit.

The Minister must recognise that wage levels in the north-west are considerably lower than those in London and the south-east. In north-east Lancashire and Preston they are lower than those in Manchester or other areas of

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the southern part of the north-west. Indeed, the difference between average weekly earnings in London and the south-east and the north is about £60 and the difference between those areas and north Lancashire is greater than that.

I believe that the Government have got it wrong and they should go away and think again. This is not the way to change the present system because it will not deal with the problems. All it will do is penalise some of the poorer sections of the community and benefit a small percentage. Indeed, in constituencies such as mine less than 10 per cent. of the people will be better off. I am sure that the other 90 per cent. will say to the Government, "We do not like what you are doing; you have got it wrong. Think again and stop this Bill before it is too late."

8.31 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is fair to say that a few years ago, any Government, especially a Conservative Government, who introduced a measure to abolish rates would have met with enormous support in the country. That was the feeling in the 1970s when the last revaluation took place. However, since then, things have changed and I believe that such support no longer exists. Indeed, outside the Chamber and within some parts of my party the Bill is considered a child that will have few loving relatives. The country views the Bill with considerable suspicion.

The history of this measure and possible rate reforms was touched upon by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). In the interests of time I do not propose to repeat that history. I notice that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is in the Chamber; I am sure that he will agree that the one thing that my right hon. Friend omitted was the report from the Select Committee on the Environment in 1982. That was an all-party Committee with a Conservative majority, but its unanimous conclusion—set out in paragraph 40 of its report—was that there was no case for a poll tax. Shortly afterwards, my Government concurred with that report and similarly rejected the option of a poll tax. Four years later we have this legislation before us. It must not be too surprising to some of my hon. Friends if those of us who studied the matter in great detail four years ago retain our opinion. I do not believe that, in the past few hours, due reason has been given to change our minds.

Many hon. Members have referred to accountability. It is not right to suggest that the Bill increases the accountability of councils to their electorates. It certainly increases the accountability of councils to central Government, and whether that is good or bad will depend upon my hon. Friends' attitude to local authorities, either specifically or in general. I regret such accountability. During my time in the House I have sat on many of the Committees considering the large number of Bills referred to by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). During that time, I have supported measures that increase accountability, improve the efficiency of local authorities and reduce centralisation or the danger of centralisation posed by the Government of the day.

Several hon. Members have drawn unfavourable comparisons between the number of potential payers of the community charge — some 35 million — and the number of ratepayers or income tax payers—some 20 million. The reason for the difference between those figures of 20 million and 35 million is the fact that no account is taken of the estimated 10 million or 11 million working wives who earn money and pay tax — they would readily recognise that fact—but whose earnings, under our present tax system, are deemed to be part of their husband's income.

When discussing the possibility of a banded charge, suggesting that women are not, in some way, aware that they are paying tax is nonsense. Indeed, the figure of 35 million also includes a considerable number of people who are, in theory, liable to pay the community charge because they receive supplementary benefit or income support. In some cases, those people will be reimbursed as a result of benefits. Therefore, when we take such people out of the total figure of 35 million, we are left with a different figure altogether.

Other than the unfairness of the proposal, the matters that concerns me most are the potential for cost to local authorities and the problem of evasion. There have been references to estimates—at this stage in our deliberations everything must be based on estimates—of the possible evasion rate. We are aware of some evasion rates in other walks of life. It is accepted that 8 per cent. of those who should pay the television licence evade that payment. The cost of the licence for a colour set is £58. I challenge anyone to deny that when considering the Government's proposals for a community charge — at the lowest estimate that figure will be three or four times the cost of a television licence and in some cases it will be 10 times higher—the evasion rate will be higher.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Squire: I will give way only once, because I am conscious of time.

Mr. Bennett: My hon. Friend has thrown down the challenge on evasion. Of course evading payment of a television licence—it is easy to hide a television—takes place, and indeed, payment of the car licence is also evaded. However, it is difficult to hide oneself in our community. All of us use some form of public service and it is difficult to avoid claiming benefit or using a public library. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to a set of statistics. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) because he asked for the total electorate in Scotland this year as opposed to last year. This year, after the introduction of the poll tax legislation, the fall in the number of electorate in Scotland was 1·1 per cent. and not 10 or 20 per cent. as claimed by that hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Squire: I am glad that my hon. Friend reached his point. I intend to deal with the electoral register in a moment.

I am discussing the evasion of the charge once it is in force. I am sure that my hon. Friend will concede that if someone is on the electoral register the chances are that he will end up being assessed for the community charge. In fact, it is presently estimated that that register is missing some 3 million people, and that is at a time when there is little or no penalty for not registering. I invite the House to consider whether that figure will increase, as a result of the Government's proposals. I believe that we must naturally conclude that that figure will increase and that has disturbing democratic implications.

Ministers have correctly pointed out that non-inclusion on the electoral register will not, of itself, enable an adult to avoid payment, but the corollary of that is that inclusion on the register will make an assessment certain. The population will not be slow to draw the obvious conclusion.

Some of my hon. Friends have mentioned the manifesto commitment. In the eight years that I have been a Member, I have never accepted that giving 80 or 100 listed pledges in an election manifesto resolves all possible subsequent discussion. That is intellectual nonsense. What is more, independent commentators on the last election made it clear that, with the obvious exception of Scotland and one or two constituencies in the north-west, the issue was hardly raised on the doorstep. That was my experience and that of a number of my colleagues. The matter only became a flagship about seven or 14 days after the election —the first recorded instance in history of a flagship being commissioned after the surrender of the enemy.

For many years I have believed that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with a property tax, and I retain that view. Assuming that the Bill becomes law in its present form, we shall be the only western country without a property tax. That supports my view that such a tax has a legitimate and honourable place within a developed financial system. But no property tax will emerge from this legislation, and everyone recognises that. That is why I join some of my hon. Friends in wanting the Bill amended to bring into play a fair balance on income to allow those who do not earn as much as many in our society, but who are above benefit levels, to be treated less harshly than they will be under the Government's proposals. I hope that it will be possible to bring in a banded charge.

I believe that the Bill will be intensely unpopular, not only now but in three and five years' time, too. It is right to court unpopularity if there is an underlying sound principle which, in the course of time, is likely to be generally approved. In my belief and experience, it is foolhardy to stretch the patience of so many of our supporters unless the principle is sound. It is not on this occasion.

When the Scottish legislation was debated, I made it clear to the Government that I would neither support nor seek to oppose it, because I recognised pressure from my Scottish colleagues. However, I said that if we introduced such a measure in England and Wales, I would speak and vote against it. I have done, and I shall.

8.42 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I listened with the greatest interest to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), and I suggest that his hon. Friends do likewise. The legislation and the response to it will be a case of the chickens coming home to roost for the Conservative party, which has failed to listen to sound, reasoned argument. Some Conservative Members are replete with self-conceit and blind in their faith, suspending doubt and clambering aboard what they have been told is the Government's flagship. I say to them without malice that they know nothing of the squalls that lie ahead—not in the House, but in their constituencies —as knowledge of the poll tax filters through.

If anything can be learned from the Scottish experience of the past two and a half years it is that, the more people know about the poll tax, the less they like it. That is not a statement of propaganda; it is a demonstrable fact with which Conservative Members will have to learn to live soon.

I want to say three things about what the Bill does not do, because, inevitably, rationalisations are being constructed to justify it retrospectively. First, it is not about protecting hard-pressed ratepayers from the excesses of wicked Labour local authorities. I shall not go over the historical pattern that has been described by various speakers—about how the poll tax re-emerged from the shelves of the Adam Smith Institute and was dusted off in Scotland by a handful of zealots three years ago.

Anyone who had the wit to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) would have understood the truth of what I am saying. What my hon. Friend told the House was of tremendous significance. He spoke of the calculation of the escalator factor when one relates the effect of the uniform business rate and the inflation freeze upon it to the increase in poll tax. In virtually every Scottish local authority—almost without exception—to spend within the Government's own guidelines in past years, the poll tax increase would have had to be double the level of the domestic rates increase to maintain the same level of spending.

So, if the Government say they will attack the spending levels of local authorities by the imposition of the poll tax, let us be clear that they are talking about the spending levels of non-political, Conservative and Liberal-controlled local authorities, which are now living within the Government's guidelines. Fifty-four of 56 Scottish local authority areas would have had to impose a rate of poll tax increase approximately 100 per cent. greater than a domestic rate increase to achieve the same increase in revenue and remain within the Government's guidelines. So the measure is not about protecting domestic ratepayers, because domestic poll tax payers will be infinitely harder hit.

Secondly, the Bill is not about attacking large families per se. There are many large families in this country—large families of lawyers, business people and high earners who pay domestic rates commensurate with their substantial family incomes. There are many proven cases, with which I shall not trouble the House in detail, in which five or six people living in such households will still pay less in domestic poll tax than they previously did in domestic rates. Clearly, this Bill is about attacking large working-class families.

Thirdly, the Bill is not about protecting old ladies who live alone in houses. In reply to a question to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), the Government admitted that, even on their own figures, one third of all single pensioners would be worse off under the poll tax than under domestic rates. So the legislation is about taking away from old ladies who live in poor circumstances to give to old ladies who live in prosperous circumstances. The problem can be better handled through a rebate system on domestic rates.

I conclude with a point about the register that has hardly been touched on. Any hon. Member who supports the legislation and who has not taken the trouble to go to the Library to read the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy report on the implementation of this tax in Scotland does not have a clue what he is talking about. Those in the Scottish Office—poor souls —who were lumbered with implementing the tax, had to

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go to CIPFA to ask how, in heavens name, they were to do it. Back came the facts—not in propaganda, but in grim detail. The report costs £4,000 per issue if any hon. Member cares to purchase it, and comprises two tomes —one on the compilation of the register, and one on the tax's implementation and enforcement.

Because of shortness of time, I shall not go through all the grim facts in that report, but shall mention only one. In Scotland alone, CIPFA tells us, there will be 800,000 register changes in a year. How many register changes will there be in the whole of Great Britain? If we multiply by 11, we get the Great Britain figure and it is over 8 million. Add a couple of million for London, where the whole thing becomes crazy, and we are talking about more than 10 million register changes a year that will have to be monitored by an army of poll tax inspectors.

Conservative Members have become indignant about the idea of a state identity system, but it is all there in the CIPFA report. It uses polite language but it says that there will have to be something called a community charge identifier. Those are the reasons why the poll tax has been utterly rejected in Scotland, not only by those who will lose but also by many of those who will gain but who have a shred of morality and human decency.

8.50 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I support the introduction of the community charge. It will bring more accountability into local government and, contrary to what the Opposition say, within a few years it will be generally and fully accepted.

I should like to deal briefly with some points about redistribution and the way in which the community charge will affect people living in different parts of the country. Those who compare what they are likely to pay under the community charge system with what they now pay under the rating system are under a misapprehension, because the alternative to the community charge system is not what is paid now, but what would be paid following a general rating revaluation. The last revaluation was carried out in 1973, and current assessments are now totally out of date and unrealistic. We now have the job of explaining to many people who live in properties with rateable values that are grossly low compared to what they would be if we had a revaluation that they will benefit considerably from the change to the community charge.

The hon. Members for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke about the situation in London. I shall outline the situation in my own northern metropolitan district of Bradford, where we have not only a high-spending Labour authority, but where one can still find many terraced properties with rateable values of about £60 or £70 per annum. It must be safe to assume that many of those valuations would at least treble if there were a revaluation of domestic properties. An analysis revealed that, while there would be a sharp rise in the rateable value of all properties, terraced properties would rise more sharply than all other types of property. Thus, the tax burden would be redistributed from ratepayers in larger premises, often in suburban areas, to ratepayers in smaller terraced or semi-detached homes, many of which are located in inner-city or urban environments.

It is clear that the alternative to the community charge would be an impost that would hit hardest those who are least able to afford it — certainly as far as the metropolitan district of Bradford and similar areas are concerned. In my constituency, only about 12 per cent. of people living in the three urban wards of Keighley would gain from revaluation, while as many as 88 per cent. would find themselves at a disadvantage. The figures would hardly be different for other wards, such as the Worth Valley ward, including Haworth, where many of the homes date from the time of the Brontë sisters.

For many people revaluation would be a far nastier shock than the community charge, which, because it is linked to the number of adults in a household, is actually related to services provided and is more likely to be related to people's ability to pay.

This is just one facet of the case against taxes based on property values. It shows what nonsense such taxes are in modern-day society, where services are essentially provided for the benefit of people. No one inventing a method for funding local authorities today would try to justify anything like the present rating system.

A principal argument employed against the introduction of the community charge is that it would redistribute the local tax burden from the well-off to those less able to bear it. However, if we look at the impact on Bradford as a deprived urban area in the north of England, we see that over 45 per cent. of households would be better off after the community charge is introduced, even if it is at a level that I would regard as unacceptably high because of the high spending policies adopted by Bradford's present Labour rulers. On the other hand, as many as 84 per cent. of households would pay more subsequent to a rating revaluation. Furthermore, revaluation would hit hardest those in inner urban areas such as the middle of Keighley, where many people live on low incomes with little capacity to adapt their resources or their expenditure to cope with that situation.

No system of local government funding is perfect and, of course, there will be gainers and losers. However, the community charge system has more advantages and certainly fewer drawbacks than any other system including the present one. That is why I am glad that the Government have had the boldness to come forward with this change. In time, the public will recognise the logic that underlies its approach.

8.54 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I have been listening to the debate all afternoon and I am reminded that ever since this subject was raised there has been continual discussion —we have heard it in this debate—about whether it should be called a poll tax or a community charge. It is worse than any simple community charge because even if a person chooses not to vote they will still have to pay the charge. It is a tax on existence after the age of 18. Every adult will have a price on their head, regardless of their ability to pay. It would be better to call it a head tax.

The concept is totally abhorrent but entirely consistent with the Government's philosophy of valuing people below property. They are willing to tax people who have little or nothing, but leave untaxed the wealth and property of those who have much. Just as we will have this Tory head tax, we will have Tory head hunters. Local authorities will have to employ armies of snoopers to find out who is living where and with whom. The idea of a man

from the council scaling our drainpipes to count the number of toothbrushes in the bathroon would be ludicrous if its implications were not so sinister.

As the youngest Member of the House, I have a special interest and awareness of the impact of the tax on young people, especially those outside education and training. The poll tax represents yet another attack on their rights, just as the removal of wages council protection and the introduction of the lower rate of income support were attacks. Young people have again ended up on the losing side.

From April, a single, childless unemployed person under 25 will receive just £24 a week in income support —£6 less than older recipients—regardless of their need. In addition, like everyone on income support, young people will have to find 20 per cent. of their poll tax bill. The Government's promise to uprate benefts to cover this extra cost is hardly reassuring. *The Guardian* on 23 September reported that uprating would not even be permanent but that the Government would claw it back in future years by failing to raise benefits in line with inflation. How mean can the Government be to the most needy?

Youthaid has calculated that the uprating will be insufficient to cover the 20 per cent. poll charge in approximately 112 local authorities. Young claimants will have to find the extra money from their already reduced benefit. The double blow of the poll tax and the income support system will make large parts of Britian literally no-go areas for young people in search of work. the problem will be still more acute for young people living in areas which will have larger than average poll taxes on 1 April 1990.

The Child Poverty Action Group rightly stated in its report on the poll tax that a

"group which is particularly hard hit by the proposals are young people who are not householders, who are brought in to the net for the first time. Using the Government figures, 21 per cent. of the 52 per cent. . . . who will lose will be non-householders."

The truth is that some will be forced to leave their family and friends in order to flee the tax. It is ironic that the self-proclaimed party of the family should introduce a measure which can only hasten the demise of the family unit. The effect of that attack on families in constituencies in rural areas such as Truro will be marked. Every rural community is dependent on the agricultural economy.

In Cornwall the emphasis is very much on the small farm, often run as a family business, and currently in difficult financial circumstances. In these hard times, many farms keep going only with the support of all the family working together. The introduction of the poll tax could be the final straw for many farming families. Adult sons and daughters who presently help to keep the family farm afloat by working long hours for little reward may have no option than to quit.

The Government have told us that a redistributive tax is inappropriate for local government. They prefer a tax based on the benefit principle. The Secretary of State told us:

"The community charge is a charge made for the services provided by a local authority. It is a service charge". — [*Official Report*, 1 July 1987; Vol. 118, c. 536.]

That is an erroneous assertion, but carrying through its logic, we should look at the services available to those isolated farms. Do they benefit in the way that that comment supposes? The main objective of the Bill is supposedly to improve the accountability of local government.

Mr. Hind: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Member knows that I am very short of time.

Surely there can never be genuine accountability while local authorities — Conservative, Labour or Liberal — achieve a majority of seats on a minority of the vote. Only a fair electoral system can introduce accountability into local government once and for all.

If the Government believed in accountability and listened to the electorate, the Bill would never have been introduced. If the Government were interested in consensus and consultation, they would know that no one wants the Bill.

This week my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked the Minister yet again to name a single local authority of any political or party make-up that welcomes the introduction of the Bill. The Minister was unable to give an answer. If he can give an answer tonight, we will be interested to hear it. The Bill has no support. We know that the majority of people do not want it. I welcome every Conservative Member who is wise, aware and alert enough to recognise that and vote against it in the Division.

9.1 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Having sat here for two days, I do not have as much time as I would have liked to make my speech, but I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) for his courtesy in allowing me to intrude on his time.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is on his side.

Mr. Cormack: I am on the side of the people. My interest goes back to a long time before the hon. Gentleman entered the House. On 3 December 1974 I introduced into the House—I subsequently introduced it on six separate occasions—a Bill to reform the rating system of England and Wales. Among the colleagues whom I was delighted to have as fellow sponsors was my right hon. Friend the current Secretary of State for the Environment. My hon. Friends and I were then aiming, both to exempt internal improvements from increases in rates, because we thought that that would be iniquitous, but to see that only all adult wage earners made a contribution. It is on the issue of who should pay, more than any other, that I have to cross swords with my right hon. Friend.

I have two principal objections to the Bill. I have others, but we do not have time to debate them. First, it is wrong that the Bill should apply to people with no income. Secondly, it is fundamentally wrong that there is no relation to the ability to pay. Many colleagues have made that point in the past two days. I cannot look anyone in the face and say that I believe the Bill to be just when I have constituents living in small, ramshackle terrace houses who point to those living in considerable affluence and say, "We are going to pay the same." That is fundamentally wrong and, much as I regret to say it, it is offensive.

Mr. Marlow: The rates are wrong.

Mr. Cormack: The rates may be wrong, but wanting to reform the rating system does not mean that I have to accept what is in the Bill. It is a travesty to suggest that there are no alternatives. Only today some of my hon. Friends and I received a letter from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors along the same lines as my right hon. Friend and I were moving 13 years ago. In effect it suggests that householders should pay a rate which covers them and their dependent relatives, and that others who have an income, which makes them liable to tax, should pay something. This could easily be worked out. There is no point in pretending it cannot be done.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who has done a signal service of banding, has put forward yet another alternative.

A percentage of the tax paid could be assessed as a rate poundage. A similar scheme was put forward in the letter to which I have referred. I should have liked to develop that point, but I cannot do so as I do not want to transgress on the time that rightly belongs to another hon. Member.

In conclusion, I simply state that I do not want to be part of a decision tonight that will enable people in future to say that at Christmas 1987 a decreee went out from the British Parliament that everyone should be taxed irrespectively.

9.4 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): My first brief duty as I reply on behalf of the official Opposition is to congratulate the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) on his maiden speech yesterday and offer our thanks for the warm tribute that he paid to his predecessor.

At the outset of my remarks, I want to deal with Labour party policy. I do that to avoid any doubt later. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) yesterday made our position absolutely clear. He said:

"A Labour Government will abolish the poll tax, if it is in place. Before legislating, we shall publish"

our proposals in a White Paper and bring them to this House for debate — something that the Government have refused to do. The Government have flatly refused to put any proposal to the House since publishing their Green Paper in January 1986. My hon. Friend went on:

"Unlike the Government, we believe that property should be taxed."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987, Vol. 124, c.1136.]

We believe that the taxation of property has "general merits." That phrase was used by the Minister for Local Government.

There is common ground here. If property is not taxed for the purpose of local government, the Treasury will find a way to introduce a national property tax because we will be the only country without a property tax. The Treasury will argue that the tax base is not broad enough.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland also made it clear that we will seek a consensus. We mean that. We are after a fair and principled policy. We said that we will not introduce any policy that is unfair and unrelated to the ability of individuals, families or small businesses to pay. Of course we shall also review the functions and duties of local government.

As my hon. Friend said yesterday, the Opposition support—and we know that there is substantial support in the House and in local government, at councillor level, officer level and also among informed academics — a wider tax base for local government. Broadening the central Government tax base has been a consistent policy of Governments this century, for the obvious reason that they did not want to overload any particular tax as has happened with domestic rates and will happen with the poll tax.

Only this Government have suggested that any income-based element would have to be collected by 400 authorities in England. It would more likely be a quarter of that. No document, speech or press notice that I have ever read, from any source, has ever suggested that any local income tax, whether it be 100 per cent. local income tax or shared with domestic rates, would be collected by every district council, metropolitan council, shire county and London borough. That has never been suggested and the Government are aware of that. They have put up those 400 little Chancellors of the Exchequer so that they can knock them down. No one put up that proposal in the first place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland has said that that is the way that we will proceed. Conservative Members have frequently quoted me referring to walking naked into the debating Chamber. I also said that the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen will not be able to fight the poll tax for a full parliamentary year with one hand tied behind their backs. We are not prepared to do that. We have made the principles of our policy abundantly clear. We will enunciate the details in Committee and challenge the Government to match those details.

We are not interested in a solution that fails to meet the most basic requirement of good taxation, which is that a tax should survive the test of time. The Tory tax, the poll tax, will not survive the test of time. That is absolutely clear.

People outside the House have made it clear that the Department and the Government are up to their old tricks of setting up straw men to knock them down. First, they have quoted a high tax level for London boundaries, and Camden has been mentioned in every other speech today. They ignore the fact that London local government boundaries will reduce the number of boroughs. Secondly, it would be an extraordinary coincidence if all London boroughs had different local income tax rates. In practice, a number of them would be the same. Thirdly, the Government mentioned computerisation, which will take some time but will make it easier to overcome that difficulty. That view was put by the Tory Reform Group and not by the Labour party.

Hon. Members who support the Bill have constantly spoken about charges for the use of services. That has been a constant theme in their speeches. When the present Secretary of State for Education and Science introduced the Green Paper on 28 January 1986, he said that the poll tax

"would be more closely linked to the use of local services." —[*Official Report*, 28 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 798.]

The Minister said in a press release on 27 October that the

"first priority must be to restore the link between those who vote in local elections, those who use the local services provided and those who pay for those services."

I can tell the Minister and the House that the poll tax will no more be a charge for the use of services than rates are a charge for services. The consumers of 65 to 70 per cent. of local government services are children and the elderly.

Everyone who thinks about it knows that the idea that the poll tax is a charge for the use of services is a nonsense. Local government has functions other than providing services. It exists to help divide political power in a unitary state, because the alternative would be a central dictatorship.

The key word throughout the debate and the Green Paper has been accountability. Indeed, every time a defect has been pointed out, such as the fact that the cost of collecting every £1 in poll tax will be double the cost of collecting £1 in rates, Ministers say that neither the ease of collection nor the cost of collection are good enough criticisms because of the need for local accountability. If that were true, the poll tax would be understandable.

If local councils taking decisions in fear of the electoral consequences was the name of the game, or if clause 96 was not in the Bill, it would be understandable. The Minister is taking powers to fix the poll tax after an election has take place, so the argument about accountability cannot be true. It does not stand up. There would be real accountability if every council had annual elections for one third or one quarter of its members, and Opposition Members do not understand why the Government have not moved in that direction. There would be real accountability if each council had to send out its own rate demand, instead of using other councils to do that, as in the case of the shire counties riding on the backs of the district authorities. The logic of the poll tax is to abolish local government or bring in compulsory voting. No other alternative make sense.

The point that will come home to haunt the Government is that the real pressure will come back to central Government, and Conservative Members should wake up to that fact. In defending 20 to 25 per cent. of regressive tax, they constantly used the argument that the rest of the income comes from income tax and other progressive taxes, and therefore it must be OK. It will not take long for the majority of people in Britain with below average incomes to realise that they must inevitably put the pressure for extra services on central Government to step up grants or take direct control. They will know that central Government will be dispensing grants on the basis of progressive taxation, with local government being tied to regressive taxation. There is no inherent weakness in the relationship between votes cast and seats won in local elections. The poll tax will clearly shift the balance to the relative attractiveness of central spending as opposed to local spending, yet Ministers say that it is all about local accountability.

The other theme that we have heard a lot about is the ability to pay. Astonishingly, we have heard a good deal in justification of the poll tax about excise duties, car tax and television licences. Indeed, only a couple of weeks ago the Prime Minister, arguing in defence of the flat-rate poll tax, said:

"We all pay income tax and VAT—*[Interruption.]* Most people pay income tax, but not all. All pay value added tax". —[*Official Report*, 3 December 1987; Vol. 123, c. 1098.]

The Prime Minister is truly confused. I apologise for not following the usual courtesy of telling the Prime Minister that I would refer to her, but since she was not here for the launch of the flagship she is hardly likely to be here when I am spitting on its deck.

Income tax is levied according to ability to pay. VAT is paid according to ability to spend, which is ability to pay. The same is true for a television licence, excise duties and car tax. They are all expenditure taxes. Therefore, they are paid according to the ability to spend. There is not the slightest connection between a compulsory flat rate per person, unrelated to ability to pay, and any other tax in the land.

The other red herring that we have heard is what I might call the four earners argument—the one about the single person, usually a widow or pensioner, living next to four earners. It is always four earners.

When the Secretary of State introduced the White Paper in January 1986, he said:

"It still means that the single pensioner or the single parent will face the same bill for local services as the house next door with four earners.—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 798.]

He was talking about the rates.

The Conservative party research brief for Tory Members dated 25 June 1987 said:

"First it is unfair because it takes no account of the use made of local services or ability to pay—so an old age pensioner living alone can pay the same as four wage earners living next door."

The annexe said the same.

In the Nick Ross phone-in programme on 21 July 1987, the Secretary of State referred to

"a single widow living in one house, four earners in the next house."

The Minister for Local Government, writing in the *Financial Times* on 16 November 1987, said:

"Then there is the widow in the family house paying the same as the four earners next door"—

[Interruption.] If Ministers will contain themselves, I shall give them a question to answer.

Later in the BBC phone-in, the Secretary of State was questioned by Mr. Marshall from Scarborough. He said:

"Do you think it's fair that I should pay the same in the poll tax as say the Earl of Scarborough, who happens to live in this borough, when our incomes are very different?"

The Secretary of State said yes, and went on to say:

"if a man has £25,000 a year for instance, he will pay twenty times as much towards local authorities as a man on £2,500 a year."

The Conservative Central Office brief made exactly the same point. Mrs. Joyce Burnside from Windsor in Berkshire asked the Secretary of State:

"how can the community charge be fair, if I as an old age pensioner, living in a modest semi-detached house, pay the same as the millionaire next door living in a huge residence".

The Secretary of State said:

"but that gentleman living next door to you is in fact paying a great deal more in income tax, and perhaps other taxes.

The Government are using both arguments. On the one hand, they are saying that it is unfair that four earners should pay only the same property tax for local services, and, on the other, they say that it is fair for the millionaire to pay only the same poll tax for those services. One is fair and the other is unfair, but both are living next to a single pensioner or widow. Surely the four earners are paying income tax in the same way as the millionaire.

If it is fair for the single pensioner living next door to the tax-paying millionaire to pay the same poll tax, why is it unfair when there are four earners instead of four millionaires? The Government are using the same contradictory argument for both purposes, and it is utterly bogus.

Another point, which has been made constantly, concerns the effect on couples. The Government flatly refuse to accept that the 12 million spouses in the country do not contribute to the payment of rates. I do not wish to go into all the detailed statistics, because that will not

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

make my case, but does the Minister really believe that, when the rate bill arrives, one partner does not mention it to the other? Does he really believe that, after years of silence with the householder refusing to mention the rates demand, breakfast will now begin with one partner saying to the other, "Have you got your community charge demand too, darling?"

Ministers and other Conservative Members have talked of rebates, but it is important not to confuse a sensible and generous rebate scheme with a flat-rate poll tax unrelated to ability to pay. The distinction is important, which is why it is included in the reasoned amendment. The rebate will be paid through the housing benefit system. The Minister told me in a letter—I presume that he has said the same elsewhere—that it would be available to the elderly and to grown-up children, who would receive it in their own right. However, housing benefit covers rent and rates—in future, rent and poll tax. Rent rebates are based on household income, but poll tax will be based on individual income.

How will the Government deal with the administrative nightmare that they are asking local authorities to operate? The Minister may consider that that point could be more usefully dealt with in Committee, where I suspect that we shall have to spend several hours on it. But there is an inherent contradiction in having two forms of rebate, affecting the same people, but with one related to household income and the other to individual income.

Many hon. Members and outside organisations have raised the aspect of privacy. My hon. Friends from Scotland have made the point more eloquently, because they are living through the system now. We should prefer the Committee stage to be taken on the Floor of the House, but, if that does not happen, we suggest to the Government that they include some Scottish Conservatives on the Standing Committee. We certainly intend to include some Labour Members from Scotland.

Ministers have conceded that the addresses of women who have suffered domestic violence and have sought refuge should be kept off the register—although that is not in the Bill, as we should like it to be. Indeed, any individual who has satisfied the community charge registration officer that she may suffer injury can have her name and address taken off the register, so that attention is not drawn to the information. However, all that a troublemaker need do in the case of, for instance, political refugees—who will argue that their names and addresses should not appear on the register — or women who suffer domestic violence is to check all the address gaps on the register. The implication will be that there is some trouble to be made at an address that is not on the register, and there are evil people in our society who will seek to abuse such information. The register will be up for sale, although we have not yet understood the purpose of that.

There is another point about privacy. We understand that the poll tax will start in England in 1990; the register will have been set up, and payments will start in April of that year. In 1991, people will already have seen the full effect of the first year of the tax. A census is due in 1991, which will affect every citizen in the land. It is crucial that people trust the census; it is vital that they fill in the required questionnaire.

On the information from the census depends central Government policy formation for National Health Service expenditure, transport policy, social service policy and a gamut of matters affecting the way in which we run a country of 50 million citizens. If people, having seen what happens when they have filled in the poll tax register, take the view that they want to keep their vote, but say, "Damn the census form," the danger is that it will not be accurate, and that point must be taken on board by the Government. We need the census. It will be no good ducking out of it, but it will follow too fast on the poll tax for everyone's good.

The Secretary of State, in what turned out to be a unwise intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland, said that he would like to test any proposals. He was reminded that he had said that the Government would not do that.

The Under-Secretary last night accused my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland of quoting from a parliamentary answer given in July 1986. I presume that he now realises that my hon. Friend was quoting from what the Government put in the Library on 9 November 1987. We do not ask for a correction, but the Minister was wrong.

What we complain about is that the Secretary of State has refused to answer our questions seeking legitimate information. Thus, it was no surprise when he received the response that he did last night.

I shall raise six points out of two or three dozen that Ministers have refused to answer. Will they publish the studies by Professor Foster, Mr. Hodson, Dr. Jackman, Mr. Stancliffe, Lord Rothschild, Dr. Whitehead and Professor Wilson, which led to the publication of the poll tax Green Paper? They are all thanked in the foreword of the Green Paper, but we should like to know what they offered the Government. I have often wondered why Lord Rothschild was not prosecuted for connecting Peter Wright with the world of journalism. It is a sad end to a distinguished career in public service for Lord Rothschild to be tainted with giving intellectual credibility to the flat-rate poll tax.

Ministers have refused to give a breakdown of losers and gainers, by local authority or parliamentary constituencies, because of disproportionate cost. I asked whether they would supply information so that any hon. Member or anyone else could go to any university that offered to help and get the information desegregated by constituency or authority. The reason that the Government gave for refusing my request was not cost but confidentiality.

On 24 July the Government admitted that they were unaware of any research into the correlation between voting and rate rebates or payment of local taxes in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. On 5 November they said that they refused to commission such research on the relationship between voting and paying local taxes. What is this nonsense that we keep hearing about the information that they have about those who pay, those who use services and those who vote? They do not have any evidence. If they have, will they please make it available?

The Government have refused to undertake further studies on the effects of the housing market. They have said that house prices will increase by 5 per cent., but others have said that it could be a lot higher.

At no time have the Government offered any discussion. There has been much haggling within the Government. First they were to phase in the poll tax over 10 years, then over four years and then overnight. They

have haggled on how best to introduce this unwanted tax. There has been no debate about the substance of the tax, no White Paper, no parliamentary debate, and we were astonished to learn a couple of weeks ago that until June of this year no full Cabinet had had a discussion on the introduction of the poll tax in England.

Regrettably, I have missed three or four speeches, but I have not heard from anyone, inside or outside the Houses who favours the abolition of any property-based tax comment on one of its little-known consequences. Property taxes are based on rental values. They are based not just on property but on the services and infrastructure of an area. Conservative Members are the first to lead their constituents in campaigns for a reduction in rateable value when the environment and infrastructure of their area is disturbed by a new airport or motorway. Those who have won reductions in rateable value because of interference by an airport, dock terminal or motorway, will lose that reduction overnight if the poll tax is introduced. Under a personal tax system there can be no such reductions.

Finally, I refer to comments made about the effects of a revaluation of rental or capital values. I cannot go through all the quotations, but I can give the House the figures. The former Secretary of State for the Environment told us:

"If rates are to be kept, there will have to be a major revaluation and that will create a turbulence in family incomes much greater than what I am proposing to the House." — [*Official Report*, 28 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 800.]

The Minister for Local Government used almost the same words recently.

The Government told us that no fewer than 15 per cent. of households—2·7 million—would face an increase of 50 per cent. under a capital revaluation. That would indeed be turbulence. If the rates were revalued, 1 million households—5·6 per cent.—would face an increase of 80 per cent. or more. That is turbulence that the House and the country will not stand. However, under the poll tax, 3 million households—17 per cent.—will face a one-off increase of more than 50 per cent. That is more than would suffer under capital or rental revaluation. The argument was that the House and the country would not stand the turbulence created by the other measures, but that turbulence would be worse under the poll tax system than under either of the alternatives.

As many Conservative Members have said, the Government are about to score an own goal. We do not want to win on that basis. *[Interruption.]* Oh, no, we do not want the poll tax from this Government, or from any other Government. The Government have not taken on board the consequences for our people of this grossly unfair and unjust tax. They cannot say that they were not warned.

9.32 pm

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Michael Howard): Twenty-two years ago this month, the late Richard Crossman moved the Second Reading of a rating Bill in this House. He described the rates as an ancient monument that should not have been allowed to survive from the reign of Elizabeth I into that of Elizabeth II. He said they were having a disastrous effect on local government and local democracy.

Those views are shared by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). Just two months ago the hon. Gentleman said that he could not explain the existing system to his constituents and that he could not justify its outrageous unfairness. When the hon. Gentleman was first appointed to his present position he approached these matters with a commendable sense of responsibility. The first thing that he did was to ask his party what its policy was on local government. "Hang on a moment," he said "What's our policy on local government?" He was told that it did not exist. He said: "Putting it at its baldest we haven't got a policy. That's the actual truth." What a reflection on his hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who has been his party's principal spokesman on these matters for years and still has not been able to come up with any policy at all. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We heard the hon. Member from Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and everybody listened to what he said. Do you think it can be organised so that we can hear my hon. and learned Friend the Minister?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Less noise below the Gangway would help.

Mr. Howard: The hon. Member for Perry Barr insisted that he could not defend the unfairness of the existing rating system. He said that he was not prepared to see the Labour party walk naked into the debating chamber. It had to have an alternative. Good brains were going to look at it. The chance was there to make a decision. He said, "By the day of the Second Reading of the Government's Bill we will be on the record."

We have been waiting eagerly in anticipation of the clothes that the Labour party was going to provide for the hon. Member for Perry Barr. When they were a little late arriving, we thought, if you will forgive me for saying so, Mr. Speaker, that there had simply been a delay at the tailors, but the truth of the matter is that the Labour party was not even prepared to let the hon. Member for Perry Barr get measured up. The reason for that is that the hon. Member for Perry Barr and the hon. Member for Copeland do not agree with each other on this issue.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr spelled out in one of the last issues of *Labour Weekly* on 23 October 1987 what his ideas were. He wants to keep the rates and he wants a local income tax as well. He described that combination as

"just too sensible to pass up."

However, he has not been able to persuade the hon. Member for Copeland. So, when the hon. Member for Copeland promises us a consensus on this issue, it is as well for us to bear in mind that there is not even a consensus on this matter on the Opposition Front Bench between the hon. Member for Perry Barr and the hon. Member for Copeland.

In the 22 years that have passed since Richard Crossman's speech, Governments of both parties have tried to shore up this ancient monument with a series of devices each more ingenious than its predecessor. Those efforts have been in vain, and the time for tinkering is over.

Mr. Leigh *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has been a good debate. I ask the House to give a fair hearing to the Minister.

Mr. Howard: At long last we have a Bill before the House which will, once and for all, abolish the domestic rating system. It is a moment that has long been awaited.

[Mr. Howard]

Given the momentous nature of this undertaking, it is not surprising that we have had a debate of high quality. It has been conspicuous for one feature in particular. The friends of the existing rating system have been few and far between. That is not surprising. The defects of the existing system are well known. Its unfairness is manifest. Why should poor people living in high rateable value areas subsidise rich people living in low rateable value areas? Why should a single pensioner——

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Minister has made an interesting point. However, can he justify a change that will result in my family, which currently pays about £643 a year in rates, paying £284 a year when the new system comes into effect and the two pensioners living across the road, who now pay £128 having to pay £284?

Mr. Howard: The vast majority of pensioners will benefit from the change. A total of 69 per cent. of single pensioners—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister must have a chance to answer.

Mr. Howard: Either the Labour party is seriously interested in the plight of pensioners or it is not. The fact is that 69 per cent. of single pensioners will benefit from the change.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Minister explain how the Prime Minister, a pensioner, will benefit by thousands of pounds from the change when she said when she originally proposed to abolish the rates that it would be replaced by a tax based on the ability to pay? Why the U-turn, and why the benefit to the rich?

Mr. Howard: I shall deal in full with ability to pay.

There is no satisfactory answer to the questions that I have posed. The rating system is manifestly unfair and its unfairness can no longer be tolerated. Nor is it a system which provides accountable local government. Of the 35 million people who are entitled to vote in local elections, no fewer than 20 million never pay a rate bill. Even those who do pay—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has been a good-natured debate and some powerful arguments have been put on both sides of the House. The Minister is seeking to respond to some of the points raised.

Mr. Howard: Even those who do pay cannot see a clear relationship between what they pay in rates and what their council spends because of the complexities of the system and the mysteries which encompass it. Is it any wonder that, unless and until the rates explode, people take little interest in the activities of their local authorities? Is it any wonder that the hon. Member for Perry Barr said that he could not explain the existing system to his constituents? Is it any wonder, in those circumstances, that the turnout at local elections is so abysmally low? As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said in a speech of compelling lucidity, in the metropolitan district council elections in 1986, 39·3 per cent. of those entitled to vote did so. Indeed, in some areas, only one in four of those entitled to vote make their way to the polling station and cast their ballot.

Let there be no misunderstanding about this. These defects in the existing system cannot be cured by a revaluation. I hope that no one in this House supposes, after the experience in Scotland in 1985, that a revaluation would be a painless experience. Not only would it cause enormous turbulence and bear with disproportionate harshness on those occupiers of modest properties who, for example, have had the benefit of inner-city upgrading, or those who have installed central heating since 1973 but not had that improvement reflected in the rateable value of their property; it would fail completely to deal with either the unfairness or the lack of accountability of the existing system.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The Minister talks about the complexity of the present system. Does that have anything to do with the 46 Acts of Parliament which the Government have introduced on this subject during the last eight years?

Mr. Howard: By far the most important contributor to the complexity is the concept of resource equalisation, which is at the heart of any rating system. The existing system must go. That view is widely held. It has been expressed by virtually all my right hon. and hon. Friends who have spoken during the debate.

Apparently, however, it is not the view held by my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). I listened very carefully to his speech, but I was puzzled by it, in particular by his comments on revaluation. He said that it was "unopposable". He was right, but he went on to speak of the political difficulties and urged us not to act to placate the tidy minds of valuation officers.

May I assure my right hon. Friend that placating the tidy minds of valuation officers is not something that features at all high on our list of priorities. However, we do think that, because there has been no revaluation, industrial premises in the north of this country, and in the west midlands and other areas are treated very unfairly. We think that they carry much too high a burden and that we must act to reduce that burden and remove that injustice.

The combined effects of our proposals for a national non-domestic rate and revaluation would reduce the burden of rates on business in the north and the midlands by about £700 million a year. I had hoped that on this at least my right hon. Friend would have made common cause with us.

I was also puzzled by the reasons that my right hon. Friend gave for his opposition to our proposals. He acknowledged the grievances that exist against the existing system, but he wanted them left untouched because their origins are lost in the legacy of history. I believe that Governments are elected and are expected to redress grievances whether or not their origins are lost in the legacy of history. If injustices exist, it is the task of Governments to remove them. If unfairnesses exist, it is the task of Governments to deal with them. If grievances exist, it is the task of Governments to redress them, whether or not political difficulties lie in the way.

We have had Governments in the past who have set aside these tasks because they were politically difficult. This is not that kind of Government. This a Government who act to remove injustices, to eliminate unfairnesses, and to redress grievances. It is precisely because they are that kind of Government that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been returned to Downing street in the last three general elections.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that it comes ill from the Labour party to talk about fairness when it supports councils that massively increase their rates that have such an effect on pensioners?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is because the Labour party will be found out by the new system that it is so terrified of it.

It is because this Government tackle the matters that need to be tackled that they have set about the task of identifying the alternative to the discredited existing system that offers the best prospect of removing unfairness and increasing accountability, so that we can once more have a healthy and effective system of local democracy —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say again to the House, let us hear the Minister.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Howard: It is for these reasons that, nearly two years ago, the Government published a Green Paper setting out the various alternatives to the current system. We considered them all. At a time when he was under the illusion that it was his party's objective to make a constructive contribution to the debate, the hon. Member for Perry Barr said:

"We do not have to invent an alternative—they are set out in the Government's Green Paper."

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Howard: The truth is that the community charge is the only reform that offers the hope of healthy, accountable local government.

Let me deal with fairness. We cannot have the fairness of the new system without taking into account the fact that the rich will continue to pay far more than the poor through their contribution to the central Government grant. About half of local government spending is financed by——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that if the Minister does not give way hon. Members must not persist in rising.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady had her chance earlier.

Mr. Howard: About half of local government spending is financed by central Government grants, which are largely paid for by income tax contributions. Under the new system, the top 10 per cent. of income earners will pay about 16 times as much as the bottom 10 per cent. The system of rebates will ensure that low-income groups receive help towards the cost of their bills. Those living on the basic state pension, those living on unemployment benefit and indeed anyone else in receipt of supplementary benefit will get an 80 per cent. rebate. Their benefit will be made up by 20 per cent. of the average community charge across the country to help them meet their bills. A system of tapers will be in place to ensure that the benefit of rebates is phased out as income rises.

Even if there are those who are not persuaded by these arguments, and even if there are those who remain of the view—strongly though I disagree with them—that our system has not achieved some notional critirion of fairness which they wish to apply, the matter does not end there. There is a further question which they have to ask, and it is this. How do the Government's proposals compare with either the existing system or any alternative system that has been put forward? If they ask themselves that question I believe that they will find that there is only one answer to it.

Let us look at some examples. Let us take the case of a single elderly person living in her family home in Luton. Her rates on a three-bedroom semi might be £400, 10 per cent. of her income, which is just high enough to keep— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair not to give the Minister an opportunity—*[Interruption.]* Order. The debate has proceeded in good order up to now.

Mr. Howard: Next door live two schoolteachers and their adult children. Between them they earn at least £30,000. Their rate bill is only 1 per cent. of their income. In practice, their adult children will make no direct contribution to the rate bill, no matter what their income is. Why should those adult wage earners make no contributions?

But rates are worse than that. Let us take the case of two nurses, both living in similar two-bedroom flats.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Howard: Are Opposition Members interested in the plight of nurses or not?

Let us take the case of two nurses, both living in similar two-bedroom flats, one in Carlisle and one in Luton. Those are authorities with broadly similar levels of spending. The nurse in Luton pays £700 a year in rates, while the nurse in Carlisle pays £396.

Would a banded community charge be an improvement? I fear not, but the unfairness works the other way. On the basis of the recent CIPFA report, a nurse in Luton earning £9,000 a year would pay a banded charge bill of £399. Yet the same nurse in Carlisle would pay £682—a difference of £283 a year.

Under our proposals, the nurse in Luton would pay £239, and her colleague in Carlisle £264. The difference of £25 simply reflects the different level at which each authority chooses to spend. That is clearly much fairer than any of the alternatives.

Let me deal with the only alternative that has the support of any political party, the local income tax, which is the policy of the so-called alliance. Indeed, it was espoused during the debate by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Before the Labour party yields to any temptation to espouse it, Opposition Members will no doubt remind themselves of the speech that was made by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) when he was responsible for these matters. He gave 10 reasons why a local income tax would be disastrous. The fact is that a local income tax would deal a massive body blow to our inner cities. There would be huge differences in local income tax rates between neighbouring authorities.

In the London borough of Hackney the local income tax rate would be 21p in the pound. The tax bill for a single adult on average earnings of £10,500 would be nearly £1,700 a year — nearly one-sixth of his or her gross earnings. In nearby Redbridge the income tax would be

[Mr. Howard]

only 4·2p in the pound and that person would have to pay a tax bill of £335. That represents a difference of over £1,300 a year.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that there was a similar difference between two authorities under the existing system.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend was correct, but that difference would be magnified and exaggerated by local income tax in a way that would magnify and exaggerate the problems beyond all comparison. The effect of such huge disparities would be dramatic. People would simply up sticks and leave. House prices would plummet in the high-spending areas. Therefore, people living in those areas would face huge increases in their bills and big cuts in the capital value of what would be in many cases their main asset. The inner cities would lose many of the brightest and enterprising people, which would be a body blow to the local economy.

Some of my hon. Friends have put forward the banded community charge, but it would have all the disadvantages of a local income tax together with some unique to itself. Those who have advanced the proposal have encountered formidable difficulties. It is nearly two years since the publication of the Green Paper that set out the Government's preference for the community charge. Yet we had to wait until less than a fortnight ago to see the first, and still the only, version of a banded community charge to have been put down on paper so that we could see exactly what it might mean. Those versions proved to have a fundamental flaw. However, the information that was set out in them was sufficient to enable us to see how very considerable the disadvantages of such a proposal would be.

We have pointed out that the effect of a banded charge would be that, when someone moved from one band to another by increasing his income by an extra £1 or £2, the amount which he would have to pay in additional banded community charge would increase by up to £2,000. That is a defect which is inherent in the concept of a banded community charge. That particular consequence exists in the model that was put before us that had eight different bands. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir. G. Young) said that it is true that one could reduce that effect by increasing the number of bands, but the more one increases the number of bands the more complex the system becomes. However many bands there are, one cannot eliminate that effect without moving to a full local income tax. We have pointed out this defect for some time now. No one has answered it—there is no answer to it.

I have some hope for my hon. Friend the Member for Acton. On 22 July, in an article in the *The Daily Telegraph*, he declared himself in favour of the existing rating system. Today, he began his speech by saying that the time has clearly come to abolish the rates. I look forward to the futher evolution of my hon. Friend's views.

The fact of the matter is—and I realise that this is unpalatable to some of my hon. Friends—that there is no new painless way of financing local government lying just around the corner waiting to be discovered. That is why the Labour party has come to this debate without a policy. It knows that any alternative which it could come up with would have defects, disadvantages and unfairnesses that would make the criticisms of the community charge pale into insignificance.

Mr. William Ross: The Minister has still not told us why Northern Ireland has been denied the benefits of this new system of financing local government.

Mr. Howard: Because, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the system of local government in Northern Ireland is very different from the system of local government in Britain.

The Opposition have not got a policy and they do not want one. They are prepared to continue to come to the House time after time with negative sterile opposition. They are a party that says no. They said no to council house sales, and then they changed their mind. They said no to trade union reforms and then they changed their mind. They said no to privatisation, and then they changed their mind. And they say no to the community charge, but the time will come when they will change their mind.

The domestic rating system started in the reign of Elizabeth I and should never have been allowed to survive until the reign of Elizabeth II. We promised the British people that we would abolish it, and abolish it we shall in the Bill before the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a Tory Member stuck in the Aye Lobby, the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), who will not come out of the Lobby. I tried to coax him through. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) wants to sweep up at the other end of the Lobby, but the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding will not come out. My hon. Friend has to clear the Lobby and say, "All out", but, unless the Tory Member goes through the gates and votes with us, the vote will take an extraordinarily long time.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is in error. No hon. Member can be compelled to vote.

The House having divided: Ayes 253, Noes 340.

Division No. 121] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Boateng, Paul
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Boyes, Roland
Allen, Graham	Bradley, Keith
Alton, David	Bray, Dr Jeremy
Anderson, Donald	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Armstrong, Ms Hilary	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Ashdown, Paddy	Buchan, Norman
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Buckley, George
Ashton, Joe	Caborn, Richard
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Callaghan, Jim
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Barron, Kevin	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Battle, John	Canavan, Dennis
Beckett, Margaret	Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Beggs, Roy	Cartwright, John
Beith, A. J.	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*	Clay, Bob
Bermingham, Gerald	Cleiland, David
Bidwell, Sydney	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Blair, Tony	Cohen, Harry
Blunkett, David	Coleman, Donald

Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter

Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Mariand, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put:—
The House divided: Ayes 341, Noes 269.

Division No. 122] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartliss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael

Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Staml'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Salisbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*

Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time

Motion made, and Question put,

That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Dr. Cunningham.]*

The House divided: Ayes 248, Noes 342.

Division No. 123] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*

Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dixon, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spaid'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn

Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE BILL
[MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question put,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Local Government Finance Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) the remuneration of, and any expenses incurred by, valuation officers in carrying out functions under the provisions of the Act relating to non-domestic rating (including the remuneration and expenses of persons employed to assist them),

(b) any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred in consequence of the Act, and

(c) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 156.

Division No. 124] **[10.45 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'th's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas

Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*

Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Douglas
Holland, Stuart
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. Alun Michael.

Question accordingly agreed to.

LIAISON COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That Sir Antony Buck, Mr. Bob Cryer, Mr. Frank Field, Sir Marcus Fox, Mr. Terence L. Higgins, Mr. David Howell, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Ron. Leighton, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Timothy Raison, Sir Hugh Rossi, Mr. Robert Sheldon, Mr. Nigel Spearing, Mr. James Wallace, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mr. Kenneth Warren, Mr. John Wheeler and Mr. Jerry Wiggin be members of the Liaison Committee.—[*Mr. Maclean.*]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Sex Discrimination

That the draft Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 23rd November, be approved.

International Immunities and Privileges

That the draft International Trust Fund for Tuvalu (Immunities and Privileges) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 19 November, be approved.

Animals

That the Coypus (Prohibition on Keeping) Order 1987, dated 26 November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30 November, be approved.

Animals

That the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987, dated 26 November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 30 November, be approved.

Agriculture

That the Farm Diversification Grant Scheme 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1949), dated 16 November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 18 November, be approved.

Merchant Shipping

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 6 November, be approved. —[*Mr. Maclean.*]

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Shopworkers

10.55 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): I am privileged to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who are shopworkers and members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers. That union deplores the pressure that shopowners are putting upon staff to work on Boxing day and on 1 and 2 January. USDAW represents 390,000 members, two thirds of whom are women. Many do part-time work, the hours of which are dictated by employers with no regard to anti-social hours that disrupt family life.

The petition complains of Tory legislation that has abolished any legal minimum rate of pay for young people. That has created an incentive to avoid paying full adult rates, which in themselves are barely adequate. The Wages Act 1986 abolished the right of workers to paid holidays, and that was a scandal. Figures published this week show that shops are enjoying a pre-Christmas boom and, in the past weeks, they have had bumper takings in excess of £10 billion.

Surely it is only fair that, following eight weeks of unmitigated pressure, the shop staff who have been working flat out deserve a break. That break should not be just on Christmas day, which, in any case, is not a holiday for most parents. The petition seeks to give shopworkers and the rest of us a real break on Boxing day and on 1 and 2 January.

To lie upon the Table.

Daisy Hill Opencast Coal Site

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

10.57 pm

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): On the motion for the Adjournment I am raising the subject of the planning appeal decision of the Secretary of State for the Environment on the Daisy Hill opencast coal site in my constituency. I am doing so because I believe that the Secretary of State's decision to overrule his own inspector's recommendations is ill-considered, unjustified and arbitrary.

Let me say straight away that I am not opposed in principle to opencast mining. However, as the Select Commitee on the Environment said:

"open cast mining is one of the most environmentally destructive processes being carried out in the United Kingdom."

Therefore, it is essential that decisions on opencast mines should be subject—as they are now—to the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and its procedures.

What needs to happen is that each case should be considered extremely carefully on its merits, and that is precisely what the inspector at the Daisy Hill inquiry did. There is no argument about the facts of the case. Indeed, the Secretary of State has said specifically that he accepts the inspector's findings of fact. The inspector held a public inquiry in March and April of this year against the refusal of Durham county council to permit opencast mining at the Daisy Hill site.

All the local councils—county, district and parish—were against the appeal by the Coal Board. Many local people were involved in the inquiry, and as the constituency Member of Parliament I gave evidence to it. Apart from the Coal Board, no one was in favour of the board's appeal. All agreed that the decision to proceed with opencast mining would have harmful environmental effects.

As was the case with the 1979 inquiry into a similar, if marginally larger project, the inspector at the 1987 inquiry found that, mining at the Daisy Hill site would cause serious environmental damage that would outweigh any market requirement for coal. Opencasting, said the inspector, would disrupt the landscape and lead to harmful environmental effects, including dust, noise, vibration, and harsh visual intrusion on the surrounding settlements of Edmondsley, Daisy Hill, Sacriston, Woodland Terrace and Nettlesworth.

The site is in a bowl, overlooked by the settlements that I have just mentioned. So, as the inspector pointed out, there is no way in which the visual effects can be mitigated or screened.

The inspector was also concerned about the impact of opencasting on the Waldridge county park, which directly adjoins the site. As I am sure the Minister is aware—he will have looked at the papers—Waldridge Fell is a beautiful area containing a registered common and a county park, managed for educational and recreational purposes—it was visited by about 75,000 people in 1985, the last year for which we have accurate statistics—and it is a site of scientific interest because it is a rare lowland heath. That is why the inspector concluded that opencasting so near the park would

"result in an unacceptable impact on a leisure area of rare therapeutic value".

When the inspector came to weigh the environmental damage against the need for coal, he accepted that there was a regional need for further opencast coal working, but he concluded that

"this individual proposal appears to have an insignificant relationship to the wider national interest"

and that market considerations did not justify the substantial environmental damage that was involved. In view of the decisive and conclusive nature of the inspector's recommendations, it is astonishing that the Secretary of State proceeded to overturn them.

In answer to my parliamentary question on 14 December the junior Minister said that since the National Coal Board opencast executive was brought into the planning system in 1984 the Secretary of State had overturned an inspector's recommendation on only one occasion. I should like the Minister to confirm that that only occasion was the one that we are discussing tonight. It is therefore unique.

My argument is not that the Secretary of State is not entitled to do what he did, but that, if his decisions are not to be considered arbitrary, he must have overwhelming reasons for overturning his inspector's recommendations. The letter from the Department setting out the Secretary of State's reasons for overturning his inspector's decision is unconvincing, to say the least. He accepts that opencast mining at the Daisy Hill site will cause damage, but he goes on to say that

"there is a regional need for further opencast coal working to be permitted".

I challenge the Secretary of State's decision on three grounds. First, it is inconsistent. For the planning system in general to function in a proper way and attract confidence, there needs to be an evenhanded approach to each appeal. This applies particularly to the opencast industry, where the inevitable outcome of any approval is to cause disturbance, to at least some people.

The Daisy Hill decision is the third of a series of decisions on large British Coal opencast sites in the county. The first two decisions were taken in May for the Rose Hill site near Stanley, which is also in my constituency, and in August for the Hill Top Brusselton site near Shildon. The need for the coal from each of the sites was identical, being based upon the supply of coal to the steam markets in the south-east.

In the Rose Hill and Hill Top Brusselton appeals the Secretary of State agreed with the respective inspectors that the disadvantages of working these sites outweighed the perceived need for coal. In the Daisy Hill decision, the Secretary of State seemed to forget about the earlier decisions on the need for coal and the weight to be given to that. He also disagreed with his inspector about the degree of disturbance that would be caused by the working of this site.

As I have said, each case has to be considered on its merits, but when the same applicant produces similar evidence at three inquiries held within six months of each other about the market requirement for coal—a term which, as the Minister knows, is used in circular 384, which contains the current Government guidance—one would expect at least a reasonably uniform approach to the environmental considerations of each proposal. It would be difficult for anyone with direct knowledge of the location of the Daisy Hill site to maintain that the environmental effects there would be less significant than those at the two other sites, which were refused. I speak

with personal knowledge, because I was involved in the Rose Hill decision. Therefore, I know what I am talking about.

As the Minister knows, the inspector in the 1979 Daisy Hill inquiry, and the inspector in the current inquiry, recognised the environmental problems of working at this site. I doubt whether any other sites in the country have been considered in such detail over many years with a finding against development by two inspectors. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State has determined that the Daisy Hill site should be approved. Most objective observers would conclude that the Government have abandoned the evenhanded approach.

I should like to know the basis on which the Secretary of State has judged that environmental considerations are not important in this case. To my knowledge, he has never visited the site. His inspector has visited the site. Indeed, he virtually lived on it for a month. He concluded that the environmental damage would be severe. What grounds has the Secretary of State for rejecting his inspector's advice? Would he allow opencast mining near his own house or next to a country park in his constituency? I very much doubt it.

The Secretary of State calls on the north to improve its environment to attract business. He tells us to design more golf courses to make the north more attractive and more beautiful. The inspector also said that an improved environment was a crucial part of the Durham county council's plan to attract modern light industry to set up in the north. Indeed, it was one of his main reasons for turning down British Coal's appeal, yet the Secretary of State has rejected his inspector's advice.

The Secretary of State has not even troubled to make a serious argument about the market requirements. He has ignored his inspector's conclusion that Daisy Hill coal is not particularly rare and that any contribution to exports would be expected to decline. By relying purely on the argument about the regional need for more sites, the right hon. Gentleman is virtually giving the go-ahead for all future applications by British Coal. We should like to know how many sites are needed, where they will be and whether local councils and residents will have any meaningful say in the planning process.

I fear that the Daisy Hill decision will not only be harmful to the interests of my constituents, but will give the green light for unlimited opencast mining in the northern region. The Secretary of State has behaved in an irrational and arbitrary fashion. It is as if he took the decisions late at night on his fifth box, and that he mistook a letter from the Secretary of State for Energy for the inspector's findings. I do not accuse him of having listened too eagerly to a telephone call from the Secretary of State for Energy. I am sure that he would not do that, because he knows that he has a quasi-judicial function. As his decision is so inconsistent, arbitrary and unjustified, I ask him to rescind it. It may cost the Government money, but it is the only sensible thing to do.

11.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) has explained his concern about this case with characteristic vigour, and I congratulate him. Before he was successful in obtaining this Adjournment debate I was already aware of his interest in the decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to permit the British Coal Corporation to extract coal by opencast methods from the Daisy Hill site. Since that decision, issued on 10 November, the hon. Member has written to my right hon. Friend and has tabled two questions which deal with the statistics of decisions in opencast coal cases.

The hon. Gentleman's constituency is one of several in north-east England which are fortunate in having not only some very beautiful scenery but also considerable mineral wealth. His constituents have, for generations, been constantly faced with the dilemma of preserving the environment whilst exploiting the natural wealth of their home territory.

I am sure hon. Members will appreciate that I am unable to comment on the merits of a particular planning decision. Once a decision has been given on appeal or called-in application my right hon. Friend has no further jurisdiction in the matter and he cannot reopen it to consider any further representations or complaints he may receive. Any person who is aggrieved by a decision on appeal and wishes to question the validity of the decision may make an application to the High Court within six weeks from the date of the decision. As the decision on the Daisy Hill site was made only on 10 November, it would be doubly inappropriate for me to make any comments on its merits.

In every case that comes before my right hon. Friend for decision a great deal of care is taken to assess all the evidence both as represented by the inquiry documents and as presented by the inspector in his report. However, I must emphasise that my right hon. Friend is entitled to reach his own views on the merits of any case as presented to him by the inspector and he is not obliged to accept the inspector's recommendation. Only where he intends to reject an inspector's recommendation because he is privy to new evidence would the Secretary of State have to refer back to the parties.

The hon. Gentleman has asked why this is the only case —it is the only case—where the Secretary of State has overturned the decision of an inspector. I have said why I cannot comment on the decision, but I refer the hon. Gentleman to the letter from which he quoted, which sets out in some detail the reasons—he may not agree with them — for the Secretary of State's decision. It is certainly true that it is the only decision the Secretary of State has overturned on an opencast coal site. However, it is not unique in other respects. Last year some 27 recommendations of inspectors were overturned, and on occasions the Secretary of State has varied decisions of the inspector on opencast coal matters.

Although I have said that I cannot comment on individual cases, I appreciate the concern that proposals for opencasting can cause. I fully accept that this method of mining can have a severe impact on the amenities of an area. However, that does not mean that opencasting is automatically incompatible with the protection of the environment. It is important to recognise that opencast coal is a valuable source of low cost energy and that, providing proper control is exercised, there is no reason to impose artificial limits on the production of opencast coal. I obviously welcome the comment that the hon. Gentleman made about opencast mining.

This is the approach that we adopted when the Government accepted the recommendation of the Commission on Energy and the Environment that consideration of opencast coal proposals should be

[Mr. David Trippier]

brought within the normal minerals planning machinery. Under the terms of DOE circular 3/84, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, British Coal was required, as private licensed operators have always been, to submit its plans to the mineral planning authorities — usually county councils — for consideration in the normal way. If planning permission is refused, British Coal has a right of appeal to the Secretary of State, as in the case of the Daisy Hill application.

Whether on appeal or during the consideration of an application by the mineral planning authority, account must be taken of the guidelines my Department issued in circular 3/84. That states that each project should be considered in terms of the market requirement for its planned output, taking into account the alternative sources of supply, including deep-mine coal, as well as the environmental, agricultural and other planning considerations. The overall level of opencast output is therefore determined by the market, subject to the acceptability of individual projects as determined by the planning system. The circular also states that when assessing the need for coal and the environmental, agricultural and other planning matters, proposals for opencasting should be examined against certain considerations. Those are, in no particular order, first, the extent to which coal would otherwise be sterilised by built development. For example, if a major road construction project is to take place, where possible it is sensible for any shallow reserves of coal to be worked first. Secondly, the extent to which a site can be environmentally improved, by clearing dereliction or stabilising a site for amenity use or allowing other forms of development to take place once the site is cleared. Thirdly, to provide for the comprehensive working of coal deposits in an area. Generally, it is better not to work coal in a piecemeal fashion which may prolong the environmental disturbance in an area. Finally, to consider whether the proposals facilitate the efficient and economic working of any other minerals which occur in the site.

Opencast coal sites also raise issues such as the effects of dust, noise, visual intrusion, increased heavy traffic movements and vibration from blasting. If an opencast coal proposal is to be considered favourably, all those matters will have had to have been satisfactorily resolved. Another important factor will be the satisfactory arrangements for the proper restoration of the site. In all those matters it is sensible for the applicant to have sought the views of those affected such as local people, or those able to offer expert advice, such as the Nature Conservancy Council. In that way a consensus is more likely to be achieved.

Although under that system British Coal now applied for planning permission, the Opencast Coal Act 1958 still required it to seek authorisation from the Secretary of State. That separate tier of approval is redundant and its repeal was provided for in the Housing and Planning Act 1986. However, before the opencast coal provisions in that Act could be implemented, two sets of regulations had to be made to amend the forms used by British Coal for footpath and compulsory rights orders and ensure that the corporation's entitlement to compensation for planning decisions is confined to the same circumstances as other mineral operators.

I listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman said. I understand his concern and I know that he is a very honourable Member of this House in every conceivable way. However, I must make it clear once again that I am not allowed to comment on the details of the case, but a way is open to an appeal to the High Court.

The Government recognise that opencast coal is an important source of low cost energy. They are firmly committed to the protection of the environment and they wish to ensure in individual cases that the right balance is struck between the national interest in developing those resources and in protecting the environment.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 18 December 1987

the House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Rating Reform

9.35 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Greenock and Port Glasgow and other persons. The petition protests against the proposed implementation of the community charge, or, as it is known in Scotland, the poll tax, which is considered unfair, unjust and inequitable in my constituency and elsewhere in Scotland.

The tax will infringe the civil liberties of the people whom I represent. Moreover, it has no support in Scotland other than within the ranks of the Scottish minority party —the Conservative party. The petition states:

"Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act.

To lie upon the Table.

Armed Forces (Pensions)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*(Mr. David Hunt).*

9.36 am

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): During national emergencies we rely completely on the dedication and self-sacrifice of our armed forces. Politicians are quick to praise the efforts of those who protect us at those times, particularly the professionals who provide the backbone for the reserve and conscript forces. It is therefore only right and proper that in their time of need we should do our best to help them, and now is one of those times.

Retired service men and their widows are suffering considerable financial hardship as a result of serious anomalies in the armed forces pension scheme, and those who have been retired the longest, and are therefore the oldest, have the smallest pensions. These inequities are due mainly to a system of block dates fom which the improvement becomes effective and also the impact of a temporary pay restraint policy that reduces permanently the pensions of those service men and their widows who are unfortunate enough to retire at that time.

Because service men have little choice over their dates of retirement, their pensions are calculated on a code system which covers a period from 1 April to 31 March in the following year and is designed to ensure that they receive the same rates of pension for equal rank and length of service, irrespective of their actual retiremant date in that particular code year. However, if there is a period of temporary pay restraint during the code year, the system can work fairly only if pay is maintained at a realistic level.

The Armed Forces Pay Review Body is allowed to recommend full rates of pay for the job, which are then deemed to be payments for pension purposes. That system of deeming was first used by Members of Parliament in 1976 to protect their pensions from the effects of the 1976-77 incomes policy. It was not until the 1978 code that Her Majesty's Government allowed it to be used by the armed forces, and consequently those who retired during 1976-77 code years are receiving substantially lower pensions than those of equal rank and length of service who retired before or after that date.

For example, the pension payable from 1 April 1987 to a major who retired retired under the 1977 code is £7,624, compared with £10,145 for a major who retired two years earlier. Similarly, a lieutenant-colonel who retired in 1977 receives a pension that is nearly £1,000 a year less than that received by a major who retired two years before. Such inequities also affect a widow's entitlement under the forces family pension, as she receives a proportion of her husband's pension. However, there is an even greater anomaly in widows' pensions: if her husband retired before 31 March 1973, she receives only a one-third compared to a one-half rate after that date.

A further serious anomaly is the treatment of officers who retired before 1960, whose pensions are based on a standard rate for maximum permissable reckonable service according to rank, and not on actual service. As service before the age of 21 does not count for pension purposes anyway, and because the majority served for longer periods than the reckonable maximum, it is common to find that an officer retiring in the years between 1945 and 1960 loses up to eight years of actual service in the calculation of his pension.

[Mr. Neil Thorne]

Again, that affects widows' pensions. To make matters worse, all those widows are only on the one-third rate. For example, the widow of a major who retired in 1956 receives a forces pension of £1,996 a year, compared to the half-rate pension of £3,586 for the widow of a major who retired with 22 years' reckonable service in 1987.

There are further serious inequities affecting widows. The widow of a post-retirement marriage prior to 6 April 1978 does not receive a forces family pension. Yet, through his act of service, the service man "buys" an entitlement for his widow to receive a pension, irrespective of the date of his marriage. Since, by their very nature, the contributions can never be refunded, service widows' pension rights must always remain "bought".

Then there is the position of the older war widows whose husbands retired before 31 March 1973, and who are therefore not entitled to the Ministry of Defence attributable forces family pension, which is paid with no minimum service qualification required from the husband, at a rate for each rank, and is equal to 90 per cent. of the husband's full career pension. Yet what actually matters is that those women's husbands died for their country, not when they died.

That has caused an enormous gap between the financial treatment of older war widows and that of those whose husbands retired after 31 March 1973. They all receive state war widows' pension, which for the war widow of a private soldier aged over 70 is currently £3,244, and for the war widow of a major is £3,341. However, in addition, the war widow of, for example, a private soldier killed in the Falklands receives from the MOD an attributable forces family pension of £3,117, and the war widow of a major receives £8,703 a year. However, the war widow of a service man killed in the second world war, or in Korea, receives a forces family pension from the MoD only if her husband served for long enough to earn a pension. The majority did not.

There are many other anomalies. For example, on a second bereavement a widow who was receiving a forces family pension from her first husband can have her pension restored only subject to a means test. Because of the rule about post-retirement widows' pensions, that poses a real moral dilemma, and puts the widow who wishes to remarry a service man who is already retired in the position of having to decide whether it is worth marrying him and risking the loss of her forces family pension, rather than simply living with him. That cannot be right.

Moreover, because of Her Majesty's Government's refusal to allow "deeming" during a period of pay restraint, the date of retirement for service men has become a lottery. Those who retired during the first half of 1984 are particularly hard hit. This will create further bitterness, and the policy can only lead to future manning problems.

All those anomalies have been represented many times over the past 10 years to Ministers, but the Government have maintained that they cannot afford the cost of correcting them, as such correction would also have to apply throughout the public sector. However, service men, because of the conditions under which they serve, are in a special category among public servants. The code system used for calculating their pensions is unique and they are denied the averaging system used by all other public sector schemes, which avoids the worst effects of pay restraint on pensions. No other public-sector group is subject to the age restriction of service before 21 not counting for pension provision, and they all base pensions on actual service.

Service men's widows, especially war widows, are certainly in a special category.

All our major NATO allies treat their service men's widows more fairly than we do, with a minimum pension of one half and no restrictions on the date of marriage or retirement. The Government maintain that it is a "principle" that improvements to pension schemes cannot be made retrospective, but we are dealing with working rules and practices that should be kept under review, and updated as necessary.

In 1983, the Officers Pension Society's chairman, Admiral Sir Peter White, wrote to the Prime Minister:

"A Serviceman, when he joins, accepts that he may be required to give his life for his Country and on occasion he has to do just that. Therefore we believe we are different; we believe the public accepts that we are different, and we believe that recent events in the Falklands underline that view point."

In reply, the Prime Minister wrote on 30 November 1983:

"I respect the Officers Pension Society's view that Servicemen are, for the reasons given in your letter, in a special category among public servants."

The Officers Pension Society is continuing its campaign. The General Secretary, Major General L. W. A. Gingell, and the Assistant General Secretary, Group Captain F. Vincent, now maintain that the pattern of service life is different, involving

"Frequent moves causing difficulties of owning property, educating children, and establishing 'roots' . . . Frequent separations (e.g. Falklands, Northern Ireland, Belize, seagoing duty) causing family hardship and problems . . . Service wives find it difficult to obtain employment . . . Servicemen have to respond 'at the drop of a hat' to orders. There is no Trade Union . . . Servicemen are expected to work 24 hours a day when called on. There is no overtime pay for unsocial hours . . . Servicemen are expected to put their trust in the Government to protect their interests. There is no Court of Appeal . . . It is expected that they will give 'good and faithful military service' to the Government. They have no right to strike."

All those factors amount to the fact that service men and service women are in a different category from the remainder of the Civil Service. Arguments in the past have relied on the fact that civil servants are trying to protect the Government from having to pay out additional funds. I think that that view is wrong. We cannot possibly believe that service men are in the same category as all other civil servants.

It is particularly hard on widows of service personnel who have married after completing their service. Service men have been discouraged from marrying early. Before the last war, serving officers were not allowed marriage allowances until they were 30 years old, and since the war that has been reviewed only to 25. Married officers required accommodation, and had children to educate; they were therefore discouraged from marrying early, and many accordingly married after completing their service. Their wives are completely abandoned by the state if they retired before 1973. That is wrong, when they were holding off from marrying on behalf of the state.

The advertising for service personnel that we promote tries to encourage the belief that, by giving their working lives to the protection of the state, service men in return will be looked after by the state. I feel that they are being particularly badly let down. We say to them, "Avoid the

rat race — come and do something much more worthwhile. Look after your country, and we shall look after you." But we are really saying, "You must watch us as employers. If you do not, you are likely to be short-changed." That is neither fair nor reasonable. We now have an opportunity to put these matters right.

The matters to which I have referred apply to all ranks in the services. The Officers Pension Society watches carefully what happens to other retired service personnel. The effects in the period 1976-77 and, I am sad to say, in 1984-85 leave much to be desired. For example, a major who retired in 1975 would now be drawing a pension of £10,145 a year. However, if he retired in 1976 he would now be drawing only £8,472 a year, and if he had retired in 1977 he would be drawing £7,624. It is not until 1978 that the figure starts to go up again, rising to £8,768. A major who retired in 1986 would not be as well off as one who retired in 1975, because he would be drawing £9,928. That is an unfortunate situation, and, as I have said, other ranks suffer just as badly.

In that respect we should not allow ourselves to indulge in the luxury of saying that, because we have managed to get away with that, we do not have to correct it. Service personnel have a right to look to the Government to make the correction. A sergeant who retired in 1975 would now be receiving a pension of £3,986, whereas one who retired in 1977 would be receiving only £3,147.

The problem is summed up extremely well by Wing Commander, Hurst W.E.B., who has retired from the Royal Air Force and now lives in Suffolk. In February of this year he wrote:

"I am particularly unfortunate in that I completed my full term of service at the age of 55 on 31 May 1973 and would normally have retired on that date but, at that time the RAF was short of engineers and called for qualified officers to serve for an additional three years (making my total service just short of 42 years). I was pleased to do this as the Royal Air Force was my life. I had complete trust in my employer and it never occurred to me that I might be financially penalised by 'staying on' but I estimate that my volunteering to extend my service to help the RAF has cost me about £10,000, (less tax)."

That is deplorable. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to correct it as a matter of honour.

9.52 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on selecting this topic for debate, and I welcome the opportunity to say a few words. I wish to speak particularly about the situation affecting widows and war widows. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that the wives of service men are pretty unique individuals. They are very like the wives of Members of Parliament. They are called upon to be constantly moved around. They have upsets to their domestic situation. They have enormous pressures on their families during their husbands' service careers. All of that calls for individuals of a particular type who can stand up to the problems. In addition to that they live with the constant knowledge that their husbands may be called upon any day to sacrifice their lives for their country.

Before the Falklands war few of us expected that we would be sending a task force to the south Atlantic. I remember vividly what one young marine from 45 Commando said to me. The Commando had sailed but the marines were still back at their base at Condor because they had been away on a course. He was terribly upset. The signal came in saying that they were to join the Commando at Ascension and the young marine was delighted. At a dinner we were holding on behalf of the marines, he turned to me and said, "We'll show them what we get paid for." By jove, he did. He won a Military Cross. However, what is important is that he lived. Many of his colleagues did not. On a recent visit to the Falklands I photographed the war graves and sent the photographs back to the members of 45 Commando and the dependants of those who had been killed.

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that war widows in that war were looked after much better than war widows of the second world war. The war widows of the second world war are now getting rather old, and I believe that the time has come for the nation to say that those ladies should be well looked after. We are enjoying freedom, democracy and the rule of law today because their husbands sacrificed their lives.

I should also like to deal with those widows who married when their husbands had completed their military service. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South explained why the services prefer young officers to be unmarried. One understands why. However, one can only say that it seems rather odd that we encourage young men not to marry and that, when they complete their service, as many of them do at an early age of between 45 and 55, and then marry, their widows do not enjoy the same pension rights as they would heve enjoyed if they had married even during the last years of their service. That anomaly should be put right.

In those circumstances, and in the short time available to me, I make a plea on behalf of those widows. There are many things I could say, because I believe that the nation owes its service men, not least those who regularly go on active service in Northern Ireland and other parts of the world, an enormous debt. It carries on for 365 days of the year, every year. It is because of that that we should look after the widows and ensure that they are never left feeling badly treated or short-changed by a nation that did not understand or, worse still, probably did not care. I believe that the Government, with their fine record of caring, particularly for the way in which they have treated the armed forces and improved pay and conditions, should look at what we can do for the widows, because that would be appreciated and understood throughout the country.

9.56 am

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): My interest in this important debate rises from my four years as Conservative party vice-chairman for women. Like my hon. Friends the Members for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) I speak on behalf of the widows. My constituency has a high number of service widows and the unfairnesses of the present system are brought to my notice almost daily.

I pay tribute, on behalf of the Officers Pensions Society, to my hon. Friend the Minister. It has unstinting praise for him, not necessarily for this readiness to unlock the purse strings but for his quick understanding which I suggested to the society was in part derived from his substantive financial background.

I ask the Minister to think about three things and I shall start with the future widows of current service men. The Green Paper on the reform of social security in June 1985 and the White Paper published in December 1985,

[Miss Emma Nicholson]

speaking of pensions and women, said that changes in the national insurance widows benefit scheme should be seen against

"the background of the greater involvement of women in the work force."

As previous speakers have said, there are intolerable difficulties for the modern woman in keeping her career going when marrying into the services. I ask the Minister to bear in mind the future widows and perhaps leave some legacy within his Department when he moves on and up so that their rights will be fully looked after.

I want to put on record the great difficulty faced by post-retirement marriages when a service man dies. I know how difficult it is for the Government to pick that up because of the supposed knock-on effect. I endorse what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South when he said that the services are different.

I want to put on record a particularly poignant case. Mrs. Phillott of Tavistock married her husband after he took early retirement at Government request. He joined the Army when he was 13 and made it his life. His pride in his medals was superb. He left the Army in February 1959, not on completion of his service, which would have been November 1964. The discharge certificate states that the reason for his discharge was a reduction in the establishment. Had he served to his proper retirement age his widow — he was married and had two children — would now be receiving a pension.

Most importantly, I beg the Minister to look carefully at the case of older war widows and to help them. Deprived of their husband, perhaps after a short service during war years, they are elderly and poor. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North in asking whether we cannot do better in a time of rapidly increasing prosperity under this Government. There are huge gaps between the Falklands war widows, older war widows and all service pensioners. Their case is most urgent and, as they are getting older, it is one that we must hasten to put right. I beg the Minister to help them.

10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on securing this important Adjournment debate and on the eloquent and persuasive way in which he and my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) have argued the case for improving the position of those who retired from the armed forces in previous years — and their widows — who do not receive pensions at the levels that are now current. I am sure that we all recognise the value of the service that they have given their country. I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said in respect of the service men and women whom he knows.

I should pay tribute to the various organisations which have so courteously and clearly made representations to the Secretary of State for Defence. They include the Officers Pension Society, the Royal British Legion, the War Widows Association and the British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association.

I shall address the points that my hon. Friends have raised in a moment, but first I shall set out the background against which they should be considered. In dealing with service pensions we should recognise that there are two separate sets of provision under which benefits may be paid to ex-service men and their dependents. On the one hand there is a war pensions scheme, which is administered by the Department of Health and Social Security. It provides benefits specifically in cases when a member of the armed forces is injured or dies as a result of his service. On the other hand, there is the armed forces' own pension scheme, which is administered by the Ministry of Defence. It is the provisions of that scheme, for which I am responsible, that are under discussion today.

The armed forces pension scheme is an occupational one. It is therefore broadly similar to other public service pension schemes, although there are a number of features that are designed to reflect the somewhat difficult characteristics of service in the armed forces and the relatively short careers that apply to many. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South referred to those difficult characteristics and to the different nature of life in the armed forces compared with other parts of public service or civilian life. Those features are in addition to the special provision for the greater physical risks that may arise, which are provided for by the war pension scheme.

Pensions must be paid for. In this particular case there is no capital cash fund from which the costs are met. It is not like a funded pension scheme. There are no direct contributions and benefits are paid for, as they arise, from money allocated to the defence Vote each year. In that regard, it is a pay-as-you-go scheme.

I do not wish to imply, however, that service personnel are completely insulated from the cost of providing for their pensions. When setting armed forces' pay a deduction is met of about 10 per cent. — it obviously depends on the grade of service being provided — which represents the service men's pension contribution. Service men and women — officers and other ranks — are contributing to their future pension.

As with an occupational pension scheme, that for the armed forces is therefore managed in accordance with the same principles that apply to other schemes. There are two important and allied points; first, entitlements under the scheme are for any individual, and through him his dependants, derived from the rules of the scheme that are in force at the date of his retirement. Secondly, when rules are changed, those changes are not given retrospective effect. It must be obvious to my hon. Friends that, if occupational pension schemes always had to make retrospective changes, improvements would be less frequent. It is a matter of resources. The House may wish to know that the cost of the armed forces' pension scheme in the current year — 1987-88 — is estimated to be £1,050 million, and that comes out of the defence Vote. That figure will rise significantly over the next 10 years.

The detailed rules of the armed forces pension scheme are inevitably complex, but I should remind the House of the main features of the scheme as they stand today. They provide for a pension, which is paid immediately on retirement, for officers who have given 16 years or more of reckonable service; a pension, which is paid immediately on retirement, for other ranks who have given 22 years or more of reckonable service; deferred pensions, which are payable from the age of 60, for those who served for shorter periods, and that is subject to a minimum of five years; pensions for widows and dependent children; immediate pensions for those who are invalided from

service on account of injury or ill health, which is subject to a minimum of five years' service; enhanced benefits where that injury or ill health is attributed to service in the forces, with no minimum qualifying period of service; and enhanced benefits for widows and dependent children for those whose death is attributed to service.

All those pensions are index-linked. Long service and invalidity pensions are calculated from representative rates of pay for each rank and on length of service given. For a full career, which is based on retirement at age 55, the pension is equivalent to half the corresponding rate of pay, with, in addition, a tax-free lump sum of three times the annual rate of pension awarded.

Many service men have to retire early, so the early rate of pensions paid for shorter periods of service is enhanced to be better than strictly proportional to the service given. That is to compensate for the short career, which may be all that is available. As I have already said, service men can retire on pension by about the age of 40 — after 22 years' service, having entered the armed forces at the age of 18.

I have already said that lump sums are paid on retirement at the end of a full career. They are also paid on a similar basis where pensions are awarded for shorter periods of service, and where invaliding occurs, and additional lump sums are paid where injury or death is attributed to service.

Those, briefly, are the main benefits that are available today. However, as with other pension schemes, there have been developments over the years that have gradually introduced changes and improvements in what is provided, which have created anomalies. Among those have been, in 1960, the introduction of scales for officers linked to length of service instead of standard rates for service of at least a minimum length; in 1972, a substantial revision following the introduction of the military salary, and introducing a direct link with representative rates of pay; in 1973, to improve the benefits available for injury and for widows; in 1975, to introduce deferred pensions for short periods of service; and, in 1978, to introduce pensions for the widows of post-retirement marriages.

Against that background I shall briefly address the key points that have been raised. Many of them are associated with improvements that have been made in the past and would involve retrospection. A number of them arose from developments that were not particularly associated with the armed forces, but which formed part of general improvement of pension provision in public service schemes. For those in particular, a departure from the normal concept of non-retrospection would require corresponding action throughout the public service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South referred to the pensions trough for those who retired in certain years—the mid-1970s—and who now receive a pension less than those who retired immediately before or after them. It is acknowledged that those who retired in the period of pay retraint policies receive less by way of pension than colleagues with the same qualification of rank and service who retired earlier or later. However, they received the awards to which they were entitiled under the circumstances that applied at the time of their retirement. The variation in pensions is a result, on the one hand, of increases in basic pension awards due to index-linking, which continued to operate in full during the period of restraint on pay—there was a comparatively high rate of inflation at the time, so increases were significant—and on the other, for those who retired subsequently, the improvements in pay that followed restraint.

When the Government took office in 1979 the position was carefully examined to see whether it was practical to take special action to overcome the effects of pay restraint on pensions, which applied widely across the public sector. Various solutions were considered but no satisfactory arrangement could be found.

Cost was one factor—in 1979 it was estimated to be as much as £100 million. It has been suggested that the subsequent improvement in the economic situation should make it possible to overcome that. However, demands on public expenditure remain very heavy and all claims for additional expenditure, whether large or small, must be judged on the basis of priorities. The Government remain of the view that the use of still scarce resources to resolve the trough situation could not be justified.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South also referred to the anomalies between those widows who receive the one-third rate pension as opposed to the one-half rate pension. In 1973 the proportion of a man's pension that would be paid to his widow was increased. For men who left the armed forces before 1 April 1973 the proportion was one third. For those who retired subsequently the proportion was increased to one half, but this applied only to that part of their service from 1 April 1973. They did, however, have the option of making direct contributions to qualify previous service for the one-half rate. To have provided the same option to men who had already left the service would have involved retrospection, with the associated additional cost to be met by the Government. Similar arrangements applied in other public service schemes.

My hon. Friend referred to the particular case of officers who retired under the code in force before 1960. At that time retirement pay was not linked to the length of service given, other than that a minimum period from the age of 21 was necessary to qualify for the standard rate. Therefore, officers served a standard length of service. When a revised structure was introduced in 1960, with scales of retired pay linked to years of service—that was a distinct and sensible improvement — the change was not made retrospective. That was in accordance with the practice at the time and the normal practice since then of not making improvements and enhancements in the occupational pension schemes retrospective. The same was true of the improvements that were made to the provisions for pensions for other ranks in the years following world war 2.

My hon. Friends have raised the question of post-retirement marriages. The Ministry of Defence, as a good employer, pays a widow's pension without any direct contribution being made by the husband. However, that does not mean that the pension is automatically earned by service. Until April 1978 the Department, in common with those responsible for all other public service schemes, considered it right to restrict the payment of a widow's pension to those who had shared at least some part of their husband's career. From 6 April 1978, again in common with other public service schemes, the armed forces have also provided for widow's pensions where marriage takes place after retirement. The pension is proportional to that earned by the husband from that date only.

Mr. Thorne: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Freeman: I have a short time left, but I shall give way.

Mr. Thorne: We sense my hon. Friend's concern about this matter and know that his reputation with the Officers Pension Society and the other societies is extremely good. In view of the anomalies I wonder whether my hon. Friend would undertake to consider the possibility of setting up an inquiry to determine whether some special arrangements should be made to help widows and those who have suffered so much from the trough, which has not affected other civil servants who have the benefit of choosing the best 12 months out of the 36-month period prior to retirement for pension purposes.

Mr. Freeman: Concern has been expressed about the war widows, especially the elderly widows. My hon. Friend is aware that that is a matter for the Department of Health and Social Security as it administers and pays the war widows' scheme. We pay a separate and additional war widows' pension for service since 1973.

I assure my hon. Friend that I shall draw this debate to the attention of my hon. and noble Friend the Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security. I shall have further meetings with him to discuss this matter—it is not a matter primarily for me, but I shall continue those discussions.

My hon. Friend asks for an inquiry to consider the anomalies created. We are all aware of the facts and an inquiry is not needed to elucidate them. The Ministry and the societies are also aware of those facts. However, I assure my hon. Friend that I shall continue discussions not only with the Officers Pension Society but with the four organisations that I have mentioned to consider what improvements can be made. I cannot hold out any hope of improvements in terms of resources, but in terms of procedures, discovery of the facts and a better understanding of the anomalies, I assure my hon. Friends that I shall give all the strength at my command and all the time that I have available to pursue the points that they have raised.

Southern Africa

10.14 am

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss southern Africa and, more specifically, the question of the Government's approach to the problems of that region.

Let us make no mistake about it: South Africa has for many years operated a system of government that must be abhorrent to anyone who claims to espouse the causes of democracy, justice and equality. It is a regime that operates a system based on racial division and is prepared to act with unspeakable barbarity to maintain the rule of the white minority over the black majority. Moreover, in its desperation to perpetuate itself, that regime is prepared to violate almost every aspect of human rights and all conventions regarding national sovereignty and integrity in southern Africa. Therefore, we are talking about the fate of a whole continent and the lives and liberty of many millions of black people.

The facts are well known throughout the world. There is widespread national agreement, especially among black countries, that the regime must be brought to an end. As I discovered at the recent international conference at Arusha in Tanzania, the whole world is now saying, "Yes, apartheid must go." However, our Government, the supposed upholder of world democracy and freedom, say, "No, apartheid must stay."

Whenever the international community demands action to bring the system to an end, the British Government, to their shame, say no. They even collaborate with the dictators in Pretoria. The Minister must explain why that is so. Why are the Government increasingly isolated? The Government have it within their power to bring apartheid to an end. Why are they sitting back and doing nothing, while black men, women and children are being murdered, imprisoned and tortured in South Africa, Namibia and the front-line states?

Why are the Government refusing to join the international call to stop the apartheid executions? Worse than that, the Government seek to brand those 44 black people awaiting execution as terrorists and refuse to recognise the real terrorists of southern Africa — the Botha regime, its military forces and its surrogate military forces in Angola and Mozambique.

Let us put the record straight. The African National Congress is not a band of terrorist thugs. It is an organisation that represents the majority of black opinion in South Africa. It has existed for 75 years with the objective of freeing that country from the disgraceful system of apartheid. The ANC has conducted itself with great wisdom and dignity and throughout its existence its leaders have been men and women of the highest calibre and insight. Only when all other means of advance had been exhausted was the decision taken to engage in an armed struggle. Negotiations, argument and reason over half a century had failed. It became clear in 1961 that force could only be met with force. Those engaged in fighting the military might of South Africa are truly freedom fighters, and it is for the crime of trying to liberate their black brothers and sisters that many of them have now been sentenced to death.

As I said before, 44 people on death row are now awaiting death by hanging. They are guilty of no crime, other than that of fighting for their freedom and liberation

from racism in its most extreme form—apartheid. The Government's position is scandalous. They have refused to intervene with the South African Government, to demand clemency from the racist regime. Perhaps because the Prime Minister herself is in favour of hanging, the Government have not taken this straightforward and humanitarian step.

At the United Nations Security Council on the day after Govan Mbeki's release, Great Britain refused to join a call by the Council for clemency for a young South African under sentence of death that very day. It should be noted that the United States of America voted for such clemency. Clearly, our Government are not prepared to join the United States in this matter, unlike their performance in other matters. The people of Great Britain and the world need to know why the Government are prepared to stand idly by and not lift a finger to save the people who are awaiting death by hanging.

If the Government are not prepared to intervene we need to know why. The Minister must tell us why today. Is it perhaps because of the colour of skin of those people? The Government have made representations to the Soviet Union about the plight of its dissidents. They have made representations on behalf of Polish people and others in eastern bloc countries. They have a lot to say to Mr. Gorbachev about human rights, but they say nothing to Mr. Botha about the black people whom he is consistently murdering in South Africa and southern Africa. We demand that the Government make similar representations to save the lives of black people for a change. I look forward to the Minister's reply about that.

I turn now to the release of political prisoners. Govan Mbeki was recently released. Agents of the Pretoria regime in this House hailed that as a sign of Pretoria's willingness to negotiate and of the fact that it was prepared to reform apartheid. The truth is far removed from that. I can do no better than to quote a press release from the African National Congress in this regard. It is dated 12 December, and says:

"The African National Congress vehemently condemns the restrictions that the apartheid regime in South Africa imposed today on Govan Mbeki. These restrictions, imposed under the present state of emergency, confine him to Port Elizabeth. This latest action by the Government, coming after the banning of a rally in Cape Town last month, which was to have been addressed by Mr. Mbeki, is evidence that the regime is now indirectly placing conditions on his release, which is contradictory to what the world was made to believe.

This also demonstrates the fact that the Government are not prepared to allow the chosen and accepted leaders of our people to address and speak to them freely without any hindrance or harassment from the racist authorities, thus giving the lie to Government claims that it is prepared for dialogue or any kind of negotiations whatsoever.

It is ridiculous for the Botha regime to claim that Govan Mbeki, or his actions since he was released, will affect the release of those leaders still in prison or the lifting of the current state of emergency. The responsibility of the continued incarceration of the others and the state of emergency, is that of the regime."

This is the reality surrounding Govan Mbeki's release. After 24 years in gaol he is still in prison, unable to speak freely. The only difference is that his prison is larger. The British Government have said nothing about the restrictions placed on him since his release. Let the Minister speak clearly today on that matter.

What about the other prisoners who, for more than 20 years, have been incarcerated in such prisons as Robben Island — Wilton Wkwayi, Andrew Mlangini, Elias Motsoaledi, Ahmed Kathrada, Raymond Mhlaka, Walter Sisulu and, of course, Nelson Mandela? We know that the Prime Minister has called for his release, but that is nothing special. Everyone calls for his release. Pop stars write songs about Nelson Mandela; it is trendy to call for his release. People print T-shirts about him. Even Chief Buthelezi, a mortal enemy of the ANC, calls for his release. So the Prime Minister's call is nothing special, and she knows it. She needs to do rather more than make a call before she can gain the respect of the House, the country and the international community.

While on the subject of Chief Buthelezi, I want to mention some of the actions of that gentleman, who appears to be a friend of the Prime Minister. She has quoted him in the House in support of her case against sanctions. Of course, he is against sanctions because, in his lust for power, he believes that, by collaborating with the Botha regime, he will reach the position in which he will reign in a Bantustan in which blacks, liberal whites, Indians and coloureds would live under his control. Sanctions are against his interest, and that is why the Prime Minister and he are at one on this issue. I must warn the Prime Minister, however, that she is in bad company. Buthelezi and his party have been responsible for some of the most outrageous attacks on ordinary people in South Africa——

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): What about the policemen? Who is murdering them?

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Why does the hon. Gentleman not shut up?

Mr. Grant: A recent report in the *Financial Times* on 22 November 1987 concerns the so-called factional fighting in the Natal provincial capital of Pietermaritzburg —in particular in the Edendale valley—in which 150 blacks have been killed in recent months. Buthelezi rejects the accusations by social and church workers, and I— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. If hon. Members disagree with arguments, the usual way to rebut them is through the dialogue of debate, rather than in unseemly shouting across the Chamber. I hope that we shall have less of it.

Mr. Grant: I want to quote from the article in the *Financial Times*. It states that Buthelezi

"rejected accusations by social and church workers, as well as the UDF and Cosatu, that the main perpetrators of the violence are Inkatha-linked 'warriors'. But their names crop up time and time again in a stack of sworn affidavits produced in a Pietermartitzburg court this month. The affidavits, from victims of violence, not only cite individual 'warlords', they also complain of tacit police connivance with the conservative 'vigilantes'. The accusations are similar to those now being brought to light in a separate court case in Cape Town. This concerns the destruction of the Crossroads squatter camp 15 months ago. Photographic and videotape evidence has been used to show police standing by or actively assisting Crossroads vigilante witdoeke as they tore down shacks and assaulted defenders of their makeshift homes . . .

Few of the inhabitants of the Edendale townships probably appreciate the deeper political significance of the fighting now destroying their lives and property. It could almost certainly be stopped by determined police action. The fact that fighting continues indicates that what is happening in Edendale is part of a much wider strategy aimed at weakening the ANC."

South Africa is clearly attempting to control all the sovereign front-line states in the region. Its objectives in

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doing so include that regional states refuse to permit liberation movements to operate from their territories and take steps to prevent them from operating clandestinely; that they do not develop strong economic or, more particularly, military ties with Socialist countries; that they maintain, and even deepen, their economic links with South Africa and refrain from supporting calls for sanctions against South Africa; and that they moderate their criticisms of apartheid.

To achieve those objectives, South Africa has created a number of surrogate forces which regularly enter those sovereign states illegally and kidnap, maim, rape and murder their citizens. I refer in particular to the Reconnaisance Commanders, UNITA — under the leadership of the infamous Dr. Jonas "Judas" Savimbi in Angola — the Mozambique National Resistance and Renamo in Mozambique, the LLA — the Lesotho Liberation Army — and so on. The actions of those forces have catastrophic results for the economies of the front-line states. In Mozambique alone, during a two-year period, more than 140 villages, 840 schools, 900 rural shops and 200 public health installations were destroyed. Transport networks were also bombed and destroyed. The total cost of the MNR destruction has been conservatively estimated at $3·8 billion.

Aggression and destabilisation policies by the apartheid regime in South Africa have been directly or indirectly responsible for the deaths of 140,000 children under the age of five in Angola and Mozambique during the year 1986-87 alone, according to UNICEF, and for the deaths of at least 100,000 other people in Mozambique alone in the 11 years to September 1986. South Africa has been responsible for making 4·5 million people in Mozambique dependent on food aid to avoid starvation. It has deprived 2 million Mozambicans of access to health care and 315,000 school students of access to education. The loss of the economies of the nine South African Development Co-ordination Conference states amounts to $2,000 million annually, with accumulative damage estimated at about $18.7 million up to 1986.

The South African Government and their agents are responsible for the assassination of President Samora Machel in Mozambique on 19-20 October 1986. They are also responsible for attemps on the lives of Prime Minister Mugabe——

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has produced one of the grossest calumnies of any country that I have ever heard in this Chamber. He has just said something that we know to be absolutely untrue, and he should withdraw it immediately.

Mr. Corbyn: Like what?

Sir Ian Lloyd: The assassination of President Machel.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) has not said anything that is a matter for the Chair. However, I wish to repeat a statement that has been made so often from the Chair, namely, that in referring to people outside the House, hon. Members should have regard to the fact that they cannot defend themselves. Hon. Members should therefore exercise restraint in their expressions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I would not normally interrupt the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) in such a debate, but I would be grateful if he could substantiate his very serious allegation about the death of President Machel.

Mr. Grant: There is evidence that a false beacon was placed in South Africa, so that the pilots of the aeroplane carrying President Machel back to Mozambique were lured into a mountain.

Sir Ian Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman has no evidence of that.

Mr. Grant: I have. A commission of inquiry was set up, composed of officials from Mozambique, the Soviet Union and South Africa. It was supposed to investigate the tragedy, but the South African officials withdrew during the investigation and refused to co-operate further with the commission. I believe that to be clear evidence that the South African Government were directly involved in the killing of President Machel.

In addition to assassination attempts on key political figures in the front-line states, the South African Government have taken a number of other specific actions. One of the most outrageous aspects of their total disregard of international conventions and national sovereignty occurred in November, when President Botha and members of his Cabinet, concerned about the battering that their surrogate forces were encountering in Angola, decided to pay them a morale-boosting visit. It has since become known that that was not the first time that they had done so. What did the British Government do about that? Where was their condemnation of that blatant breach of international conventions? Were they silent because it involved black countries? Do they think that they are all the same and that it does not matter if a white dictator wants to stride across the borders, encouraging the maiming and murdering of black people? Perhaps the Government do not feel compelled to speak about freedom and democracy for those countries.

Where is the British Government's condemnation of the increasingly regular practice of kidnapping people in the front-line states who speak against the Botha regime? This Government's standards have slipped. Even the Tory Government of 1963 were prepared to exercise international pressure about such issues. When Dr. Kenneth Abrahams was kidnapped in Botswana, illegally transported to South Africa and put on trial, the then British Conservative Government put diplomatic pressure on the South African regime to such an extent that Dr. Abrahams was eventually released and returned to Botswana. That is not the case nowadays. Instead, this Conservative Government stay silent about kidnapping.

What have the Government said about the kidnapping of Abraham Ishmail by South African agents in Swaziland, which is a sovereign state, on 15 December 1986, and who is now being brought to trial in South Africa? What protests has the Under-Secretary made? In what way has he worked within the international community for Abraham Ishmail's release? If, as I suspect, the answer is nothing, will the Minister today undertake to make representations to Pretoria for his release? I want a specific reply to that question.

It is claimed that the Government have a policy to assist the front-line states with aid so that they can fight the war

of economic aggression that has been launched by South Africa. The Government talk about aid to the front-line states and to the SADCC countries. The anti-apartheid movement has estimated that present aid to front-line states is only 57 per cent. of the value of the aid, at its 1979 value, when the Government took office. Therefore, there has been a reduction of about 43 per cent. in the actual aid given to those front-line states since 1979. A massive programme of aid is required. Those figures show the tremendous burden that is placed on the front-line states and on other countries by South African aggression. The Government must change their policy and give more. They must stop giving such mean-minded and miserable amounts of aid to those countries and ensure that a proper amount of finance is given to them in the form of aid.

Sanctions are a major issue. I believe, as do the Labour party, black people in Britain, black people throughout the world and leaders of all black countries, that sanctions are the only way forward. The Eminent Persons Group—eminent people drawn from all over the world—made a report to the Bahamas conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government. That report was accepted by those Commonwealth Heads of Government. On behalf of the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister signed a joint declaration at the end of the conference to support sanctions. However, she has since refused to implement those sanctions, and that remains her position today.

In fact, despite all the evidence showing that the imposition of sanctions is beginning to hurt South Africa, the Government have made a total about-face and do not now support sanctions. Indeed, during the past few months the South African business economy has gone on the offensive towards Britain. We have seen, for instance, the opening of an office in London by the South African coal industry to ensure that propaganda is pumped into the British economy so that more British business people will invest in South African coal and other industries.

Sanctions are the only way forward and must be applied for several reasons. One is the internal situation in South Africa. Huge numbers of black people have been massacred in towns all over South Africa by the South African police and defence forces. We have seen the brutalisation of black people by the vigilante squads and the so-called "Kitzconstabels". They are often criminals who, after only four or five weeks training, can enter the townships to harass and brutalise black people. After only four weeks training, those people have the same status as police officers in that country. Practically anyone in a uniform can seize and detain a person for 30 days. There have been examples of the railway police and the army arresting people and detaining them for 30 days.

Although there have been gross violations of democracy in South Africa, and South Africa has illegally occupied Namibia, where at least 100,000 South African troops are stationed so that there can be cross-border raids into Angola, the British Government have vetoed action to implement United Nations resolution 435, which condemns South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia and tries to force that country out.

Therefore, there are several reasons why sanctions are the only way forward, not least because the black people of South Africa have stated that they are prepared to accept that further sacrifice to ensure their freedom. In the face of all those facts, and the attitude of the international community, I ask the Government to denounce the Botha regime, that fascist and racist regime in South Africa, and to denounce the cross-border raids into Angola, Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe and other countries. I ask the Government to demand that the racist regime in Pretoria unconditionally releases the political prisoners who are held in its camps and that it removes the death penalty from those people, especially the "Sharpeville Six" who are currently awaiting the death sentence.

It is time that the Government got their act together. I pledge, as does the Labour party, to carry on the struggle uncompromisingly until we force the Government into the 1980s and force them to take action that is aimed at freeing black South Africans so that a Government will be elected in South Africa who will be non-racist, non-sexist and democratic.

10.45 am

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): One appreciates the reasons why the hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) feels strongly about this subject. Indeed, many hon. Members feel the same and we had a debate on it only the other week.

I should like to comment on some of the points raised by the hon. Gentleman. As his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Mr. Caborn) knows, I was in Southern Africa only a few weeks ago. We should not over-emphasise the influence that we, outside, tend to think that sanctions will have on the South African Government and on white public opinion in South Africa, nor fool ourselves that it is necessarily a one-way trade. There was great internal pressure for the United States to apply sanctions and to disinvest. That was done. United States companies had about 400 subsidiaries in South Africa, but that figure is now less than 200. Those companies have now sold out their major holdings. Indeed, some British companies have also done so—Barclays bank is the outstanding example. However, the result is that the United States now has little influence in South Africa. South Africans do not need to worry any more about the United States. That country has fired its big gun, but South Africa has survived.

My view is that we shall see apartheid disappear in all its forms. However, it will take a lot longer and I anticipate a long struggle ahead. I considered that last year's idea that if the African National Congress put its Spear of the Nation fighters into South Africa, that tenet, combined with sanctions, would result in the immediate crumbling of the South African state, was a mirage, and so it has proved. The view of South Africa now is——

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman explain to the House why, after 75 years of trying to fight for freedom in South Africa, the African National Congress turned to arms 25 years ago? He is not informing the House about any alternative. The United Nations, the EEC, the Commonwealth and all international organisations, except this Government, support mandatory economic sanctions, or sanctions of some form. Will the hon. Gentleman briefly explain the alternatives to the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope the House will bear in mind that hon. Members would like to hear the Minister before the debate reaches its conclusion at about 11 o'clock.

Mr. Knowles: I should like to answer that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is a case for putting pressure

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through economic sanctions but it must be combined with other things and one must continue to talk to all the people involved. In the end there must be dialogue and people must talk to one another. If one pushes any one of the parties into a corner, be it Inkatha, led by Buthelezi, the ANC, which Inkatha regards as an Xhosa organisation, or the whites, especially the Afrikaaners, one will not reach a settlement, one will achieve only ongoing bloodshed. I shall conclude as I wanted to speak only briefly and wish to give my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the chance to make the Government's point.

10.48 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) finished his speech by requesting that the Government should get their act together. I listened to the mixture of prejudice and waffle that he came out with, and feel that he should reflect on his priorities. It does the cause that he purports to further no good to come forward with such an extreme, badly researched set of arguments. It does the reputation of the House no good either.

It is a mistake to try to look at the problems of South Africa in isolation. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the problems of South Africa affect southern Africa as a whole. At the heart of the problems of southern Africa is the system of separate development known as apartheid. Despite what the hon. Gentleman said, the Government's policy towards apartheid is absolutely plain. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver, apartheid is a repulsive and detestable system. The Government wish to see it ended and wish to see it ended soon.

The hon. Gentleman is not alone in objecting to racial discrimination. I do not know whether, as he claimed in a recent debate, he is

"entitled to speak on behalf of black people in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the world".—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 739.]

I find that assertion rather extraordinary coming from the hon. Member who had the worst personal result and the greatest swing against him of any Labour candidate in the last general election. The Government speak for the people of this country when we call for justice for black and white in South Africa, and for a peaceful end to apartheid.

In his long speech, the hon. Gentleman raised a number of specific questions and I shall seek to answer them. He referred to 44 people awaiting execution in South Africa. It is entirely typical of his superficial approach that he has not done his homework here. In the case of the Sharpeville six, the German ambassador in Pretoria called on the South African Government's deputy foreign minister on 4 December and appealed on behalf of all the member states of the European Community for clemency for those people. The European Community is currently considering other cases.

Our policy is clear. We are prepared to join appeals on humanitarian grounds where the case is clearly political and there are extenuating circumstances or grounds to doubt the fairness of the legal process. Each case is considered carefully on its own merits and we use exactly the same grounds for our decisions making in respect of South Africa as we do in respect of other parts of the world.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Give us some examples.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman referred to our refusal to appeal for clemency in the case of Mr. Lapunta. That has been referred to by the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), but we considered that case and concluded that it was a criminal case and not a political offence. On those grounds, applying the same criteria as we apply to other countries, we were not prepared to make representations.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the release of Mr. Mbeki. We have called many times for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners and we welcomed wholeheartedly the release of Mr. Mbeki. In our view, it is entirely right that he should have been set free, but we regret the South African Government's decision to impose a restriction order on Mr. Mbeki.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of remarks about Chief Buthelezi. Many black leaders inside South Africa, including Chief Buthelezi, and the United Democratic Front, support the concept of peaceful change. In this regard, we very much regret the loss of life in the violence in Natal, as we regret the loss of life elsewhere in South Africa.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of accusations about the death of President Machel of Mozambique. The hon. Gentleman is rather ahead of the view taken by the Mozambique Government of that incident.

It is, of course, easy for the hon. Gentleman and others to call for justice to be done, but it is far less easy to achieve justice, especially in as complex a situation as exists in South Africa and between South Africa and its neighbouring states. It is easy to take refuge, as the hon. Gentleman did, in sloganising and unwarranted simplification, but no one should labour under the misapprehension that fundamental change in South Africa will come about easily or quickly. South Africa is not Rhodesia. It is not a "colonial" problem. Change has been a lamentably slow process. Indeed, it is unacceptably slow, but the pernicious and wicked doctrine of apartheid that grew up in South Africa is nevertheless being eroded. There are some changes for the better.

Nor is it enough to bewail the plight of black South Africans or rest content with describing the effects of South African Government policy on neighbouring states. The Government have always recognised that fine words are not enough. We need to persuade the South African Government that change cannot be avoided, that it is not in the long-term interest of white South Africans to avoid change and that it is in their interests to grasp the opportunity to make changes now.

To portray South Africa as a tragedy with an inevitable and unavoidable outcome is both easy and irresponsible. Peaceful change is still possible, but the warning lights are now well in sight. If fundamental changes are not made soon by the South African Government, they will in due course be forced upon them. The alternative to peaceful change is, eventually, violent change.

There are limits to what outsiders can do to help. Only those who, like the hon. Member for Tottenham, have not studied the situation closely could think otherwise. The

reality of South African economic power must also be acknowledged. In economic terms alone, the problems of South Africa are the problems of southern Africa.

There is a more general and longer-term prudential limit to what we can do in South Africa. It would not be in the interests of those in South Africa who oppose apartheid and who look to a future in which it has been ended to inherit an economic wasteland. This is increasingly recognised by leading opponents of the South African Government. Additionally, it would not, in our view, be right or effective to bring short-term economic misery to black South Africans in the forlorn hope that such international pressures would force the South African Government to make fundamental changes.

This last point brings me to the contentious matter of sanctions. Many Labour Members believe that punitive sanctions against South Africa would force the South Africans to carry out those changes in which all of us in this House believe. We respect the view of those who hold to this view, but we do not agree with them. Indeed, we would hold that the implementation by some countries of punitive economic sanctions against South Africa has been ineffective. Some would say that it had been counter-productive.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Rubbish.

Mr. Eggar: There is a great deal of evidence that attitudes in South Africa towards genuine negotiations have not become more pliant since recent events. They have hardened. The result of the whites-only election in South Africa on 6 May produced a pronounced shift to the Right. This has done nothing to assist those in South Africa who want to see early, fundamental but peaceful change. The Government, however, believe that firm political signals as well as advocacy are required.

We have been scrupulous in implementing all the restrictive measures to which we have agreed, whether in the Commonwealth, the Twelve or the United Nations Security Council. Such signals are meant to alert the South Africans to the need for change. They are not meant to destroy the South African economy. Such a goal is no part of our policy.

The key to peaceful change in southern Africa lies with the countries of the region. For our part, we are dedicated to advancing the cause of change. We must all accept that peaceful change will not come easily. But a solution to the problems of South Africa will directly contribute to increased stability and prosperity in southern Africa as a whole. It is our firm intention to use every opportunity to facilitate and encourage change. Our policy is designed to cope with the long haul, and I assure the House that we have the commitment to carry it through.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Retail Prices Index (Error)

11 am

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's proposals to make extra payments to social security claimants following the recent discovery of the error in the retail prices index.

The House will know that the effect of the error has been to understate the annual inflation rate on average by about one tenth of 1 per cent. in most months since February 1986. As a result, the rates of retirement pension and other long-term benefits should, in general, have been 5p higher than they are this year and 10p higher than the rates that will come into effect next April. Several benefits, including child benefit, are unaffected.

The House will know that we have already made it clear that the Exchequer will not benefit from the effects of the error on social security expenditure. In line with this principle, we intend to make special payments to the following social security recipients: retirement pensioners, supplementary pensioners, those receiving widows benefits, industrial injuries benefits, war pensions, invalid care allowance, invalidity benefit, mobility allowance, attendance allowance and severe disablement allowance. This will be followed by action to correct benefit rates for all recipients at the April 1989 uprating.

The payments will be at a flat rate of £8—slightly more than the standard £7.85 loss — to retirement pensioners, and, in line with their actual loss, £5 for mobility allowance recipients. We have arranged with the Post Office that payments will be made from the first week of February for those paid by order book. Action will be taken by the Department's local and central offices to ensure that those paid by other means—for example, through credit transfer—will also receive their money at that time.

There are a few severely disabled war and industrially injured pensioners who will lose significantly more than £8. Because this affects a comparatively small group it will be possible to make special arrangements to ensure that they are given extra compensation. Inevitably, this will take more time, but payments will be made as soon as is practicable. I also propose to pay an additional amount to those who retire or become widowed between the time the special payments are made and April 1989. These special payments will be made on an ex gratia basis, and parliamentary approval will be sought in a Supplementary Estimate. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Overall we estimate that, as a result of the error, £109 million will have been underspent. The arrangements that I have described will cost rather more than £100 million. To fulfil our commitment that there should be no gain to the Exchequer, the remainder will be allocated to suitable charities.

My hon. Friend the Paymaster General is making it known today by written answer that no extra statutory payments will be made to pensioners of public service occupational schemes administered by central Government. The savings to the Exchequer arising from this decision will be added to the sum available for disbursement to charities as a result of the underspend on

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

social security benefits and will bring it to between £10 and £15 million. We shall ensure that charities and benevolent associations active in support of retired public servants will be among those with an opportunity to benefit from this arrangement.

The House will recognise that, with nearly a billion social security payments a year, it would be a disproportionately complex and time-consuming operation to seek to calculate and pay exactly what each individual has lost. I feel confident that the House would wish to see this mistake corrected in a way that combined as far as possible speed of payment and fairness. I believe that our plans provide a sensible and effective way of doing this.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): As I have just purchased my first computer, may I begin by saying that I find it encouraging to learn that the Civil Service also makes errors with its programming.

Although the House may accept in a season of good will that such errors occur, it is extraordinary that it required a year and a half before such an error was uncovered, and remarkable that in such an important indicator as the RPI an error could remain unchecked and undetected for a year and a half, which included two uprating statements by the Department. I press the Minister for an assurance that there will be regular checks of the RPI in future, especially before uprating statements are made to the House on the basis of that indicator.

I turn to those who are being compensated as a result of the error and begin with the Minister's reference to public service pensioners. He said that the Government will compensate long-term claimants of benefit, but not short-term claimants. I presume that that is because long-term claimants are stable and can be identified and are the same people. By definition, public service pensioners are also long-term claimants of pensions and are the same people. There can be no justification for the distinction that the Minister has made between state pensioners and public service pensioners, other than the Government's distaste for civil servants.

Arrangements are being made for short-term benefit claimants. I remind the Minister that those claimants also have a benefit, which is also operated by reference to the RPI under statutory arrangements. Claimants of unemployment benefit face the same costs in purchasing bread and paying for heat as do claimants of state pensions. In October, 1·6 million unemployed claimants had been unemployed since last April. Were they to benefit from the same arrangement for compensation as pensioners, at least half that payment would go to people who have suffered because of the miscalculation, and at least half those receiving it would be people who had been unemployed for a year.

I press the Minister for a statement about the Government's future intentions. The statement tells us what the Minister intends to do to make good the past effect of the error. What does he intend to do to make good its future effect? I press the hon. Gentleman in particular for an assurance that next year's uprating statement will be calculated as though the correct level of benefit had been paid on the basis of the correct level of the RPI. I put it to him that any other assumption that uprates the current level of benefit that has been reduced by the error will leave the Treasury permanently better off and the claimants permanently worse off.

I turn to those claimants who are not covered by the statutory undertaking to increase their benefit by reference to the RPI, especially the 4·9 million claimants of supplementary benefit who are not pensioners. I remind the Minister that this group contains many who are long-term claimants, including single parents and carers for the disabled, who will have been in receipt of benefit throughout the period affected by the error. Their benefit is uprated by reference to the Rossi index, under informal arrangements. Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the effect of the error in the computer programme has an even greater impact on the Rossi index than on the RPI index, and that these are the people who are frequently taken through the courts and prosecuted on any occasion on which they themselves succeed in obtaining £8 extra in payment by error? A Government who are as punctilious as this Government in reclawing the benefit that people have been overpaid, owe it to those claimants to be just as punctilious in compensating them when they have been underpaid.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment made a statement which clearly set out the background to how the error occurred. He gave an undertaking that the retail prices index computer programme was being reviewed by the head of the Government's statistical service to ensure that the error could not happen in the future.

As I said in my statement, my hon. Friend the Paymaster General is making known in a written answer this morning the position of public service pensioners, pointing out in particular:

> "The rates of pension received by retired public servants vary very widely according to their length of service and final salary when in employment. Flat rate compensation for the index error would be inappropriate. Precise compensation would have administrative costs out of proportion to the sums concerned."

I believe that that is right. I want to reflect that point in what I shall say about the number of detailed points put to me by the hon. Gentleman.

The Government have no legal obligation to come to the House today to announce our intention to make these payments. I believe, however, that we have a moral obligation in this matter. That is why we are announcing that £109 million will be available. If we were to compensate every individual who has lost any amount, however trivial, as a result of this error, the administrative costs would be out of all proportion to the benefit gained.

The Rossi index will be affected in the same way as the RPI. It will be corrected in April 1989. Of course, from April 1989 the uprating will be made on precisely the basis that the hon. Gentleman suggested.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that this is a private Member's day and I hope that, in the next 20 minutes, I shall be able to call those hon. Members who have been rising in their places. I propose to give precedence to those who did not catch my eye last Monday.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): May I say to my hon. Friend that I believe that in all parts of the House

the speed and candour with which he has dealt with this embarrassing problem will be very well appreciated? May I also say that I believe that the settlement that he has made is the best that he can do in the circumstances and will be appreciated by the recipients? On public sector pensions, may I also remind my hon. Friend that, in 1974, I made the point that we were creating a privileged elite of public sector pensioners in giving them full uprating with the cost of living? Under 5 per cent. of private sector occupational schemes are able to do the same.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his opening remarks. I believe that it was right to deal with this matter quickly, clearly and as fairly as we could, consistent with the speed of the operation. The House will have noted my hon. Friend's second point.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Minister accept that the only warm reception that will be forthcoming for the statement is bound to be from the charities for the needy and aged, which will welcome £10 million to £15 million unexpectedly coming their way because of the Minister's argument about the administrative cost of paying out money to public service pensioners? Will he be frank with the House and tell us what has been the cost to public expenditure of rectifying this error? What steps have been taken in the Department to ensure that it does not recur? Does he accept that many of us continue to believe that the RPI is not the right yardstick by which to judge payments to pensioners, bearing in mind their cost of living requirements?

Mr. Scott: That is a more general point. The Government are pledged to protect pensioners from inflation, and the RPI seems to be an entirely appropriate index to use in those circumstances. The administrative cost of making these payments will be somewhat in excess of £5 million. That is what even this broad brush approach will cost. The more precisely we target repayments to actual loss, the greater are the administrative costs. I hope that charities will not be alone in benefiting from the social security money and the money for public service pensioners. I hope that those who receive payments will benefit. The Government have no legal obligation, but I accept that they have a moral obligation.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I also congratulate my hon. Friend on the speed of the operation. Many pensioners have been to see me to tell me that they remember not getting the Christmas bonus from the Labour party when it was in government. Will bereaved pensioners be able to claim what would have been due to their deceased spouses? Could such payments be arranged?

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. I suppose that I was naive enough, bearing in mind my Christian name and the time of year, to think, on my way here, that the House would welcome the fact that the Government had come forward with these proposals. If Opposition Members want to get into an argument on party political matters and how they treated retirement pensioners and others, I must ask them to cast their minds back to 1976, when they took £1 billion out of pensions by changing the basis for forecasting. As we have come to the House with these proposals as quickly as possible, there are some details that must be incorporated, and I shall bear my hon. Friend's question in mind.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I declare an interest as the son of a war widow and as a war pensioner myself, although I am not one of the severely wounded people to whom the Minister referred. What are the special arrangements that the Minister has in mind for them? Most of that group are likely to be very old, so how will they be informed of what the Minister has in mind?

Mr. Scott: Records are kept in the Department or in local offices, so it will be possible to analyse each case individually, as they are a comparatively small group. It is inevitable that that will take longer, but they will be entitled to a payment of £8 in any case. We shall try to establish their losses by the summer and send out individual Giro payments to those concerned.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that, although the error was regrettable, the fact that it has been detected and rectified in this manner will do much to restore the confidence in the system, which was lost during the incumbency of the previous Administration? In a year when we have experienced so many disasters, such as King's Cross and Zeebrugge, does my hon. Friend agree that the lump sum is an ideal opportunity to set up a national disaster fund?

Mr. Scott: That raises wider questions. My judgment is that, as the benefit that would otherwise flow to the Exchequer arises from the underpayment of social security benefits or public service pensions, it would be more appropriate to see, as far as possible, that the charities that benefit from the money serve the needs of those groups.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): As my hon. Friend's Department spends approximately £47 billion, it is quite remarkable, and to the great credit of civil servants, that they discovered their error at all. I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. It is sensitive and welcome. Does he agree that what the leader of the Liberal party said was quite remarkable? If he successfully proposed a pensioners' index, pensioners would lose.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that hon. Members will play a part in alerting beneficiaries to the payments. We shall publicise the payments by advertising them in the press and publicity material in local offices and elsewhere, but we should all play our part.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I thank the Minister for his statement. How many claimants will not get the increase although they suffer the same increase in prices as other claimants? I am sure that the House would be happy to have the figures to the nearest million. As the unemployed do not gain from the statement, would it be right for them to conclude that the payment of their benefit is not safe in the Government's hands?

Mr. Scott: I do not think that that is a fair point. I admit that this is a broad brush attempt to ensure that money that has fallen to the Government is redistributed quickly to those who have suffered. Trying to identify unemployment beneficiaries, many of whom go on and off benefit, and many of whom will have lost quite trivial amounts, would incur a disproportionate administrative cost. If the hon. Gentleman wants more detailed statistical information after the recess, I shall do my best to answer a question that he tables.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am grateful to the Minister for making his statement. He referred to

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

payments being made at a flat rate. May we assume that people who have multiple benefits, such as mobility, attendance and invalid care allowances, will get a payment for each, not just one payment? In those circumstances, the sums are not trivial. What the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) said is pertinent. If a husband or wife has died, the loss could be significant.

Mr. Scott: Anybody who is entitled to a payment in the first week in February will receive this flat rate sum. Payment will be paid in respect of any deceased spouse if there is entitlement for that week. If beneficiaries have a number of books of entitlement, they will be entitled to a flat rate payment for each book.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My hon. Friend and his Department deserve every congratulation on making this statement on the last day before the Christmas recess. Does not the fact that the Government, without any legal duty, but with a moral duty, have made the statement vindicate the point that we have made time and again—that we shall honour our pledge to keep the old-age pension in line with inflation?

Mr. Scott: That is exactly right. We are honouring what is a clear moral obligation in a way that combines speed with fairness. I hope that the whole House will recognise that.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Given that the error caused unnecessary hardship and will cost an additional £5 million in administrative costs which would otherwise be available to alleviate poverty, will the Minister tell the House whether the error was made by a civil servant, a private consultant or a private contractor, and what disciplinary or other action will be taken as a result?

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the detailed statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who explained the background to this. The administrative costs will be taken from the contingency reserve.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Can the Minister explain to the House how the money will be allocated through charities? We already have the haemophiliacs and the EEC surplus working. Will Mrs. Thatcher——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Rephrase, please.

Miss Mowlam: Will the Prime Minister dress up as Mother Christmas? How will the Government decide which charities will receive how much?

Mr. Scott: As I said in reply to an earlier question, I hope that it will be possible to develop a scheme to ensure that charities will help to direct this money to meet the needs of those who have either social security or public service pension connections. We are taking advice from the Charities Aid Foundation, which has considerable expertise about appropriate charities. Again, it may be possible when the House returns to answer a more detailed question on that point.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The trust that pensioners and others have in the state and its agencies will have been somewhat shaken by the news of this error. If the sums to be paid are so small, why must it take so long to make the payments? Of the £100 million, what proportion will go to citizens so deprived in Scotland?

Mr. Scott: The money will be distributed in exactly the same way to those receiving retirement pensions and the other benefits to which I referred. Individuals will be treated on a flat rate, and pensioners will be compensated for rather more than the actual loss that they have suffered. That will be broadly true of other beneficiaries, too. We shall tackle the smaller group in particular. Whereas I can well understand a certain shaking of confidence as a result of the original error being discovered, I hope that the steps announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to ensure that this cannot happen again will have done something to restore confidence. Above all, I hope that what I have said today and the way in which we have come to the House and announced the arrangements will restore confidence completely.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): It is just not true to say that the other day a statement was made covering the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) about the circumstances in which the error was found. Nowhere in the statement of last Monday is that explanation to be found, and I have the statement in my hand. Will the Minister tell us on what day the error was found, in what circumstances, and by whom?

Mr. Scott: The error was made within the Civil Service. If the House would appreciate some background, I shall provide it as briefly as I can. In 1983 it was decided to computerise the Department's compilation of the RPI to avoid a great deal of manual and clerical effort and to improve and make the process more accurate. In June 1985 it was decided to modify part of the software system to speed up the process. It was undertaken in-house, and the new procedures began to be used in February 1986. In writing the modified programme a mistake was made. Insufficient computer space was made available for calculating the price changes for certain items. As a result, the price changes were recorded as whole numbers only and the decimal places were not carried forward. Without going into inordinate length——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When was the error found?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman will be patient for a moment, I can tell him. It will be easy for the House to understand how the cumulative effect of that built up until we reached the annual inflation rate for this year, which continued to be underestimated by 0·1 per cent. I understand that the error was discovered and reported to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who is responsible for this matter, late in the week prior to his coming to the House to make his statement.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): How many unemployed people are being denied what would have been theirs by right had there not been a computer error? Will this be a convention for the future should there be further errors in the Ministry's computer? In handing out other people's money to charities, are the Government not salving their conscience for short-changing teachers, hospital workers and other public servants? Outside the House, would that not be described as crooked?

Mr. Scott: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's lack of generosity of spirit. I have sought to explain clearly and, I hope, patiently, why the administrative costs of seeking to reimburse everybody for any sum that they had lost, however trivial, would have led to wholly disproportionate administrative expenditure. We have come forward to make quick, generous, flat-rate payments to long-term beneficiaries, to make other arrangements for those who suffered disproportionately large losses and to ensure that no benefit flows to the Exchequer as a result of this mistake, by making money available to charities to meet the needs of those involved.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I should like to congratulate the Minister on discovering this error, but I cannot do so because I have pointed this out to Ministers in correspondence on behalf of some of my constituents since I have been elected. I understand that even before that, mistakes in the RPI were being pointed out by civil servant pensioners and that no notice was taken. Is the Minister saying that those who have campaigned for many months, and perhaps years, will receive nothing? Is this not ideally a matter that should be subject to an investigation by the PAC?

Mr. Scott: That is certainly not a question for me to decide. There are two points here. The first is whether the RPI is being calculated accurately. An error has been discovered and, as my right hon. Friend said, the head of the Government's statistical service will review this to seek to ensure that it cannot happen again. I understand that some people complain about the basis of calculating the RPI. That is a second and entirely separate matter from whether the RPI has been calculated accurately at a particular time.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Minister confirm that the Government do not take into account the costs of administration and of the detailed work necessary for prosecutions against people who make false claims for supplementary benefits? Will he confirm that this is the last possible day on which he could make this statement, so the Government have left it to the last possible moment? Will he confirm also that this matter has been outstanding for 21 months, yet the Government have failed to make remedial payments in time for Christmas? Many people on low incomes will face a miserable Christmas because of the Scrooge-like attitude of the Government. Instead of handing the money over to Lady Bountiful charities, why did the Minister not think of using the extra £9 million to extend television concessionary licences to more pensioners, many of whom will not be able to watch television this Christmas because they cannot afford the licence fee?

Mr. Scott: I was surprised at the attitude of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), but I am not in the slightest surprised at the hon. Gentleman's attitude to the timing of the statement, and I suggest that he consults his side of the usual channels.

Mr. Robin Cook: As the matter of the technical base of the mistake has arisen, will the Minister confirm that the affect of the error would have been precisely balanced out if the programme had been arranged to round up the first decimal point, rather than round it down? Might that not be a lesson for the Government in future, so that the advantage might be given to the claimant instead of being claimed by the Treasury?

Mr. Scott: It was not a rounding error. It was a mistake in the original programming. My hon. Friend will have heard the hon. Gentleman's point.

Britoil

11.30 am

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At various times during the last few days, hon. Members have asked for a statement on the position of Britoil and the Government's golden share. The Government have replied that no full takeover bid has been made for Britoil. Since the announcement of a full takeover bid by BP, will the Government make a statement on that issue. The Chancellor gave a commitment——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked for a statement. I am sure that his request will have been heard. This is private Members' time. I cannot answer the question he has asked the Government, so it is not a matter of order.

Mr. Salmond: May I continue my point of order?

Mr. Speaker: No. I have had no request for a statement. The hon. Gentleman has made his point and I am sure that it will have been heard.

Mr. Salmond: May I continue my point of order?

Mr. Speaker: No. It is not a point of order. The hon. Gentleman is seeking to elucidate information from the Government. That is not a question of order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will the Leader of the House briefly respond to the request for a statement?

Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I have heard the point of order. I know nothing of the details, but I shall certainly pursue the matter. Perhaps it can be best dealt with through the usual channels

Mr. Salmond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman has heard the answer. The best course would be for him to have a discussion wih the Leader of the House.

Mr. Salmond: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is unfair on a private Members' day. The hon. Gentleman would be equally aggrieved if that happened to him. I ask him to see the Leader of the House.

We now return to the Adjournment debates. Will the hon. Members concerned divide the time between them until 12.30 pm? They will each have slightly less than half an hour.

Vietnamese Refugees

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.32 am

Mr. Alastair Goodlad (Eddisbury): The Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong have been described as the forgotten people. They have not been on our television screen since the original news film about the boat people, but they are not forgotten by the House. It is right that we should be debating their plight in the Christmas Adjournment debate today. Hon. Members who have visited Hong Kong have seen the appalling conditions in which the refugees are living, and I shall not dwell on those today. Suffice it to say that living in confinement, in cramped conditions, with no privacy is not, and no one would represent it as being, a long-term solution to the unhappy situation of the refugees.

The British Government's efforts to alleviate the problem have been strenuous, but we must sustain and redouble our efforts. We have accepted nearly 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees since 1975, and about 13,000 refugees from Hong Kong. That is the third highest number of refugees from Hong Kong in any country. This year, the Government have decided to accept for settlement 468 further named individuals, who are close relatives of those already here, and they will be resettled at the rate of about 20 a month over two years.

In addition, we are continuing to try to persuade other countries to follow suit. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will be able to tell the House something about our success in doing so. I know that talks have been held with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and that talks have been held in Vietnam about the settlement there of those who wish to return. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to tell the House something about their progress.

The serious refugee position in Hong Kong has recently become worse. There are now 9,331 refugees in Hong Kong awaiting resettlement and 3,119 refugees have arrived this year. This represents a 54 per cent. increase over the same period last year. By contrast, a total of 2,105 refugees have been resettled this year, which represents a 44 per cent. decrease in resettlement compared with the same period last year. The refugee population in Hong Kong has gone up from just over 8,000 at the beginning of the year to 9,387 now.

Since the introduction of the Hong Kong closed centre policy, 47 boats have opted to continue their journey from Hong Kong after arrival, with provisions of rations and other essential items—three of them this year. About 11,000 of the 13,000 refugees reaching Hong Kong since the closed camps were introduced have elected to stay, preferring them to the alternatives of going on to Taiwan, the Philippines, or perhaps to a totally unknown destination.

Although, on the scale of human suffering, the Vietnamese refugee problem in Hong Kong is not of the same horrific size as the tragedy of the millions of Afghan refugees, which the House debated last week, it is a serious and intractable problem for the Government and the people of Hong Kong and, needless to say, it is a matter of life and death to the Vietnamese people involved. The arrival of the refugees has compounded the difficulties

posed by illegal immigration from China into Hong Kong. There have been about 630,000 legal and illegal immigrants from China in the past 10 years. That is a 12 per cent. addition to the local population. In addition since 1975, there has been a constant flow of refugees from Vietnam at a completely unpredictable rate. In the first seven months of 1979 no fewer than 66,000 arrived. Since then there have been varying numbers every year. There have been more than 3,000 already this year, an increase of more than a half over the same period last year.

The rate of resettlement has been falling. There has been a 44 per cent. drop this year. Last year a special offer was made by the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, but they now feel that Thailand and Malaysia, which have more Vietnamese refugees than Hong Kong, should take priority in their resettlement policies. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the Hong Kong Government to predict the rate of resettlement. There are only five ongoing resettlement programmes—the United States of America, Canada, Australia, Hong Kong and Britain—all with stricter criteria in force than previously. The Australians, the Canadians and the Americans have made plain their view that the international responsibility is now primarily British. There are other programmes, but they are limited to accepting refugees for family reunion, and for families rescued by ships at sea flying the flags of, or owned by, traditional maritime countries. The problem is getting worse.

Hong Kong, which has a land area of only 1,000 sq km, three quarters of it barren hillside, has a population of at least 5·5 million, with a density of more than 5,000 per sq km compared with about 230 people per sq km here, and 22 in the United States of America.

The record of Hong Kong, faced with this serious problem and threat to the stability of its already crowded population, has been quite remarkable. All arrivals by boat from Vietnam have been given asylum, although some ships have been given help to continue their journey if they have opted to do so.

The House is aware that in 1982, the Hong Kong Government adopted the closed centre policy, which it has described as a humane deterrent. Refugees are housed in closed centres awaiting resettlement, and are given basic facilities and necessities, but conditions are grossly overcrowded. People are told about the policy when they arrive, and given assistance to move on to other destinations if they so wish. Hong Kong has also provided a place of new settlement as well as temporary asylum, and has accepted the permanent resettlement of about 14,500 Indo-Chinese refugees since 1975.

Following the British Government's decision in 1985, the Hong Kong Government have accepted more refugees. The criteria which the Hong Kong Government apply are that refugees should be long-stayers in Hong Kong, that is to say that they have been in Hong Kong since before July 1982; secondly, that they should be ethnic Chinese; thirdly, that they should be financially independent; and fourthly, that they should not meet the resettlement criteria of other resettlement countries. Those are strict criteria, and perhaps a relaxation of the first and last of them might be an acceptable way of allowing more resettlement cases at a rate that the Hong Kong Government feel could be accommodated by the colony.

The people and authorities of Hong Kong have given temporary asylum to over 110,000 Vietnamese since 1975. Throughout that period, the voluntary agencies have been doing the most essential and distinguished work. I know that the House will wish to pay tribute to the dedicated individuals who carry out that work.

The efforts have been remarkable. Not one refugee has been turned away. Hong Kong is the only place in south-east Asia to introduce a policy of local resettlement, an extremely courageous thing to do, given the difficulties of illegal immigrants from China, with which it already has to cope. It is the only place of first asylum in the region to contribute financially towards the cost of its refugees. Since 1979, the cost to the Hong Kong Government of looking after the Vietnamese refugees has been over US $86 million. The voluntary agencies in Hong Kong have spent about US$10 million, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to whom this country is a substantial contributor, has spent about US$40 million. The current cost of caring for refugees is over US$20 million a year, of which the Hong Kong Government is contributing three quarters, the UNHCR about US$4·5 million and the voluntary agencies about US$1 million. By contrast, in the other countries of first asylum in the region, the Governments insist that the UNHCR meets the full cost.

The problem is part of the wider difficulty posed by the many millions of people fleeing from cruel and repressive Communist regimes in several parts of the world. We in this country have accepted a large number of refugees for resettlement. I think that the whole House will accept that, because of our constitutional relationship with Hong Kong, we have the unique duty to take the lead in accepting refugees for resettlement here as part of the overall programme. I believe that an important gesture would be for Her Majesty's Government to accept some long-stay refugees with no family links here, and who do not therefore fall within the family reunion principles. I hope that that will be emulated by other countries.

Integral to the solution is persuading other countries, as well as Australia, Canada and the United States, to share in the solution to the problem. Many people, of whom I am one, believe that Hong Kong has never had a fair share of the resettlement places on offer. I know that the UNHCR gives priority to the resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong and has asked many Governments to help. First and foremost must be those in the region—Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and perhaps Japan. They have accepted for temporary asylum some 35,000 boat refugees from Vietnam at the moment, which is up by over 1,000 this year, but given the substantial land areas, particularly in the Malaysian, Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos, there must be a case for their accepting refugees for permanent resettlement. Of course, there are difficulties—delicate ethnic balances, precedence for other refugee groups, and so on—but those countries must contribute to the solution. They will have to do so eventually, and they should do so now.

The Hong Kong Government's decision to introduce the closed centre policy probably had the effect of reducing the number of refugees leaving Vietnam for Hong Kong, although the numbers were already declining. The decision highlights a dilemma. If a country has a Government who are oppressive and cruel, as in Vietnam and, of course, in Afghanistan at the moment, where over half the population are refugees, can the international community

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

assimilate everybody who wishes to move across international frontiers for a better life? The answer to that question is no.

On the other hand, there are people who clearly fulfil specific refugee criteria, and for whom it is our duty to find places of permanent resettlement. That problem, which is facing the Hong Kong Government in an acute form, is one that we in this country share with them.

The causes of the problem lie in Vietnam and are beyond our control — they are religious harassment, compulsory military service, political education camps, in which people sometimes spend many years, shortage of food and consequent malnutrition. People who manage to escape from the country and risk their lives and those of their families in open boats deserve every sympathy. The early refugees were all genuine — people in danger of their lives or their liberty because of their religion, political beliefs or race. Subsequently, emigration was no doubt stimulated by accounts of better conditions. It is not helpful to anybody to suggest to the millions of people living in Vietnam that all they have to do is to go somewhere else for a better life. It is not a practical proposition. The only possible course is a steady policy of erosion of the number of genuine refugees awaiting resettlement. At the moment, sadly, we are going backwards rather than forwards.

The British Government have said that this country's willingness to take further refugees from Hong Kong will be decided in the light of the willingness of other resettlement countries to respond to Hong Kong's need, and in the light of all the other circumstances at the time. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to tell us what has been the outcome of the Government's pressure on other countries to take more refugees from Hong Kong and of the conversations with Vietnam.

I hope that my hon. Friend will spell out to the House how our own willingness to accept refugees for settlement is evolving. One of the constraints is the capacity of the voluntary agencies, primarily the Ockenden Venture and Refugee Action, in accommodating refugees. They do a distinguished job, and I hope that my hon. Friend will reassure the House that they will continue to enjoy the necessary financial support from the Government for doing so.

The Government have said that the principal determinant for the rate of resettlement in the United Kingdom is the availability of accommodation for refugees. I need hardly remind my hon. Friend and the House of the number of empty houses, particularly outside the south-east. I hope that my hon. Friend will elaborate on the current availability of suitable accommodation.

The need to alleviate the plight of the Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong is compelling and urgent. The means are available and I hope that my hon. Friend can tell us that the will is undiminished.

11.45

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) for the humane way in which he has introduced this subject. I am sure that we all echo the tribute that he has paid to the Hong Kong Government for the way in which they have tackled the problem and to the charities that have done so much to alleviate suffering.

A few weeks ago I had an opportunity to visit again a closed centre in Hong Kong where some 1,676 people were detained in an area about the size of the Holland Park comprehensive school. The staff who looked after them were clearly humane, and relations between the staff and the inmates were remarkably good. The inmates' health was good and there seemed to be less crime than one might expect to find in an English village of comparable size. On the other hand, the overcrowding is becoming much worse. When I was there 12 months before, there were double bunks, and this year triple bunks were being introduced. The average length of stay in the camps is now three and a half years and some of the children approaching school age have never set foot outside the camps. That cannot be right.

Like my hon. Friend, I recognise that we are in a cleft stick. If we open the camps in Hong Kong, and if the West accepts many more Vietnamese boat people for resettlement, the number of people setting out from Vietnam will almost certainly increase. In the summer we saw a major increase in the number of refugees trying to come to Hong Kong because of the mistaken belief that in Washington the Secretary of State had announced a relaxation of American policy, allowing in more immigrants.

What can we do? I echo the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury. We must try to persuade other countries in south-east Asia, and in the Philippines, in particular, to accept some of the refugees from overcrowded Hong Kong until such time as the harsh regime in Vietnam softens its stance sufficiently to allow those people living in the camps to return.

11.48 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) for giving the House an opportunity to consider this very important issue. I welcome the opportunity to put the Government's view on record and to explain what we are doing to resolve this tragic problem. I shall do my best in the limited time available to answer some of the points that have been raised. If there are any outstanding matters that I cannot cover, I will write to my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury and to my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Gooodhart).

Since 1975 a vast number of people have left Indo-China. The reason is very simple. They have fled the Communist oppression. More than 1·5 million people have left their homes to seek sanctuary overseas and more than 1 million of them are Vietnamese. More than 35,000 Vietnamese await resettlement in refugee camps in the region and some 9,400 are in Hong Kong. That is a human tragedy of appalling proportions and one which only international action can resolve. I should state that the only comparable refugee problem is that of the Afghan refugees trying to escape from Communist oppression.

In July 1979 it was a British initiative that led to a conference in Geneva designed to tackle the worsening crisis of the boat people. It was agreed that group refugee status would be conferred on those leaving Indo-China by boat. That was an important step forward. Asylum would be offered by those countries where boat people first arrived to allow time to arrange resettlement in third countries. For years that British-initiated system worked well, taking the south-east Asian region as a whole. The

rate of resettlement declined after 1980, but until recently it had more than kept pace with the declining rate of arrivals. The change came this year.

While the pace of resettlement continued to decline, the rate of arrivals increased. Many are accepted as refugees in places of first asylum, but then not by other countries for resettlement. That is often because their motivation for leaving Vietnam is perceived—with some justification, I must say — to be economic rather than political. However, the implications of those people for the places of first asylum are obvious. The places of first asylum bear an increasingly heavy burden.

Hong Kong is only too aware of that. From 1979 until this year the number of Vietnamese refugees in camps in Hong Kong fell. However, the numbers are again on the increase. My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury quoted the figures, which tell their own story. That trend extends wider than Hong Kong. It is a regional problem that demands an international solution.

We hear much of the suffering caused by natural disasters. What is shocking about the refugee problem is that it is entirely man-made. It is important to make it absolutely clear—as both my hon. Friends the Members for Eddisbury and for Beckenham did—that the root cause of the refugee problem in Indo-China lies in Hanoi. It lies in the repressive policies of a Government who maintain the fourth largest army in the world while continuing to devote their scarce resources to the military occupation of Cambodia and yet lamentably fail to provide a decent life for their own people. That is a sad commentary on Communist priorities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury drew attention to the efforts of successive British Governments to resettle Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. He referred to some of the figures, and I believe that they deserve to be repeated. Since 1975, we have accepted some 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees, and nearly 13,000 of them were Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. That is a substantial commitment which reflects our special responsibilities for the territory. It is an honourable record, especially when we take into account the pressures that we also face to settle immigrants from other parts of the world.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury referred to the resettlement offer that we made in 1985. Further to that, in May this year, as he also noted, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced that we would accept a further 468 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong with relatives in this country. So far this year, 150 refugees have been resettled under this programme. The pace at which it is being implemented will facilitate the reception of the refugees by the voluntary agencies and their absorption into the community. We are also making a financial commitment to the upkeep of the refugees in Hong Kong through contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to a voluntary agency working in the camps. I associate the Government with the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury about the major role placed by voluntary agencies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury asked about the availability of suitable accommodation in this country. The resettlement of refugees in Britain is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but my understanding is that in one way or another the reception of refugees puts considerable demands on local resources. We judge that a gradual flow of around 20 people a month is to be most easily handled. The voluntary agencies here at home have an important role to play, and the Government ensure that they receive adequate financial support.

I should also pay tribute to the contribution of the Hong Kong Government. My hon. Friend has noted Hong Kong's particular generosity in offering local resettlement. I believe that that is a significant and praiseworthy contribution by a small and overcrowded territory. However, I note that my hon. Friend has suggested some relaxation of the criteria applied, and, of course, I shall draw that to the attention of the Hong Kong Government.

The contribution of Hong Kong does not end there. My hon. Friend has also noted the generous financial contribution made by the Hong Kong Government, and their readiness to accept every refugee who seeks help. That is a humanitarian record of which the Hong Kong Government can be justly proud.

I said that an international commitment was required. My hon. Friend asked about the progress that we have made in urging other Governments to accept refugees from Hong Kong. We keep in close touch with all the Governments who in the past have taken refugees from Hong Kong, and we are deeply grateful for the contribution that they have made. We are now urging them vigorously to follow our recent initiative, and agree to accept more refugees. We also work closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and my hon. Friend is quite right in saying that he gives priority to the resettlement of refugees from Hong Kong. He is in contact with many Governments who seek his advice when allocating their refugees resettlement quotas.

Our diplomatic campaign for further resettlement places for refugees from Hong Kong is a major priority for us, but let no one underestimate the difficulties. Some replies give us cause for encouragement: some additional places have been offered as a result of our representations. Often, however, the response is disappointing. I have already said that some resettlement countries now apply more restrictive criteria when considering Vietnamese for resettlement. Yet those refugees have all been accepted in good faith, and without distinction, by places of first asylum on the basis of the consensus reached at the 1979 Geneva conference.

We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions that the resettlement countries have already made, but I assure the House that we shall be redoubling our efforts to persuade them to show even greater generosity in the future. As I said earlier, we consider that our latest decision to accept a further 468 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong with family ties here represents a significant continuing commitment to Hong Kong, given the immigration pressures that we face from elsewhere.

While I deeply sympathise with Hong Kong's problems, and with the plight of the refugees themselves, I have to say that at this stage our resettlement commitments have been extended as far as possible. I do not think that at present we can announce any further moves.

Both my hon. Friends the Members for Eddisbury and for Beckenham have referred to the possibility of permanent resettlement for Vietnamese refugees in the south-east Asia region. We have considered the idea carefully in the past, and have also taken informal

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

soundings of the Governments who might be involved. I have to say that that has led us to conclude that no country in the region would be receptive to the idea of accommodating large numbers of refugees from Hong Kong.

When my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced a new intake of Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, he made it clear that we do not consider resettlement alone to be the answer to the territory's refugee problems. As I said, the key lies with Vietnam. We shall keep up our support for the orderly departure programme, which offers one mechanism to reduce the pressure for illegal departures. We are pleased that that programme has started again to allow departures to Britain. So far this year, 162 Vietnamese have arrived in Britain under the programme.

My hon. Friend referred to those who wish to return to Vietnam with the consent of the authorities there. I understand that a handful of refugees in Hong Kong have elected to return to Vietnam, and have been accepted back by the authorities, but the number is very small.

There can be no doubt that the long-term solution to the problem is the creation of acceptable conditions for the return to Vietnam of those who have left for essentially economic reasons. Our view is increasingly shared by other Governments. We are in contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We are in contact with the main resettlement countries. There is now active international discussion of the possibility of returning to Vietnam under suitable safeguards—I should stress that —those who do not meet the criteria of refugees. At the same time we have intensified our bilateral contacts with the Vietnamese authorities.

So far, those approaches have not borne fruit. I regret that we have found no new willingness on the part of the Vietnamese authorities to accept back those who have left, other than on a very limited case-by-case basis. It will be difficult to reach acceptable and agreed arrangements covering those who do not meet the criteria of refugees. I can assure the House that there can be no question of returning them to a punitive reception in Vietnam. We cannot expect quick results, but I believe that international perceptions are changing in a way which will over time facilitate that development. We shall continue to play an active part, in full recognition of our special responsibility for Hong Kong.

I hope that this debate has enabled the House to understand in rather greater detail the problem of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong and the efforts that we are making to resolve it. I have explained the main aspects of our policy but the most important thing is that over the longer term we must seek a lasting international solution to the Indo-Chinese refugee problem as a whole. We are under no illusion that progress here will be quick or easy. It is linked to the pace of international discussions, and it needs a change of heart in Hanoi itself, but we must all recognise the need for a durable solution to a continuing human tragedy. It is an objective that we shall continue to pursue with determination.

National Health Service (London)

12.1 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This debate on the crisis in London's Health Service comes at an important time. For understandable reasons the debate is shorter than it might have been, and that is regrettable.

Earlier this week we had a statement from the Government on health spending in Britain and how they are planning to increase it to cope with the present crisis. Many of us were sceptical when the statement was made and, having had a couple of days to look at the details and the figures and do calculations for our own areas, I can reveal that the amount allocated for the four Thames regions—if all the money was spent in London alone—would meet only half the needs of the crisis. In fact, the four Thames regions cover far more than Greater London.

Because of the background to the debate, it is worth putting on record the fact that the levels of health spending in this country, despite all the best efforts of the Government in their huge propaganda machine, are woefully inadequate when compared to any other industrial country that is seeking to run a proper Health Service. The figure for this country of total health spending per capita is $161, compared to $232 in Australia, $220 in West Germany and $141 in Japan. Therefore, only Japan comes lower than the level in this country. One can make many more comparisons which will always show that health spending in Britain is significantly lower than in any other comparable country.

There are three early-day motions on the Order Paper today concerning London's health emergency. All three are in the names of the London group of Labour Members, all of whom have signed them. The first

"deplores the closure of 590 acute beds in inner London and a total of 1,000 hospital acute beds across London since May 1987, and the crisis of funding imposed by cash limits on London's health service which will result in increased suffering and hardship for Londoner".

It calls for more money for London. However, that money has not been forthcoming.

The second motion, which is in many ways just as important, deals with the loss of rate support grant to London local authorities, which has undermined the quality and level of service of community care and social services that local authorities provide. The motion reflects the real nature of the Government's policies for London. It calls on Her Majesty's Government to restore the loss of £4·4 billion in rate support grant and to make a further £35 million available to allow district health authorities to avoid further cuts in health facilities. There is a close correlation between the two.

The third of our emergency motions deals with staffing in London. There is a crisis in Health Service staffing in London because of low pay, privatisation and a loss of morale. That is a measure of the low regard that the Government have for Health Service staff in London. We are calling on the Government to make substantial improvements in the 5·5 per cent. offer for London weighting and to fund the Thames region sufficiently to enable it to pay any new offer to health authority staff.

Tnose of us who have been involved with the Health Service for a long time—for many years I was a full-time official of the National Union of Public Employees, and I am sponsored by it in the House—know full well that the consequence of the Government's not funding

health authority pay awards is that it creates a false division between Health Service staff and the needs of patients, when in reality they are very much the same. We resent the way in which these divisions have been brought about.

The crisis that we face is that, despite the money that the Government announced this week, which is inadequate, we are facing an immediate series of cuts in London over the Christmas period. Camberwell health authority is closing 110 beds at King's College hospital for two weeks; Wandsworth health authority is closing nine wards for two weeks—the number of beds in each ward varies; Islington health authority is closing the Royal Northern hospital, which is located in my constituency, and moving patients to the Whittington hospital from 18 December until 4 January. Additionally, there is an attempt to close the hospital altogether.

Merton and Sutton health authority is closing eight wards for two weeks, one of which will be permanently closed thereafter; Brent health authority is closing six wards for an unspecified period. Again, there is concern that those wards will not reopen. Barnet health authority, in which the Prime Minister's constituency lies, is closing Victoria maternity hospital because of nurse shortages. It is £1 million overspent and the Victoria maternity hospital will be closed indefinitely pending consultation on its permanent closure. That is an activity that we have seen increasingly within the Health Service.

Since the beginning of this year the number of beds lost in London health authorities is staggering. I shall not quote every example, but Brent health authority has lost 50 beds, Harrow 32, Hillingdon 75, Paddington 92, Bromley 58, West Lambeth 137, Hampstead 112, and Haringey 127. Haringey health authority no longer has any acute services within the borough. There has been a process of cut and closure in every hospital in the borough of Haringey. The nearest emergency services are at the North Middlesex hospital, which lies just inside the borough of Enfield.

On 26 November, the day that the House was last debating the crisis in the Health Service, the *London Evening Standard* reproduced an excellent report from London Health Emergency. It outlined a few of the problems. Bloomsbury health authority has a budget of £137 million and has not overspent. That has been achieved by the authority saving £1·3 million by freezing vacancies and other such matters. Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's, which has a budget of £46 million, is overspent by £700,000. The main cause of that is the underfunding of pay awards and the need to upgrade kitchens and dining rooms. Greenwich, which has a budget of £65 million, is overspent by £250,000, and even to achieve that figure it had to introduce savings of £750,000. In effect, the cut is £1 million on a budget of only £65 million. That is an enormous cut in one year.

In the current year we have lost almost 1,000 beds. That must be considered against the background of what has happened in the Health Service in London since 1979. The Minister is always keen to quote the state of the Health Service under the last Labour Government, but we must consider the success of the Conservative Government in providing for the health needs of the people of London. In 1979 there were 64,736 National Health Service beds in National Health Service hospitals in London. The great achievement of the Government has been to reduce that figure to 52,708.

If anyone were to consider the cuts that have taken place in the past eight years in particular health authorities he would be astounded. Let us take one or two at random. The City and Hackney district health authority had 1,990 beds; it now has 1,686. Waltham Forest district health authority had 3,311 beds, and that number has been reduced to 2,407. Barnet district health authority had 2,841 beds and that number has been reduced to 2,324. In my authority—the figures are available only from 1982 because of Health Service restructuring—the number of beds has gone down from 1,177 to 866. It is one of only three authorities in London which have fewer than 1,000 beds available for their populations. Those figures are a measure of the disaster that faces the Health Service in London.

The Minister has spoken of the problems of Health Service spending in London, but there are a number of confusing aspects. London is covered by the four Thames regions—there is no London health authority. I believe that it would be better if there were such an authority, because I am fed up with the idea of inner-London health spending always being compared with spending in outer-suburban areas. I have absolutely no wish to see the home counties suffering health cuts, but I believe that the way in which the RAWP formula has been operated by the Government has resulted in the biggest cuts taking place in some of the Thames regions.

In fact, the sub-regional RAWP movements have resulted in a permanent process of cuts, closure and decline in every inner-London health authority. Although we do not want cuts anywhere else, we ask the Government to recognise that there are enormous health needs within London. We are not indulging in special pleading for London at the expense of other parts of the country: we are seeking a cash increase that will help the people of London. It is important that that is on the record.

In the years between 1982-83 and 1985-86, the North East Thames health authority, which covers my constituency, has lost 0·9 per cent. in real terms in capital revenue allocations. It has also suffered as a result of the sub-regional RAWP figures.

It is also important to consider the regional variations in hospital costs for in-patients. The costs in London are considerably higher than those in any other part of the country. That is why London weighting is available for staff and why we ask the Government to take proper account of the increased costs in London. Building costs, land costs and transport costs are all higher in London. The efficiency of any service—the ambulance service, or anything else—is markedly less in London because of the continuous, inevitable congestion.

Let us consider the costs for hospitals with more than 300 beds. In the North West Thames regional health authority, the cost per patient per day is £108·97. The equivalent figure for the Oxford authority is £99·72, and for the West Midlands, regional health authority it is £95·86. The average in England is £99·63. The costs for acute beds in those regions are as follows. The cost in the North West Thames health authority is £81·80. The cost in the west midlands is slightly higher than average and the average for the whole of England is £79·79. It is important that the Government should take account of those figures.

When the Minister made his statement this week, he said that, as a result of the total increased allocation for extra services in the Thames regions, the North West Thames health authority would receive £4·7 million, North

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

East Thames health authority £6 million, South East Thames health authority £5·3 million and South West Thames health authority £4·3 million. We should compare those figures with the needs identified in our early-day motion, which require £38,257,000. That sum is needed to avoid the immediate acute crisis that faces the London Health Service. That is a measure of how far we have still to go, and of how little we have achieved so far.

There is a serious staff crisis in the London Health Service. There have been large numbers of job losses because of a process of privatisation and of deliberately keeping vacancies in the Health Service. Anyone who visits a London hospital from year to year can see how bad the situation is becoming. One sees the generally scruffy appearance of the entrance areas to so many hospitals. People have to wait a long time. One comes across cases of double bedding — or hot bedding, as it is called — whereby patients are shuffled from bed to bed at enormous speed. In some hospitals people are treated in the corridor.

A case was reported recently in a well written article by a constituent of mine in *The Guardian*. My constituent's son broke an arm. She would be the first to admit that she is a relatively comfortably off person, in that she has access to a car. When she took her son to the local Whittington hospital she found that he could not be admitted even though the X-rays were done there, so he had to be taken to the Edgware hospital, to which she was able to drive him, and after a four-hour wait he was admitted. Others, who are not so lucky, have to rely on ambulance services, which are so overstretched that they cannot meet these demands.

I wish to give some figures about the Paddington health authority — an inner-city authority. There has been a long-term plan of reduction of facilities at St. Mary's W2 hospital, which has now finally been closed. There have been reductions in service at St. Charles's hospital, and everything has been centralised in St. Mary's on the Praed street site. The effect of that is to make travelling more difficult for everyone and to create a large, impersonal hospital. The privatisation of the staff there has resulted, at St. Mary's in Praed street, in 60 catering jobs and 280 domestic jobs being lost, and the privatisation at St. Charles's hospital has resulted in the loss of 170 domestics. Bringing in the company Mediclean has resulted in a different atmosphere, which is hostile to the needs and aspirations of staff, and in considerable difficulties for union organisation and representations.

Before I allow the Minister time to reply, I want to draw his attention to one or two other matters. I shall deal first with the London ambulance service, which was the subject of a lengthy debate following the passage of the Consolidated Fund Bill, during which we were able to show that the service is finding it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of the people of London—especially for emergencies. On the night of the King's Cross fire, about 40 ambulances were unavailable for service. I would be the first to praise the heroism of the police, station, fire and ambulance staff, but it is not good enough to shed crocodile tears in the House about the needs of the London emergency ambulance service if, at the same time, funding is not provided so that the ambulances can do the job properly. Many people are fed up with Ministers going around hospitals after disasters like ghouls, when they are not prepared to pay the money that is needed to avoid such accidents in future.

The problems of the service are compounded by a general shortage of staff and controllers, which in turn leads to enormous stress among the staff. Ambulance staff are not particularly well paid. Anyone who has watched them at work will realise the terrifying stress of trying to drive an emergency patient through London's traffic, knowing full well that there is another emergency after that—and another after that—with the attendant fears that one might arrive too late because of the traffic and the shortage of ambulances in the first place. That must be understood.

The unions concerned, NUPE and COHSE and others, produced a report on ambulance stress.

In 1980 the London ambulance service covered a total of 9,101,000 miles. That has been reduced by 1987 to 8,238,000. In every area fewer emergency ambulances are available, even though they are working efficiently and hard. Emergency ambulance miles covered have kept up, but at the expense of non-emergency services and by increasing the use of hired cars, minicabs and volunteer drivers, which is an unacceptable way of doing things.

Islington health authority is in an inner-city area and is facing a long-term cut in health standards. The Friern Barnet psychiatric hospital is to close and its patients will be forced into the community. The social services department is worried that it will be unable to meet the needs of those people, in the same way as Camden and Haringey are also unable to meet them. The Royal Northern hospital is closing temporarily over Christmas and will close permanently soon after that. The Southwood hospital is also to close.

People in my constituency are greatly worried that the Health Service is becoming increasingly unable to cope with the needs of patients. Indeed, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) the lack of funding for the elderly assessment centre at Bart's hospital is causing great concern, and we look forward to an announcement from the Minister that he will support that venture.

Health is much more than a series of statistics, although that is the only way in which one can present it in the House. Health means the knowledge that the Health Service is available for all those who need it, at the time that they need it. In London, that is increasingly no longer the case. Waiting lists become longer and longer, small hospitals are closed and large hospitals are closing wards and operating theatres. There is great concern among the staff, who either leave or continue to work in such appalling conditions that we wonder why they stay in the employment of the health authority.

The announcement this week of some increase in funding shows how scared the Government are over the increasing protests about the level of health spending. They have been frightened by publicity and by letters from leading doctors. They now realise that every family knows that there is something badly wrong with our hospitals, wherever they may be throughout the land. We need a large increase in Health Service spending in London, and we need it very quickly, to stave off the crisis that we are facing this Christmas.

However, it must go further than that. Barbara Young, the spokesperson for the hospital managers, has said that any money often comes too late to stave off ward closures.

The Minister could do us a good turn today by announcing that he is prepared to alleviate the crisis in London by giving the Health Service the money that it needs, now.

12.22 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who put a powerful case. He drew attention to problems that are well known, but unfortunately he did not suggest the solutions. When tackling the problems of the Health Service, we must take a long-term view as to where the money can be found. We cannot constantly print it, as the previous Labour Government did, to meet demand, and to reallocate the money from other areas is always a controversial issue.

A long-term solution must be found, but where the short-term emergency in London is concerned, the hon. Gentleman was unfortunate in that his debate has come just after a statement that has gone some considerable way towards meeting it. Indeed, the existence of the emergency is not denied by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

Outsiders—I speak for myself, as I am an outsider to the Health Service—meet experts in the Health Service who can generally put an absolutely convincing case for what needs to be done, backed by figures and arguments that leave one in no doubt of the justice of their case. However, the next expert one meets will probably say the exact opposite. We are then left in doubt about what action to recommend.

I want to make one recommendation that is especially relevant to London. We are handicapped by the regional structure in making long-term plans. I am not suggesting that we should embark on yet another reorganisation, and I certainly do not suggest that we should set up a health ILEA. However, I noted the hon. Gentleman's comments about organisation in London, and there is a serious element of truth in his statement that we are unable to plan for London as a whole. The Department should undertake a review of the major London hospitals, especially the teaching hospitals and the great specialist institutions. It should be recognised that they are of service to the whole country and, in some cases, to the world. They are not merely of service to the region in which they happen to be located.

I feel that decisions have been taken about those major institutions based simply on the regions in which they are located, and not in the best interests of London as a whole. That problem cannot be tackled except by the Department. I put forward that problem for my hon. Friend's consideration and hope that, in due course, a satisfactory solution will emerge.

12.25 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): I shall, necessarily, have to reply briefly and shall not attempt to pick up all of the points made by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams), partly because, as the hon. Member for Islington, North has acknowledged, some of his comments on the London ambulance service have been the subject of recent debate and discussion in the House. However, I should like to comment on some of the major points made by the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend.

I observe gently and in no spirit of aggression that part of the hon. Gentleman's speech complained about what he called privatisation, but what I call competitive tendering in relation to certain support services in London hospitals. Given that on our estimate competitive tendering has saved about £100 million throughout the country, money which has been left in the Health Service and has therefore been available for spending on patient care services, all the problems that the hon. Gentleman has discussed would be £100 million worse if we had not pursued those competitive tendering policies.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister is just using statistics.

Mr. Newton: Well, if we are to argue about who is using statistics contentiously, I may have one or two comebacks against the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Corbyn: We have more

Mr. Newton: I think I shall quote statistics because I noticed that, when referring to the additional sums that I announced on Wednesday for health authorities throughout the country for the current year, 1987-88, and for next year, 1988-89, the hon. Gentleman selectively picked only one element in the increased funding for the current year for the Thames regional health authorities. In doing so, the hon. Gentleman virtually halved the amounts that they will actually receive. I should like to put on record the fact that for 1987-88 what I announced on Wednesday means an additional £11·4 million for the North West Thames regional health authority, £9·6 million for the North East Thames regional health authority and £7 million for the South West Thames reginal health authority.

I acknowledge that part of that money—sizeable only in relation to South East Thames — is related to the storm damage that occurred in what has become known as the hurricane of last month. Nevertheless, even allowing for that, those are substantial sums. The hon. Gentleman left out of his own statistics the fact that they include significant sums in recognition of the acute pressures that AIDS has placed on some of the Thames regional health authorities, especially the North West Thames regional health authority, which covers the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington. Within the totals that I have already given, from Wednesday North West Thames has received an additional £6 million for AIDS, North East Thames £2·5 million and South East Thames £1·5 million.

I should make the point that those are immediate additions to the money that is available for regional health authorities for 1987-88. I should like briefly to remind the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend that for next year, 1988-89, the four Thames regional health authorities will receive respectively an additional £68 million for North West Thames, £62 million for North East Thames, £51 million for South East Thames and £40 million for South West Thames. No doubt we could argue almost for ever about whether those sums are precisely right, but they are substantial additional sums for those Thames regional health authorities.

I refer to the comments of the hon. Member for Islington about hospital beds in London and the RAWP process. As a Member concerned with North East Essex regional health authority, I am conscious that there are different perspectives on such matters. Indeed, for the first

[Mr. Newton]

10 years that I was a Member for Parliament for part of Essex, my constituents complained endlessly and, in my view, understandably, that despite the fact that the population was steadily moving out of London into Essex and, for that matter, into Kent, Hertfordshire and the other counties that surround London, Health Service money continued to be spent in London and on maintaining beds in London. The population, often, in my case, from east and north London, that had moved out to Essex was not getting the provision that it deserved.

Again, there is plenty of scope for argument about the pace and scale of change, but there is no serious room for argument that, against a background in which the population is moving fom within London to outside London, there must necessarily be consequences for the pattern of health service provision——

Mr. Corbyn: The population is stabilising.

Mr. Newton: It is showing signs of stabilising. That, in turn, will be taken into account in our policies as they develop. We are reviewing the so-called RAWP formula. Among the matters which we are examining is whether social deprivation, which affects all constituencies, is weighted sufficiently. As I observed in the House the other day, for every group of Members that says to me that urban deprivation is not sufficiently recognised, there is another that says that rapid growth of population is not sufficiently recognised——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Hear, hear.

Mr. Newton: —as, no doubt, is the case in Peterborough and in the Oxford region——

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman worked in a hospital.

Mr. Newton: There is a sizeable chunk of new hospital there. Perhaps for *Hansard* purposes, I should make it clear that my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) is the subject of these interventions.

We shall take account of all these factors—including "rural scatter", as it is described in Cornwall. We shall, of course, take account of legitimate concerns.

The comments of the hon. Member for Islington, North on some aspects of hospital activity over the Christmas period, especially the Royal Northern hospital, were pretty misleading. It is well known that, apart from anything else, many patients do not care to go into hospital over Christmas and that there is a drop in the demand for elective surgery. Many people, if offered an operation over the Christmas period, would say that they would rather wait.

The Royal Northern hospital will close over Christmas, but as part of the health authority's normal reduction in service over that period rather than because of any effort to save cash. This year, for the first time and on medical advice, the health authority is concentrating in-patient services at the Whittington hospital — where my appendix was taken out some 13 or 14 years ago — rather than maintaining a reduced service at both hospitals. Out-patient services will continue to be provided at the royal northern during that period.

The hon. Member for Islington, North did slightly less than justice to his cause, in his comments on the closure of the Royal Northern, without acknowledging that the background to a consideration of that hospital's future is that fact that building has just started at the Whittington on a £16 million new development. It is proposed that all acute services will be transferred to the Whittington following the completion in 1991 of phase one of the redevelopment of the hospital, which started only last month.

I accept that there may always be arguments about what the total number of beds should be, but it is not reasonable to refer to proposals for closure of an old hospital without recognising that a great new hospital is being developed close by, which inescapably means considering the pattern of services.

The hon. Member for Islington, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington referred to the planning of London health services. I have some sympathy with the view — which I think was highlighted by the report of the King Edward's hospital fund for London, which was published about a year ago after a get-together of the 12 inner-London health authority chairmen—that there is a need for further work to be done. We have set up a working party with the four regional health authorities and representatives of the inner London chairmen's group to examine the issues that have been raised. I take note of the suggestions made by the hon. Member for Islington, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington. We expect to receive a report shortly, which we shall of course consider carefully.

I have rattled along a little, but I hope that I have commented on the important points raised by the hon. Member for Islington, North and my hon. Friend for Kensington.

Northern Ireland Schools

12.33 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): On this the last day that the House will sit in 1987, it is salutary to look back on what has happened in the last 12 months. I shall confine my remarks to Northern Ireland, and I think with sorrow of all those who have been murdered or maimed by terrorists in the last 12 months. I make no distinction between the types of terrorists, and I certainly make no distinction between the victims on the basis of religion.

In the past 48 hours we have had to contemplate a mindless atrocity in Londonderry, when randomly placed bombs caused death, grief, destruction and injury to many, including children. The Enniskillen atrocity gained international headlines. It made a massive impact which aroused the anger of Protestants and Catholics throughout Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, particularly among the younger generation.

I do not want the marvellous spirit of good will to be dissipated, but that is all too easy in the heartrending situation in Northern Ireland. We must therefore call a halt to the present political stalemate, which generates despair, uncertainty and hatred.

As we look back today on the events of 1987, we must consider what can be achieved in the new year. No doubt there will be atrocities, death and destruction—all that the terrorists have to offer—but we should counter that with sensible proposals. The new year must be accepted as a year of challenge by us all. We should see what each of us can do to overcome the divisions in our community. Each of us should attempt to bridge the cruel divisions between Protestant and Catholic. Politicians must give a lead in that regard.

For many years I have fought against the religious apartheid that exists in our education system. It divides people in their formative years when they should be learning together, playing together, laughing together and, I suppose, but only occasionally, crying together. It is unbelievable that children are divided even at kindergarten. If they are sent to separate schools, it is inevitable that children at one school will regard as alien children of a different religion in another school. Such division is indefensible and infringes the inherent rights of the child.

So far I have not succeeded in ending that unnatural division, but I shall continue to advocate integration. I have also argued that teacher training colleges — the state college at Stranmillis and the Catholic colleges of St. Mary and St. Joseph — should be amalgamated and placed under the aegis of the university. The opposition won the day when I suggested that. The opportunity to bring teachers within a non-sectarian university atmosphere was missed.

The Minister who is to reply to the debate has proposed that Protestant and Catholic teachers spend part of their training in schools of the other tradition. It is a sensible proposal, and I cannot understand how anybody could object to it. It is only a modest step, but it could herald a new approach to the educational division in Northern Ireland. Once trainee teacher exchanges took root, the people involved might not want the process to stop at that, and we may yet witness the dismantling of the religious divide in education.

In the meantime, how else can we foster good community relations in schools? Schools which accept children of a religion which is not the majority religion should be encouraged and given financial incentives. Lagan college was established in 1981 with 28 pupils. It now has about 500, an equal number of whom are Protestant and Roman Catholic. I thank the Minister for the support that he has given that integrated school. Others have been established or are being established. Some are primary schools, and I believe that there are two secondary schools.

What else have the Government done? I should like to give an example of a major blunder. The Rudolf Steiner school in my constituency at Holywood prides itself of providing education for children of any or no religious denomination. The school was naturally appalled—as I was — to hear how it was described in a recent Government publication cumbersomely entitled:

"Religious Equality of Opportunity and Employment—Guide to Effective Practice".

In that publication, which was produced, not by the Department of Education, but by the Department of Economic Development, the school was described as a Protestant school. When the school protested, and I protested on its behalf, we were told that it had to be labelled as either Roman Catholic or Protestant. Thus—this is the reasoning behind the decision of the Department of Economic Development—a prospective employer can tell when an applicant for a job is Protestant or Roman Catholic.

The document was issued to about 40,000 employers. I protested to the Minister at the Department of Economic Development, and in reply he said:

"systems need to be put in place to identify the perceived religious affiliation (not the actual belief) of job applicants and of existing employees. . . . the school would under the present system be reclassified as 'Not Known' when the list is revised and updated."

What bureaucratic nonsense. The religious affiliations of the school are well known. It is non-denominational, and I would have thought it simple for the Government to denote the school in their publication as "non-denominational". To do otherwise is to repudiate the tremendous effort made by the Rudolf Steiner school and its staff to make all its pupils aware of and sympathetic to others in the world, regardless of colour, creed or race. I demand that the Department of Economic Development send out a correction forthwith to all those who received the original misleading and damaging document.

I know that the Minister has committed himself to a vigorous programme for reconciliation within the present school system, and I praise him for his efforts to stimulate conserted action, but I shall leave it to him in his reply to set out the Department's strategy for community relations in schools. All the initiatives to bring about reconciliation must be designed to encourage pupils to realise that they live in a land which has a long, rich and varied history — which, despite religious and political differences, they all have much in common.

I do not merely desire better community relations to stop there. I see Northern Ireland in the context of the United Kingdom, which, despite the occasional political crisis on the mainland, can be regarded as a nation of great toleration. I mentioned that in a debate only a short time ago. I would not limit the initiative to the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland schoolchildren must be faced with the fact that they are all young Europeans. It is in that context that we must bring them to face the realities in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

Many centuries ago, there was a famous school of learning at Bangor in my constituency. It welcomed students from all over Europe, and 1,300 years ago it was destroyed by the barbaric hordes who had already pulled the blanket of darkness over the rest of Europe. Students came to Bangor to learn there what they could not learn elsewhere in Europe.

Northern Ireland has always had a good education system. I was interested to read in the press that the Minister, on a visit to the famous Ulster folk and transport museum at Cultra in my constituency, saw a notice issued in November 1863 headed, "General Lesson", hanging in a reconstructed school house. I understand that the Minister commended the message and asked that it go out to all teachers. It is worth quoting, and I shall quote just two parts of it. I remind the House that "General Lesson" was issued in November 1863 and hung in all school houses in Ireland. It said:

"Christians should endeavour, as the Apostle Paul commands them, to live peaceably with all men, . . . even with those of a different religious persuasion.

Our saviour Christ, commanded his Disciples to love one another. He taught them to love even their enemies, to bless those that cursed them, and to pray for those who persecuted them. He himself prayed for his murderers."

That declaration has a relevant message for today. Does it not remind us of the fine words used by Mr. Gordon Wilson immediately after the Enniskillen atrocity, when his daughter and others were slaughtered, when he said that he forgave her murderers? Not all of us can aspire to such Christlike forgiveness. None the less, we must all strive to bring people together in Northern Ireland and to show that we can live together. If we cannot do that, the alternative is what the IRA says, that we die together. The message from the House, from all Unionists and Ulster politicians, must be that we should all live together.

There is no point in overlooking the sectarian slaughter. There is no advantage in trying to avoid mentioning the sectarian hatred that manifests itself from time to time. Divisions exist. We must do our best to heal the wounds that are there. The future belongs to the young people of Northern Ireland. Better community relations in schools in Northern Ireland will mean a better future for Northern Ireland. We all have a part to play, not least the Ulster politicians. Everyone, young and old, can help to bring the community together. It is an enormous task.

Northern Ireland is not the only part of the world where there are religious and political divisions in one form or another. In certain instances, those divisions are far worse than in Northern Ireland. Bad as the situation is, thank God the position there has not reached the level in the Lebanon and Sri Lanka. However, let us see what steps we can take to achieve consensus as far as it is humanly practicable. Let us also strive towards establishing some form of government in the Province that has the support of all reasonable and decent people in the community. By our example in 1988 and in the years thereafter we can encourage better community relations, not only among the young, but among all the people of Northern Ireland.

12.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) has done the House a great service by allowing us to have a short debate on this important subject. I thank him for the kind personal comments that he made about me in my role as Education Minister.

The hon. Gentleman properly set the importance of this subject against the background of terrorist activity and killing, which we have seen for too many years in the Province, and which reflects the extreme edge of the divisions that characterise Northern Ireland society.

The hon. Gentleman referred to 1988 as the year of challenge. I wish that I had thought of that phrase. He will forgive me if I use it on other occasions after today. The challenge is the effort that the Government and everyone in the community must make to seek to improve community relations in Northern Ireland and to bring about greater harmony and reconciliation. No one should underestimate the difficulties or suppose that there are easy solutions.

I assure the House that the Government are fully committed to the task of improving community relations. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has emphasised his intention of being directly and personally involved in helping to tackle Northern Ireland's community relations problems. For my part, as the Minister responsible for the newly established central community relations unit, and for the Department of Education, which has the major statutory role in Northern Ireland for community relations, I have emphasised my personal commitment to encouraging and supporting efforts directed at improving those relations, which fundamentally influence the quality of life in the Province. I make that commitment clear again today.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the segregated system of education in Northern Ireland, under which Roman Catholic and Protestant children are educated in separate schools; not, I must add—and as the hon. Gentleman well knows—by legal requirement, but in practice. He mentioned the unfortunate omission of the Rudolf Steiner school from the Department of Economic Development publication. I say "omission", because it was in the publication, but in an inappropriate category and I regret that. I note the representations that the hon. Gentleman quite properly made on behalf of his constituents. I am happ to confirm to him today that Rudolf Steiner is a non-denominational school, and I accept his point and join him in stressing that that is part of the strength of that school.

I know that many people believe that the segregation that characterises Northern Ireland society and which starts in our schools could be ended if young people in Northern Ireland could be educated together and could meet during their school days and thereby understand each other better. I have much sympathy with that view. I also accept the sense of frustration experienced by some people who believe that faster progress could be made in setting up integrated schools.

I recently met representatives of the two major sponsoring bodies for integrated education in Northern Ireland, and I fully understand their aspirations. I assured them of my personal interest in their work and of the Government's willingness to give sympathetic consideration to proposals for integrated schools which can demonstrate viability and achieve appropriate educational standards.

It is Government policy that integrated education should be encouraged where there is local support for it. Fundamentally, parents have a statutory right to have children educated in accordance with their wishes, with the

proviso that that must be compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and avoid unreasonable public expenditure. On the other hand, there can be no question of forcing integration on parents. However, where parents collectively indicate their desire for integrated education and have demonstrated that the demand is sufficient to justify the creation of a new grant-aided school, the Government have taken a generous line in providing support. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall continue that generosity of spirit, which is the necessary precursor of generous financial support. I note in passing the hon. Gentleman's interesting suggestion that financial incentives might have some part to play in seeking to move people together in schooling.

The best evidence for that is the growing number of integrated schools that have been established, of which three have now been recognised for grant aid—Lagan college, Hazelwood primary school and the Forge primary school. As the hon. Gentleman said, other proposals are under consideration and he will know that recently I met representatives of the governors of Hazelwood college. We agreed together that I would consider their application for grant-aid status in the first half of next year.

The proposals in the Education Reform Bill include an extension of parental choice of schools and of parental influence in the management of schools. I have already announced my policy in Northern Ireland on extending parental choice and my intention to introduce proposals for legislation in support of that policy. In terms of parental influence, the consultative paper for Northern Ireland that I expect to produce early next year, will include consideration of the parental choice and influence aspects of the Education Reform Bill against the background of our present divided educational system.

None the less, despite Government support and the enthusiasm of parents, the integrated education movement will touch only a small percentage of the school population. Even an increase on a scale undreamed of by the most ambitious advocate would leave the vast majority of this and succeeding generations in separate schools. That being the case, I have given the highest priority to supporting those measures that will encourage and provide support for contact and joint activities undertaken by schools and youth organisations on each side of the sectarian divide.

Central to the steady improvement of community relations is my Department's education for mutual understanding programme, which I have determined shall be a major priority in Northern Ireland schools, colleges and youth clubs. To complement that programme I recently initiated the cross-community contact scheme to encourage new contact programmes between schools, colleges and youth groups across the religious divide, and I have allocated £250,000 for each of the next three years to fund the new programme.

My aim is that an ever-increasing number of Protestant and Catholic children should have the opportunity to meet and co-operate in curricular and extracurricular activities. I am pleased to say that those programmes, and the funding for them, are in addition to the existing range of community relations activities organised by the education and library boards and by the Northern Ireland Council for Educational Development.

The activities that have arisen from those initiatives take many forms, depending on local circumstances, but the fundamental characteristic of them all is that young people from across the religious divide agree on a common goal and come together on a regular basis to plan a common approach, to share the work in progress, to enjoy each other's company and to establish friendship. The ready response of Northern Ireland's teachers to community relations initiatives is particularly heartening. Clearly, they accept community relations as a part of their responsibility, and I can assure them that their efforts will receive all the support that I can give, through our education system, to the work of co-operation and reconciliation.

To assist teachers in these difficult and often—alas—uncharted areas, I asked the Northern Ireland Council for Educational Development to give priority to the preparation and publication of a guideline on education for mutual understanding for teachers at primary and secondary levels, which will be published next year. In addition, all the members of the inspectorate have a responsibility to support and evaluate communiity relations projects throughout the education system. Recently I have had four inspectors deployed more directly on community relations work. They will spend an increasing amount of their time in promoting education for mutual understanding in schools and colleges. Already they have initiated a major development in primary schools.

I noted in particular the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the teacher training colleges. While he will not expect me this morning to go into debates that have been held in the past, and to review decisions that have already been made, I am very grateful to him for his support for the initiative that I announced recently. Much of the responsibility will rest on the assessment by teachers of the circumstances that exist in individual schools, and how they can best be exploited in support of community relations programmes.

As I have said, this is difficult territory, which requires a clear understanding of the objectives and an ability to translate them into a practical programme. Much effort has already gone into in-service training programmes, and that continues to be given priority. There is a need, however, for teachers in intitial training to be brought into contact—I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about this — and I have therefore recently asked the two colleges to produce a joint policy statement on education for mutual understanding, so that their student teachers will share a common comprehensive programme.

I should like to see Protestant and Catholic student teachers being brought together at their initial training stage, and then following up that cross-community contact by arranging some of their teaching practice in schools with a religious background different from their own. I want to see them grasp the nettle of encouraging Protestant teachers to learn some of the ethos of maintained schools, and to allow Roman Catholic teachers to gain some experience of what it is like in controlled schools. By their initial teacher training, young students should be provided with the practical reality of learning alongside those who may differ religiously and politically from themselves. If we can achieve that, we shall help to generate better community understanding and go some way towards helping to create a society in which the "them and us" syndrome is dispelled.

In addition to all those projects, I have recently enhanced the support given to the various voluntary bodies which are active in, and committed to, improving

[Dr. Brian Mawhinney]

community relations in schools. Additional funds have been given to both the Corrymeela and the Columbanus communities, and to the joint work of the Protestant Council of Churches and the Catholic Irish Commission for Justice and Peace.

All too often good relationships between the two communities in Northern Ireland depend upon avoiding any issue that might be regarded as divisive. I believe that we should seek those areas of common ground that serve to bring our two communities together. We need to concentrate our minds on what we have in common, not always on those things that divide us. I believe that the voluntary bodies that have received support can help in that regard.

Alongside the improving educational standards and increasing parental choice and influence, nothing is more important in our schools than helping to promote community understanding and tolerance. That is our agenda for 1988, or, as the hon. Member for North Down said, it is our challenge. I can tell him and the House that I intend to pursue it vigorously. We owe that to ourselves and, even more, we owe it to our children.

I wish to end by quoting from the "General Lesson". I am intrigued and gratified that the paragraph that I have chosen to quote, and will quote again for emphasis, is that which the hon. Member for North Down has already read into the record. If it was true of our schools over 100 years ago, how much more true is it now that Christians should endeavour

"to live peaceably together with all men . . . even with those of a different religious persuasion."?

Northern Ireland is a religious country with a signficant majority of people to whom their Christian faith is very important. I have quoted the challenge of the Apostle Paul. It is the challenge of common decency, and it is the challenge of 1988. I can assure the hon. Member for North Down that we aim to rise to that challenge and would be grateful for his help in seeking so to do.

I wish the hon. Member for North Down, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker and other hon. Members in the House the compliments of the season.

Poverty (Bradford)

1.1 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): By any yardstick, Bradford is revealed as a city of past prosperity and present poverty. Deprivation and disadvantage are acute and, in many ways, are becoming more serious. Any reduction in unemployment is always welcome. However, in Bradford unemployment represents a deep social and economic scar. Men and women who want to work and know that they could help in doing the important work that needs to be done in Bradford are denied their right to work. There are more than 25,000 men and women without work. That represents 12 in every 100 people of working age. A total of 21 in every 100 16 to 19-year-olds —nearly 4,000 of our youngsters—are unemployed.

In Bradford, West, my constituency, unemployment is the highest in the city, at nearly 17 per cent. In University ward, also part of my constituency, unemployment rises to 29 per cent. and youth unemployment soars to 70 per cent. That is undoubtedly a reflection of the many difficulties that black and Asian youngsters have in securing employment.

Bradford council has published an important review of the link between poverty, health and disadvantage. An earlier report said:

"Poverty is no longer confined to individuals and small pockets in the district. It is affecting whole communities, and affecting them selectively . . . Parts of the District are becoming virtually 'poverty zones' with few working people, low incomes and many dependants while other parts are remaining relatively prosperous."

Many people are existing in unrelieved, grinding poverty. They now represent a sullen and hostile sub-culture that is largely becoming alienated from the rest of the community. Bradford is facing a housing crisis. The city's director of housing in a letter to me this month commented on the Government's latest housing proposals. He said:

"I am deeply concerned at the possible implications for housing in Bradford."

There are some 2,700 houses in multiple occupation —homes for 20,000 people. Most are in disrepair and lack fire safety measures and amenities and most do not have planning approval. There are 7,600 people on the council waiting list and since 1968 some 8,000 council homes have been sold. Some 33,000 homes are defective. Bradford has the highest rate of overcrowding in west Yorkshire and there are more than 1,500 homeless people. There are nearly 34,000 housing benefit claimants in the private sector and 25,700 in the public sector, which represents about one third of all households in the city.

In a report to the council last month, the director of housing said:

"Our problems have been and will continue to be depressed incomes and depressed house prices arising from the depressed economy."

Some 118 schools were built before 1914, which represents 40 per cent. of all schools in the city. In almost half of the district's schools, 30 per cent. of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. In 23 schools more than 60 per cent. of their pupils take free school meals. The council estimates that next April 6,000 children in the city will lose the discretionary free school meal that they have hitherto been taking.

The infant mortality rate in Bradford is twice the national average. There are 30,000 children under the age of five years but only 500 public nursery places.

Bradford is known as low-pay city and west Yorkshire suffers from being the lowest paid region in Britain. Men and women in full-time employment in Bradford receive appallingly low wages. More than half of all full-time women workers and three quarters of part-time women workers are low paid. Nationally, two thirds of all low-paid workers are women. Some 5·5 million adult women —one quarter of the work force—are earning less than the decency threshold. They will be expected to pay the same poll tax as someone who may be earning more in a month than they earn in a year.

The poll tax—the Tory tax—will have a devastating effect on Bradford. It has been estimated that, if it had to be paid this year, the poll tax would mean that everyone over 18 years of age in Bradford would have to pay £238. More than 209,000 citizens in Bradford would lose as a result of the poll tax, and 113,000 of those—41 per cent. —will be paying an extra £100 in poll tax compared with their current rates payments.

In the inner-city wards, which are represented by my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) and Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who are here today, 90 per cent. of the constituents would lose under the poll tax; 65 per cent would be losing more than £100. In University ward, to which I referred earlier, 94 per cent. of my constituents would be losing under the poll tax and 82 per cent. would be losing more than £100.

The number of people over the age of 85 years in Bradford is estimated to be due to increase by 28 per cent. in the next 10 years. The number of elderly of ethnic minority origin will increase nearly fivefold over the same period. Yet in October the chair of Bradford social services committee wrote to the Secretary of State for Social Services about Bradford's 49 per cent. reduction in block allocation. Councillor John Godward said that there was continuing serious concern about the inadequate level of the capital allocation being made for Bradford, and that it was enduring serious social problems, especially in the care of the very elderly.

Last month Bradford launched a campaign against the cold and distributed up to 10,000 easy-to-read thermometers to vulnerable elderly people, along with help packs that could save lives in emergencies. Yet this week, an Energy Minister, who no doubt glides from comfortable centrally heated home to well heated lavish office and to this place by chauffeur-driven car, had the effrontery to tell me in reply to a parliamentary question that the average increase in a pensioner's expenditure to meet next year's electricity price increase would be no more than 30p or 35p per week.

This week, information was revealed about the expenditure figures for the social fund. That fund is in two parts, grants and loans, and replaces the existing single payments scheme. Unlike the present system of grants, new loans must be repaid by those receiving them through their weekly benefits. The expenditure figures show that there will be a shift of resources from areas such as Bradford to the more prosperous areas in the south-east and East Anglia. That is a dramatic and substantal shift.

In recent years the poor people of Bradford have depended to a great extent upon single payments. However, changes in the regulations have led to a substantial reduction in the number of payments made. In 1985-86 48,000 payments were made, but this year just 5,000 have been made. I have received figures showing the amount of resources received from the Government for single payments covering the three Bradford DHSS offices. Those figures show that, between 1984-87, more than £10 million was paid by the Government to meet claims for single payments at those offices—£4 million to the Bradford, east office, £2·7 million to the Bradford, south office, and £3·7 million to the Bradford, west office.

However, it is clear from the social fund figures published this week that, although expenditure for 1986-87 amounted to more than £3 million, the expenditure for the current year has been savagely reduced to £500,000. Indeed, we are aware that the allocated social fund expenditure for 1988-89 will be £1·7 million. Therefore, when all the figures are swept away and the statistics put to one side it means that some of the poorest people in Bradford, many struggling to bring up families, will face acute hardship and will be robbed of about £2 million.

Therefore, our hard-pressed local economy, with depressed demand for goods and services, shops closing down because of lack of business, firms going bankrupt and new businesses finding it extremely difficult to start off, will lose almost £2 million that would otherwise have been spent by the poor people directly in the city to help themselves and the business community.

I was recently informed by the Bradford citizens advice bureau that there had been two recent cases when the DHSS had refused a lump sum urgent needs payment to buy a cooker on the grounds that the claimants could buy hot food with their personal allowances. I was so concerned about that that I tabled a written question and the Minister who is to reply to today's debate replied:

"The Department's staff are instructed to advise claimants of refusal of a single payment for a cooker by the issue of a special form (Form B03D). This gives a general explanation of the reasons for refusal, explains the right of appeal to an independent tribunal and refers to the Citizens' Advice Bureau and the local law centre as sources of help and advice in appealing. It also offers a more detailed explanation of the decision if the claimant requests it."—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *403-4*.]

There are many problems involved in such an approach. One of them is that, because of the enormous pressure of work faced by the Bradford citizens advice bureau, it has had to reduce its opening hours from 30 to 20 a week. The manager of the unit, Shirley Ginever, in a recent letter to me—copied to the chief executive of Bradford council—was extremely concerned about this and desperately anxious to try to increase resources to enable more staff to devote more time to the problems of the poor, who are facing acute hardship in our city. She said:

"I would add that the Debt Counselling Unit of the bureau is also under great strain. In anticipation of the increase in demands particularly regarding housing debt, after April 1988, we are trying to raise funds to open a housing debtline telephone consultancy service for statutory and voluntary agencies and the public to use".

I say to the Minister, who, in parliamentary replies, freely advises people facing difficulties to go to citizens advice bureaux, that he should ensure that sufficient resources are provided for the citizens advice bureaux in Bradford and in other cities throughout the country to enable them to deliver their advice.

[Mr. Max Madden]

On 15 January, at Bradford university, a conference is being organised, entitled, "A Hole in the Safety Net?—Responses to the Social Fund". The conference material states:

"In April 1988 the second part of the social fund will come into operation, replacing supplementary benefits single payments with a discretionary system of primarily repayable loans. Its introduction, along with other recent and current changes in social security benefits, represents a dramatic contraction of the rights and living standards of claimants".

That is absolutely right, and it is right that the conference should be concerned.

One of the nastier aspects of the Social Security Act 1986, which comes into force next April, will mean that claimants who are refused their applications for cookers and other urgent personal needs will have no right of appeal. The existing right is inadequate. When I passed on to Shirley Ginever of the CAB the Minister's reply about two claimants who had experienced refusal, she made the point — rightly — that the current waiting period for appeals is seven months. That is to be contrasted with the position after next April, when the right of appeal will be swept completely away.

There will be a series of reviews, but what point is there in administrative review when every DHSS office in Bradford and the rest of the country will be cash-limited? They will allocate less and less money on a monthly basis, and the social fund manager will be held responsible for ensuring that the allocation that each office receives is not overspent. What purpose is there in reviews being made to line management of DHSS offices—even if they were to find in favour of the claimant— when the social fund manager will say, "Hold on a minute—the money is nearly overspent for this month. We cannot grant this application from a claimant who has been refused."

We are now beginning to see the full implications of the Social Security Act 1986, which was passed well before the last general election. The Government did not want the public to see the true implications that that nasty measure would have for them. In Bradford and many other cities, it will mean that people suffering from acute hardship—men and women struggling to bring up families—will not be living, they will merely be existing. Their needs will not be met, because the Government have directed that far less money shall be spent than was the case in the past. That is a public scandal, which will do grievous damage to my hard-pressed, poor city of Bradford.

1.19 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I endorse everything that has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). The Low Pay Unit has produced figures for unemployment, which is the basic source of poverty in this country, showing that in November the official rate in Bradford, South was 10·4 per cent., slightly less than in September. However, the official figures understate the true level of unemployment because they relate only to those in receipt of unemployment benefit. Those who are unemployed and looking for work, but who cannot claim benefit, are excluded from the total.

Since 1979 the Government have made 22 changes in the way in which the official figures are collected, and the independent unemployment unit calculated that the true level in Bradford, South—calculated on the same basis as in earlier years—is now 6,123, or 12·5 per cent., with much greater pockets of unemployment. Many people in Bradford this Christmas will have as a background debts to either the gas or electricity boards. Some pensioners who cannot afford a television licence and do not qualify for a concession will be without even the cheer of television over Christmas.

The Government's economic and social policies make the prospect for the poor worse, not better. I call on the Government to provide proper long-term jobs and to abandon their Social Security Bill, which will result in further cuts and an even gloomier prospect for the poor of Bradford and elsewhere.

1.21 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): The city of Bradford has many fine buildings and is surrounded by magnificent scenery, but inside its boundaries and within the travel-to-work area there is enormous poverty. Bradford is part of the West Yorkshire region, which has the lowest pay levels of any of the nine industrial regions in Britain. The average wage in Yorkshire and Humberside is £193 a week, almost £70 a week less than the average for the south-east. Families in the south-east spend on goods and services an average of £60 a week more than do families in the Bradford area.

In the Bradford intermediate area — the travel-to-work area — which includes Shipley, Bingley, Pudsey, Cleckheaton, and across to Kirklees, unemployment now runs at more than 30,000, despite the recent small reduction. That is 3 per cent. above the national average. One in six of the unemployed are under 20, and 40 per cent. have been unemployed for more than one year. One third of the population of Bradford receive some form of state benefit, and 60,000 are on supplementary benefit. In July 1986, only 30 per cent. of Bradford school leavers found a job, and fewer than 10 per cent. of Asian children found one.

Through the use of the multiplier, over a three-year period the Government have forced Bradford ratepayers to pay £110 each in rates because Bradford was not allowed the full entitlement of grant. It is a human issue, because it deals with people.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) referred to local citizens advice bureaux. Last year's report stated:

"However, the largest increase in volume of work is that which has passed through the debt counselling unit—an unbelievable 40,718 inquiries. It was said last year that the enormous stresses and practical difficulties of trying to exist on a low-fixed income continue to underpin many of the problems brought to us, which increasingly have a debt angle. The large number of restrictive changes introduced in the benefits system over the last year . . . have undoubtedly accelerated this trend, making it nigh on impossible for those on benefit to make ends meet without any supplementary income; as the possibilities to increase claimants' income decrease, so the need for debt work grows more and more common. This is not to say that it is no longer possible to increase benefit take up. A survey of callers to the bureau in one week this year showed that a massive 76 per cent. were reliant on benefits; 50 per cent. of all callers were reliant on Supplementary Benefit."

That is a sign of the enormous human suffering in Bradford.

During my maiden speech I commented that the Government could talk about popular people's capitalism but it was a hollow joke for tens and tens of thousands of people living in misery and poverty. They have a fine

tradition of work, and all that they ask for is the right to use their abilities to work and to bring up their families with some decency.

1.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): The House will appreciate that it will be difficult for me to do justice to this subject in the six minutes that are left to me. However, I should like to say that, in common with other cities, Bradford is benefiting from the Government's economic policies, which have brought industrial production to its highest level ever. Since 1980, manufacturing productivity has grown faster in this country than in any of the other major countries of the industrialised world.

The benefits have been felt in Bradford. The latest figures, those for November 1987, show that unemployment is the Bradford travel-to-work area is 25,000—that is a fall of 5,000, or 16·6 per cent., over the year before. That compares well with the decline in unemployment in the country as a whole, which has been about 17·6 per cent. over the same period. Measured in terms of employees, employment and the unemployed, the unemployment rate in Bradford is only 1 per cent. higher than the comparable national figure.

None the less, the Government recognise that there are particular difficulties in Bradford and a need for employment initiatives in that city. Currently, 4,680 people in Bradford participate in the community programme. Under the employment allowance scheme, 1,885 people are benefiting in the Bradford area. Since the scheme was started in 1983, a cumulative total of 6,000 people have been placed by the scheme.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) referred to housing. I am sure he will be aware that substantial allocations are being made available to Bradford for housing purposes. The initial housing investment programme allocation for 1987-88 was £12·9 million. This has been supplemented by additional allocations amounting to £190,000 for housing defects and £80,000 for a project to combat homelessness. Additional housing resources have also been made available through the Government's Estate Action team. In 1986-87, an additional £1·5 million was made available to Bradford through estate action — the largest allocation for any authority in Yorkshire and Humberside and as much as 3 per cent. of the resources available nationally.

I know that the hon. Gentleman referred to the housing difficulties, but I should point out that Bradford council did not make full use of its main housing allocation in 1986-87. Every other authority in Yorkshire and Humberside supplemented its housing allocation with expenditure financed by capital receipts in 1986-87; Bradford did not. Some authorities doubled their allocations by using receipts. That does not reflect a high priority for housing investment in Bradford by the city council.

The hon. Gentleman referred also to the ending of free school meals for certain categories of claimants. He will know that under the family credit system, which, by the way, is backed by an extra £220 million expenditure from the Government over and above what is spent on family income supplement, free school meals will no longer be available. However, the amount of money that is being put into the family credit scheme to compensate for the loss of free school meals is higher than the average payment that people will have to make for school meals. There will be more children in families receiving family credit than the present total who receive free school meals under both the family income supplement and the discretionary schemes.

The hon. Gentleman made considerable play about the social fund. I should point out to him that the amounts paid in single payments this year up to November, in the three Bradford offices amount to £1·1 million over roughly a seven-month period. The amount of money that will be made available for the social fund for the coming year is £1·8 million, which is broadly in line with current expenditure on single payments.

The hon. Gentleman is worried about the effect on the local economy of the decline from the peak numbers of single payments in previous years. I remind him that £200 million extra is being put into the income support scheme, over and above supplementary benefit; £200 million is being put into the income support scheme for transitional protection; and more than £200 million extra is going into the family credit scheme. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman is doing calculations of the effects on the local economy, he will want to bear those points in mind.

The hon. Gentleman is concerned about how the allocation for the social fund has been made. He will be aware that there are substantial regional variations in the sums paid out in single payments, and those variations cannot be explained by reference to any obvious indicators of need. If we had allocated the social fund budgets to individual local offices, simply on the pattern of past single payment expenditure, we would have perpetuated these inequalities. We were concerned to distribute the money more fairly in future than had been the case in the past.

That is why the allocation has been based on the past pattern of single payments and with some consideration to the underlying needs of the area, as measured by the caseload of people claiming supplementary benefit. If the hon. Gentleman is concerned to see that in greater detail, he will no doubt be aware that there is a note in the Library which explains very carefully how that allocation has been made.

Although there will not be a formal appeals procedure unde the social fund, it is our intention that there should be a review procedure. The first part of that review procedure involves the claimant in contacting the local office and asking for a review. On contacting the local office, the claimant will be invited to an interview withthe social fund officer, who will have the opportunity to explain his decision to the claimant. The claimant will have the opportunity to make his or her case to the social fund officer and to be accompanied by an adviser on that occasion. If the claimant is still not satisfied with a negative decision, the case can be referred to a line manager in the office and, above that, to a social fund inspector. The work of the social fund inspector will be overseen, as the hon. Gentleman knows, by the social fund commissioner.

When this matter was considered in another place, Lord Denning, contrasting those arrangements with some of the arrangements in the past, said:

> "I have had experience of all these appeals up to the appeal tribunal. They have even come as far as my court. The machinery is far too elaborate, too long, too costly, with too many insurance commissioners and the like. It is all very well to have that elaborate structure in the pursuit of justice, but if it is too elaborate, it ought to be replaced by simpler machinery."

[Mr. Michael Portillo]

Lord Denning went on to say:

"I see this new proposal . . . as being simple, fair and just machinery." — *[Official Report, House of Lords,* 24 July 1986; Vol. 479, c. 426.]

Oceanography

1.31 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I appreciate the opportunity offered by the debate to draw the attention of the House and particularly of my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for civil science policy and the research councils to the excellent and frequently pioneering work undertaken at the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences Deacon laboratory in my constituency, where, for almost half a century, a group of distinguished, committed scientists have studied the oceans.

The oceans cover seven tenths of the earth's surface. They modify our climate, offer numerous tapped and untapped resources and regulate the cycling of natural and man-made materials. Britain is a maritime nation. As it is an island, the oceans surrounding our country have played a major part in our history. We have depended on the seas for trade, defence, fishing and, more recently, offshore oil and gas. We have also used the seas for recreation and frequently as a way of disposing of industrial and domestic wastes.

The Institute of Oceanographic Sciences Deacon laboratory, which I have the privilege of representing, is among the foremost laboratories specialising in the study of the seas and deep oceans. This year, the European Year of the Environment, the institute was renamed the Deacon laboratory after Dr. George Deacon, the first director of the National Institute of Oceanography. He remained director for 22 years, during which time the institute became a world leader in the subject. The institute's work is based on the fundamental studies of the physics, biology and geology of the marine environment. Many scientific discoveries, technological developments and advances in instrumentation have been initiated there.

The ISDL is part of the marine sciences directorate of the Natural Environment Research Council. The NERC receives a grant in aid from the science budget. Funds are allocated from the science budget to the research councils on the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. Internal funding allocations within the research council are a matter for the council itself.

In recent years, there have been fundamental changes in NERC, with the organisation being streamlined and reorganised in line with Government policy. They have introduced many long overdue reforms. There has been more selectivity in research areas, increased emphasis on commercially viable projects and greater co-operation between industry and science. All these are important to the maintenance of a healthy scientific community.

Earlier this year, the distinguished Chairman of the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, Lord Sherfield, visited the institute. In its first report, his Committee called on the Government to promote science as a means of achieving economic recovery. The Government responded to the report in July this year in a paper entitled "Civil Research and Development". Although it is made clear in the document that the Government do not intend to fund applied research, which is the responsibility of industry, there is a clear recognition by the Government of the need for public funding of more basic research for the generation of highly trained manpower, to underpin industry's needs and to provide social benefits in health and the environment.

The report states:

"Advances in science and technology and the early exploitation of those advances are essential to national success."

It continues:

"Public expenditure on science and technology serves various objectives: the advancement of knowledge, support for policy formalation and implementation, improvement of technology, improvement of health and the environment, support for procurement decisions and support for statutory duties. Government support for basic science and enabling technology, particularly in the universities, is intended to lead to the development of knowledge and the acquisition of skills; these have a major impact on the United Kingdom's economy and position in world markets. The Government agrees that it should be a major national priority to focus the effort of the scientific community and industry on increasing the economic effectiveness of our national investment in science and technology. The challenge is to target scientific and technological resources without constraining individual creativity and to co-ordinate related parallel R and D programmes without divorcing them from the individual objectives they are meant to serve."

Government action is already seeing clear signs of success. We have witnessed an increased awareness of the marketable aspects for research within the scientific community. The universities and polytechnics have made dramatic progress in working closely with industry. In my area, the university of Surrey works closely with local industry generating more than any other university from private sources, having recently opened its own research park. Within the NERC, duplication and waste have been reduced, resulting in greater economic efficiency.

Many would argue, however, that now is the time for a reappraisal of the financial assistance for basic research in the natural sciences. Only this week in the *New Scientist* there is a leader headed "Bring back real science". The editorial argues:

"It is impossible for every researcher to work on subjects that offer short-term economic benefits. Someone has to do the research that will one day turn into technology. This country's poor record of innovation does not mean that Britain should shut up shop on science. If anything, industry deserves the chop. After all, it is industry that has failed to build on past successes in science. Why clobber research done for its own sake?"

Although there is clearly an important part for the private sector, it is important to re-evaluate the part of Government in funding basic research in the natural sciences.

I should like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to consider some of the major developments that have been pioneered by the institute. Over the past 20 years, a major achievement has been the development of the Gloria deep ocean survey device. In 1986, the institute was awarded the Queen's award for technological achievement for the development, construction and operation of this long-range, side-scan sonar system. Gloria was developed at the IOS to meet the needs of research scientists, but it proved to have considerable commercial potential. It is a unique facility to provide sound pictures of the ocean floor extremely quickly and relatively cheaply. It maps the sea floor geologically to find areas of potential commercial exploitation. It is currently under contract in the United States to scan the 200-mile exclusive economic zone.

It took Gloria 102 days to map the 200-mile EEZ off the Pacific coast. More than 200 new isolated mountains were discovered, including five volcanoes bigger than Mount St. Helens. A canyon hundreds of miles long was found that carries sediment west from Monterey bay. Vast ripples in the sediment off Oregon and Alaska showed for the first time how currents from land combine to change the sea bed.

The economic implications of this remarkable development are numerous. Apart from identifying resources in the sea bed, the survey, by highlighting mountainous areas, can give guidance for cable-laying companies. An underwater cable costs $1 million to mend. In the Pacific, fishing is a major source of revenue. By locating isolated sea mounts, it is possible to make predictors for the fishing industry. With a growing number of exclusive economic zones being declared, many states, especially small islands in the Pacific, will have increased the area of their national sovereignty 100-fold or more. Even large states such as the Untied States and Indonesia have doubled their area. By acquiring such vast new territories, coastal states are inevitably concerned to see what resources lie there and how they can be exploited. For many, such resources offer a vital means of boosting their national economy, ensuring supplies of strategic minerals or improving their fisheries.

The success of the United States survey with the Gloria technique led to inquiries from many other countries about surveys of their EEZs using the same technique. The institute established an agreement with Marconi Underwater Systems Limited by which it transfers the technology. Early next year, the British oceanographic vessel Charles Darwin, which is owned and operated by the NERC, will carry out Gloria surveys in Indonesian waters for one month. Other engineering initiatives include Tobi, the towed sonar vehicle, PUPPI, the pop-up pori pressuré instrument, DOBS, the digital ocean bottom seismograph, and Fido, the deep ocean particle sampler and counter. The institute is splendid not only at developing these new initiatives—it also finds splendid names for them.

There are vast economic returns to be gained from exploring and exploiting the world's sub-sea resources. In January 1986, the Department of Trade and Industry launched a resources from the sea programe. It has been estimated that vast potential markets worth more than £160 billion are available to United Kingdom firms which explore and exploit the world's sub-sea resources. It is important that British industry seizes the enormous commercial opportunities available from developing advanced marine systems and equipment for exploration and exploitation of the oceans.

If the United Kingdom could capture between 5 and 10 per cent. of the world market, it would be a significant wealth and job-creating sector, possibly up to the present size of the British motor vehicle and component industry.

Another area where previously fundamental work has shown a strong commercial application is wave research. Wave data collected during the past 25 years have been invaluable for the construction of offshore structures. Engineers who design oil platforms must be sure that their creations will survive the worst waves. Forecasts for 50 years in advance are needed and estimates have to be extremely reliable. An under-estimation of the highest wave results in damage—whereas an over-estimation of merely 1 m can add more than £1 million to the cost of the platform. As with Gloria, research which was initially regarded as non-commercial has proved extremely beneficial and productive in the private sector.

Among other important projects for the future are those on climatology, which could have a powerful

[Mrs. Virginia Bottomley]

influence on the spread of famine in Third-world countries, the study of pollutants and the implications of dumping waste at sea and the effects on the oceans of burning fossil fuels. All those subjects have long-term social and environmental effects on civilisation as we know it.

These have been difficult times for the institute, as available financial resources have been constrained and staff numbers are falling. The cruise programme, for example, had to be seriously constrained. As the NERC has faced reduced funding, resources have been transferred to the universities and polytechnics. The NERC and the marine science and technology directorate have made every effort to restructure their organisations.

Establishments have been encouraged to seek compensatory income from commissioned work. Financial constraints have been faced by the IOS as a result of a major decline in income from commissioned research. Rising scientific costs associated with the growing sophistication of science mean that the budget is unable to pay for what it used to buy. We must also consider the implications of the new pay structure negotiated by the unions with the Treasury, which has resulted in significant and, for them, welcome pay increases for scientific grades, which are well above the current level of inflation. My hon. Friend the Minister will be well aware of the distinction between level funding and level value, as he drew attention to it clearly in 1985 in a debate on Government policy for science.

There is concern at the institute that long-term planning is deeply influenced by its inevitable dependence on Government and NERC grants. Increasingly it tends to be limited to essential research for commercial projects. Recruitment constraints have caused difficulty in the pursuit of some commercial contracts and the number of overall projects being turned down because of financial problems is on the increase.

The institute has made every effort to restructure and to streamline the facility as much as possible. However, I have had representations from constituents who are deeply worried about the future. The eminent director of the institute, Sir Anthony Laughton, recently said:

"Our ability to pursue long-term goals has been deeply compromised. It is hard to see how the achievements of the past can be repeated. All of which creates tremendous difficulties in motivating and retaining our highly skilled scientists."

My hon. Friend will appreciate that, as I am in regular contact with many constituents who work at this distinguished institute, I wish to take this opportunity to pass on their anxieties.

Another particular matter which has frequently been raised with me is the concern that oceanography will be too easily linked with astronomy and nuclear physics. In a recent letter, a group of constituents who work at the institute stated:

"Nuclear physics and astronomy are both regarded as areas of 'big' science whose level of funding is at least three times that of oceanography and furthermore neither of them has as great a commercial and practical impact on the nation's economic well being as oceanography. The implication of the report seems to be that government spending should be cut in each of these three areas; we at IOSDL view this possibility with grave disquiet."

I can do no more than take this opportunity to highlight the excellence of the work undertaken at the institute and my pride at representing this dedicated and talented group of individuals. I want to pass on to my hon. Friend the real commitment that has been shown by all the members of the staff to reorganise and streamline and to work with the private sector. Inevitably, at a time of turbulence and change there are effects on morale. There is an anxiety that the force of recent strictures on science will lead to too short-term a view of science funding. I am passing on the view of my constituents that long-term science must be given the priority that it needs.

Finally, I can do no better than quote my hon. Friend's conclusion in his debate two and a half years ago. Having rightly pointed out the concern about the balance of our national investment in defence rather than in civil science, he said:

"I urge the Government to think again about their policy for science. The central theme of much of their thinking, quite rightly, is to seek to improve the translation of scientific ideas into profitable business. I do not seek to criticise this emphasis, but I do not believe that it makes resources irrelevant—whether the total quantum of resources or the pattern of its distribution."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 1170.]

1·48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on raising this important subject. She made an excellent speech and gave such a good survey of the subject that I scarcely need to speak.

Oceanography is vital for any nation with a coastline, particularly for Britain with its long history of maritime activity. The debate is timely because this week two important events should ensure that British oceanography and the wider topic of marine science has a strong and vibrant future. On Monday 14 December the Natural Environment Research Council published its new strategy for marine sciences, and earlier today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the terms of reference and the membership of the co-ordinating committee for marine science and technology which is to be chaired by Sir John Mason.

The National Environment Research Council document, "The Challenge — NERC Strategy for Marine Science" shows clearly how Britain is benefiting from the results of marine research and development in past years. It emphasises Britain's dependence on knowledge about the sea for her defence and her economic and social well-being. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West drew attention to a number of those developments. She mentioned Gloria, the splendidly named long-range sonar device for mapping the ocean floor, which can map an area the size of Wales in a single day. As my hon. Friend said, it has obtained an important contract from the United States to map the United States exclusive economic zone.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the importance of wave and current research for North sea oil platforms. It has been estimated that such research has saved about £1 billion in the development of North sea oil, whereas the cost of wave research has been only about £500,000. That demonstrates the tremendous leverage that such research can produce.

My hon. Friend did not mention flood prediction and its importance in the construction of the Thames barrier, so vital for the protection of people in London. There has

also been progress in understanding climate and the way in which the ocean absorbs carbon dioxide, thus helping to balance the so-called greenhouse effect. Britain has also played a key role in analysing the cycle through which nature moves in terms of its influence on the climate, through the NERC ocean flux study led from the Plymouth marine laboratory. The Government are well aware of that progress and consider that Britain is well served by the marine research community, and look forward to its substantial contributions continuing.

The NERC strategy is designed to maintain British marine science and technology alongside the rest of the world leaders by undertaking a balanced programme of basic and strategic research. I give my hon. Friend that assurance. That research will be undertaken at universities and polytechnics and at the council's own laboratories, including the Institute of Oceanographic Sciences Deacon laboratory in my hon. Friend's constituency — she referred to the dedication and commitment of the staff there.

The core of the NERC research programme comprises five major projects, which address subjects that offer great promise of yielding substantial benefit in the late 1990s and in the early years of the next century. Those five projects are the North sea project, the biogeochemical ocean flux study, the fine resolution Antarctic model, the unmanned autonomous submersibles development and the world ocean circulation experiment. I look forward to seeing the acronyms that spring from those projects. A common theme of those five projects is the need to predict the movements of the oceans, as they affect such matters as wind, waves, tides — for ports — storm surges for protection against flooding, and mineral resources under the sea.

A major factor in selecting those five core projects is the continuing exponential growth in computing power, which increases by a factor of 10 every five years and offers a prospect of novel forms of ocean prediction by the end of the century, touching such things as water quality in coastal waters and large-scale currents and life in the sea, some of which control climatic change. The five projects on which the council decided to focus its strategy address problems that have to be solved before operational forecasting systems can be designed to achieve potential benefits. In future, NERC will devote a large fraction of its resources to the five core projects identified in its strategy.

In addition to the core projects, the NERC strategy includes a broad programme of additional strategic research to be carried out at the NERC laboratories. Those will be carried out as science budget funds, and commissioned work from various Government Departments, permit. To achieve its research strategy, NERC maintains a wide panoply of facilities including four major marine laboratories, two of which are devoted to oceanography — one is the institute in my hon. Friend's constituency. It maintains a fleet of research ships and a national pool of equipment for use at sea providing data, remote sensing and computing services.

My hon. Friend referred to resources, which are of central importance. I agreed with her analysis. She quoted back at me some words of mine in an earlier debate. It is plain that we must maintain a basic and strategic research capability. It is also plain that, to maintain our position, public funds must be invested in long-term, basic and strategic research. On the other hand, we must recognise that opportunities for high quality research have also grown since 1979. I have shown the way in which that has happened. They have been growing at a much greater rate than the funds that are available. The more science we have, the more science we can do, and the more it will cost.

However, there is a limit to what can be afforded and the research councils must consider their priorities within the totals made available. It is essential for high priority work to be funded at a satisfactory level. That is crucial. It cannot be achieved if we adopt a policy of simply spreading the available resources, whatever they may be, over too many projects. We must realise that Britain is not the only country that is undertaking research in this and other areas, so our plans must also take into account work that is being done elsewhere. In suitable cases, we must work for collaboration or co-ordination on an international basis as the best way to proceed. It seems to me that the NERC strategy for marine science, which it has adopted as an independent research council, is an excellent example of all those points. It is a consideration of priorities that take into account national needs and work that is being carried out elsewhere. The council should be congratulated on those most important recent initiatives.

So far, I have been talking about the work of the NERC, but the Science and Engineering Research Council —which has the equally unattractive acronym of SERC —is also involved in the technology of exploiting the oceans' resources. Some years ago it set up a marine science and technology directorate to focus its activities on this area. The directorate has now transferred to the private sector, although SERC still provides support for academic research grants. Other Government Departments have specific interests in research in that area, too, some commissioning work from NERC on the basis of their judgment of their needs. My hon. Friend referred to some of the implications of that for the Deacon institute. I noted what she said with sympathy. I take on board the points that she made about that commissioned research.

With that diversity of interests at stake in oceanography, it is important to have a national strategy to achieve the right balance between basic and applied research. My hon. Friend's speech addressed that theme. The key to that is the co-ordinating committee for marine science and technology, the membership of which was announced earlier today. It will report to the Government through the Secretary of State for Education and Science and will be supported by a secretariat within NERC.

That is only a part of the Government's overall strategy for scientific research and development. It includes obtaining and disseminating accurate information through the annual review of Government-funded R and D and, very importantly, the new co-ordinating arrangements announced by the Government in July this year, of which an important component is the establishment of the Advisory Committee for Science and Technology — another acronym, ACOST. In the past Britain's national research and development effort has perhaps been too much dispersed, a little too fragmented. Now at last machinery is in place which we hope can achieve better coherence and co-ordination.

Returning to oceanography, I am confident that Britain can continue to rely on the basic and strategic research community in that area to provide the necessary underpinning of the country's requirements right into the next decade. My hon. Friend deserves our appreciation for

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

raising this important matter on the Floor of the House. I think we can join in wishing the research community well, especially her constituents at the Deacon laboratory.

Coal Board Housing

1.58 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Hon. Members will be aware of the concerns that I have raised about British Coal housing in recent times. The debate gives me a chance to pay tribute to hon. Members on both sides of the House, particularly my hon. Friends the Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), and on the Conservative Benches I see the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who I hope will be able to contribute to the debate.

I should like to outline a little of the background to this subject. Since the 1970s British Coal has dispensed with over 68,000 of its 80,000 houses in the coalfield communities. Most of those houses have been sold to the tenants, local authorities and housing associations. However, some have been sold to what can only be described as bad housing directorates, property and land speculators. That has caused terrible turmoil for the tenants living in those houses. Almost a year ago to the day, auctions took place in the Connaught and Hilton hotels in London, where whole communities were auctioned off and houses sold without the knowledge of the tenants. Indeed, some properties went to Spanish and Greek purchasers, and that cannot be satisfactory.

Some of the sadness is revealed in the fact that more than 90 per cent. of the tenants remaining in those houses are over retirement age. Indeed, 90 per cent. are over retirement age in the county that I represent. A recent document published by the Nottinghamshire Federation of Coal Tenants describes in detail some cases in my area which highlight the plight of the tenants as a result of the privatisation of their properties. I commend that document to the Minister.

Some of the tenants involved include Mr. Bob Stoddard, who left the industry in 1977. He was a miner for 30 years and had to leave the industry on health grounds. May and Ted Gelsthorpe are in their 80s and have lived in their Coal Board house for more than 56 years. Mr. Stan Bruce, who is 83, has lived in his present home for 64 years. Mary Penfold is in her late 60s and has lived in her home since 1926. Arthur Wilton is in his 80s and was a miner for 52 years. None of those people want a mortgage or to buy their own homes, even if they could find a mortgage broker who would raise or offer them money. They do not want the insecurity in old age that that would offer.

It is a sad fact that British Coal has dispensed with its responsibilities to the tenants in my constituency in Nottinghamshire. Some 11,500 houses have been sold in the past few years, with the remaining 2,000 or so ready to be sold to another company. My concern in raising the matter today is that a deal is under way between British Coal and an organisation called the Lancaster housing association. That is a fine sounding name. However, I want to explain in this short debate today that the name of that organisation does not exactly match the amount of responsibility that the association will have to accept for those elderly tenants in the near future.

I have examined some of the documents relating to that association, and I commend them to the Minister. The last registered accounts for the organisation were registered with the Registrar of Friendly Societies as long ago as

1982. The association's board members have no expertise in housing management. The board of directors includes a retired stockbroker as chairman, a baker and a catering manager. One wonders whether it also includes a candlestick maker and a butcher.

The association is so small that it is currently based on someone's home. At present it manages only 27 properties. I spoke to the director, and he admitted openly that it is a very small association. It is not an association that one would at first glance consider suitable to take on 1,860 houses occupied by elderly tenants. It does not employ any staff. It relies completely on volunteers. That may be all very well in respect of 27 units, but it is not satisfactory for nearly 2,000. Nor is the association registered with the Housing Corporation which is the national body that lays down the regulations and guidelines to monitor organisations to ensure that standards are adhered to.

As I pointed out, I have already spoken to Mr. Henshaw, who admitted that it is a very small outfit. He also admitted that the main source of repayment of the £9 million-plus offered for the properties is the sale with vacant possession of the properties. I can well imagine that Mr. Henshaw, with his stockbroking abilities, has the expertise to gain the best possible price for the properties and thereby pay back the money, but it is an enormous sum, and an enormous number of properties will have to be taken off the rented market for that to be achieved.

Mr. Henshaw also admits that he has, to a large extent, been used as a pawn by British Coal against the consortium of housing associations that have established themselves, according to the proper standards and guidelines, to look after the tenants. Worse still, British Coal has negotiated a very good deal for itself, in two respects. First, it has managed to persuade the friendly society to take on board all the employees of British Coal currently looking after the properties, which means that it will have no problems over redundancies and so forth. Secondly—this is of serious concern to me, and to other hon. Members in the area—it has added a clause to the contract of sale, stating that it will not be under any obligation to repair any subsidence damage that has occurred prior to the date of sale.

I have a Bill down for debate on 12 February about subsidence damage, which is prevalent in Nottinghamshire — especially in north Nottinghamshire. In my constituency a school and a hospital have closed, and thousands of houses have been damaged, because of subsidence. It is inconceivable that serious subsidence damage will not have occurred in any of 1,860 homes. British Coal has not been honest with its broker or with the organisation. Moreover, the deal will seriously harm the future security of the elderly tenants. Given the large amount of money involved in repayment, they will be unlikely to obtain the expensive repairs necessitated by subsidence damage.

That is not the only respect in which British Coal has not been entirely honest in its dealings. The consortium of housing associations is made up of a good many organisations, including the East Midlands housing association, the Northern Counties housing association, the Leicester housing association, the Nottinghamshire community housing association and others. They have the backing of all the local authorities, and, indeed, of the Nottinghamshire Federation of Coal Board Tenants, which has been striving for security for the tenants. The consortium has repeatedly been refused permission by British Coal to become deeply and sincerely involved in finding a financial solution. I have a letter that makes it plain that it was willing to negotiate upwards its offer of £7 million. I should like the Minister to look at that.

Finally, let me put to the Minister some questions to which I should like detailed replies. Will the Minister give an assurance that British Coal will sell houses only to organisations and associations which have the financial strength and reserves to meet fully any future contingencies, and which can fulfil their obligations and responsibilities as a landlord? It should be borne in mind that, in the Nottinghamshire area, over 2,000 properties are involved. Will he also give an assurance that any new landlord would manage and maintain the properties in accordance with the standards laid down by the National Federation of Housing Associations for housing management in a document published this year?

Will the Minister instruct British Coal to resume its negotiations with the consortium of housing associations, which is prepared to negotiate at a higher figure than has already been suggested? Will the Minister intervene in the current negotiations between British Coal and the Lancaster housing association? The aim of that would be to investigate and establish whether the Lancaster housing association, which currently manages only 27 houses, has the capacity and the resources to fulfil its landlord obligations and responsibilities to the 1,400 tenants whose homes are subject to the first part of the bid that I have mentioned. Does the Minister agree that it would be an advantage to sell the remaining British Coal houses to local landlords with proven track records, rather than to remote organisations which are not familiar with the area or the people?

Will the Minister instruct British Coal to reduce the asking price of the 1,830 properties from its current £9·5 million to a sum within the reach of the consortium that will allow it to go ahead and purchase the properties, thus bringing peace of mind and security to the thousands of British Coal tenants within the Nottinghamshire area? Alternatively, will he make representations to his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to provide direct financial assistance to the consortium so that it can purchase the properties?

Will the Minister make representations to the Minister for Housing and Planning for money to be made available to local authorities to enable them to reinstate the properties which are subject to the Housing Defects Act 1984 and which have been purchased after the cut-off date? That should include properties purchased by local authorities and sitting tenants. Will the Minister ensure that he investigates the contract clause inserted by British Coal, which I mentioned earlier, which denies any responsibility for subsidence damage that may occur in any of the properties concerned?

This is a serious subject, and I have already said that I hope that the hon. Member for Sherwood will participate briefly. I also see in the Chamber my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford, who I know has serious concerns in this matter. I hope that he can also participate.

Over 3,500 elderly ex-miners or miners' widows live in those properties in Nottinghamshire. They do not want or need a mortgage. They need security in their old age. They need to be looked after. It is the responsibility of British Coal to look after them. Those people were promised that during the time they worked and slaved in the industry.

[Mr. Alan Meale]

Now British Coal is seeking to get rid of its responsibility and cast them aside. I ask the Minister to talk seriously to British Coal in order to provide a solution that will offer security to those people in their old age. The Minister should offer them a future and reopen the negotiations with the consortium.

2.12 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I thank the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) for allowing me the time to speak in his Adjournment debate. We may be poles apart in our political philosophy but we are united today behind the Nottinghamshire Federation of Coal Tenants. The hon. Member for Mansfield has outlined, in a short time, what has happened. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if the debate ran for three hours there would still be hon. Members queuing up to tell the House about the difficulties and tragedies that have befallen the tenants of British Coal.

It is supposed to be the season of good will to all. However, British Coal's housing policy makes Scrooge look like a philanthropist. Tonight I am the guest at a pensioners' Christmas party. They are constituents who have given their lives to the coal industry. What sort of a party will it be when they hear that British Coal is preparing to sell their homes to a rooky housing association from London, whose credentials are very suspect?

Let me ask the Minister; how can the Lancaster housing association, with only 27 houses, have the expertise to manage 1,800 homes 150 miles away in Nottinghamshire? How can it afford £9·4 million, when the experts say that the offering price of a socially acceptable landlord would be £6·5 million? The only way that it can make it pay is by asset-stripping. We have not experienced this sort of problem in Nottinghamshire before and, having read the book, "Pits and Mortar", we are more determined than ever not to allow it.

The past chairman of British Coal, Sir Ian MacGregor, had his critics, but his word was his bond. I am sorry to say that that is no longer the case at Hobart house. North Nottinghamshire Members of Parliament were given a promise that they would be consulted before any deal was done, yet to date no invitation has arrived on our desks. However, we have been informed that an agreement has been reached.

I ask the Minister to use what powers he has to postpone this proposed deal and to allow the housing consortium, which has the blessing of the Housing Corporation — in other words, this Government — and the local district councils, with whom they have worked for many years, to resume negotiations. Both organisations are prepared to give a grant of £1 million to bring this about.

As a result of British Coal's dismissive attitude towards the housing consortium personnel, Roy Lynk, the president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, is prepared to take the chair if and when negotiations start. I want to hear a statement from the Minister that will enable the elderly people who have given their working lives to the coal industry to have a happy Christmas and a worry-free future. The way that British Coal has treated my constituents and their Members of Parliament is nothing short of a disgrace. In the light of this experience I should like to send a message to Mr. John Walsh, who wishes to become the next president of the NUM: do not bother; British Coal deserves Scargill.

2.17 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) for allowing me the opportunity to express my concern, as I have on previous occasions, about this matter.

The nothing short of callous attitude of British Coal over the sale of these houses should be highlighted and the Minister should take action.

In Castleford travel-to-work area and the Wakefield metropolitan district, houses have been sold off to new owners in London, 200 miles away, of whom the tenants are not aware. Within days, ownership was transferred.

In the Townville estate in Castleford, an ex-miner, who has no possibility of purchasing his property, after a lifetime in the industry, has been cast aside and left at the mercy of those landlords. The landlords have not bothered to repair the houses but, rather kindly, they have provided a few tools and a bit of material and told the tenants on the estate to get cracking.

There is a serious problem in this matter with regard to the Housing Defects Act 1984. On that same housing estate, the Wates-type houses are defective. Some 70 ex-miners bought houses on that estate, which consists of 400 properties. Now, because the houses are defective, they are not an attractive proposition on the market and because the new tenants of the rest of the houses are neglecting those houses — many of which are now empty and boarded up — the properties that the ex-miners purchased are worthless. The council cannot act in accordance with the 1984 Act because the value of the properties is far less than the amount it would take to repair them.

In Wakefield metropolitan district area, there are 800 British Coal houses left to sell. Will the Minister have discussions with his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to enable the local authorities to use some of their assets, gained through the sale of council houses, to purchase those properties rather than allow them to be purchased by racketeer landlords? As a result of those discussions, will some assistance be offered to the housing associations that are interested in those houses?

The current tenants are retired miners — many of them elderly—who, when they retired, did not enjoy the attractive redundancy payments that have been enjoyed by miners for the past two or three years. They are in a hopeless situation and are living more or less in squalor. British Coal and the Government have an obligation to those people. I hope that the Minister will do all in his power to persuade the Minister for Housing and Planning to assist local authorities such as Wakefield to purchase the remaining British Coal houses.

British Coal gave itself a three-year period in which to dispose of its housing stock. It has 10 months left and it is hell-bent on getting shot of those houses and selling them to whoever it can. In some areas it appears that some people are moving in to buy those properties in the hope of making conditions so difficult for the tenants that they will move out as quickly as they can. Therefore, the buyer has got prime building land and, despite the value of the properties, has not paid the true price for that land.

2.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I begin by paying tribute not only to the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) who raised this matter, and to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), but to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) who has also spoken today. The House will be aware that my hon. Friend has, for many weeks, worked tirelessly to ensure that there is a satisfactory outcome of this matter for his constituents. In answer to the hon. Member for Mansfield—given the shortage of time available to me, my answer must necessarily be brief—I have to say straight away that the sale of British Coal houses is a matter for both the ethical and commercial judgment of British Coal.

For some weeks my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood and Labour Members have made me aware of their understandable concern to secure the future well-being of those who are presently British Coal's tenants. This short debate has served to underline their concern.

I have spoken to Sir Kenneth Couzens, deputy chairman of British Coal, to ensure that the concerns of parliamentary colleagues are known to him. He has given me his assurance that the British Coal Corporation is making every effort to ensure that in this case, as with the disposal of all its properties, the sale is made to a responsible landlord.

Furthermore, Sir Kenneth Couzens has written to a number of hon. Members with interests in Nottinghamshire in the following terms:

"the Lancaster Housing Association, which is a registered charity and member of the national federation of housing associations, has now agreed to buy 1,821 Nottinghamshire houses at prices reflecting current market values. They have told our Area Office that they intend to establish a local office to manage these properties and will continue to offer houses to sitting tenants, with the possibility of 100 per cent. mortgages. They have also said they would welcome meetings with the tenants' associations and discussions on how to deal with repairs and general management."

As the hon. Member for Mansfield said, British Coal has sold 76,000 of its houses since 1976, which represent about 85 per cent. of its original total stock. Seventy per cent. of them have been bought at half the market value by sitting tenants and, to answer the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford, 20 per cent. have been bought by local authorities.

I understand that the organisation to which British Coal intends to sell the 1,800 houses which are the subject of today's debate has satisfied British Coal as to its financial support. That organisation has been registered as a charity for 20 years. It is listed with the Registrar of Friendly Societies, to whom it is obliged to submit annual reports and accounts, and it is a long-standing member of the Federation of Housing Associations. The hon. Member for Mansfield commented on the way in which the accounts had been registered. The Registrar of Friendly Societies has confirmed that the association has regularly returned its accounts, which are up to date.

The hon. Members who have raised this matter are wholly within their rights to do so, but they too must concede that British Coal has a public duty—it is the recipient of large sums of public money—to achieve at least a fair market price for its houses. An independent valuation carried out in the past few weeks by a firm of local surveyors estimated the value of the houses in question at slightly more than the sum that British Coal seemed likely to achieve. Every opportunity has been given to the alternative bidder to increase his offer, and he chose not to do so.

Mr. Andy Stewart: If I may refresh the Minister's memory, the negotiations were to take place, and the person speaking for British Coal said, "Unless you put on £9·5 million, you are wasting your time." So the consortium had to leave, because it did not have £9·5 million. The letter saying that British Coal would negotiate if asked is on record.

Mr. Spicer: There have been many allegations about who wants to offer how much and who does not. However, this is a negotiation entered into freely between British Coal and various people who have made various offers. All I can tell my hon. Friend is that no revised offer above the original £7·3 million made by the alternative bidder has been received by British Coal.

Mr. Stewart: I went a fortnight ago to British Coal and asked if it would see the housing consortium yet again. I was told, "No, Sir, we do not want to see it ever again."

Mr. Spicer: My hon. Friend has put that statement on record, but negotiations require one side to come forward with an alternative offer. I must repeat to my hon. Friend that offers made to him are not offers made to British Coal. I have received a categorical assurance that no revised offer above the £7·3 million has been received by British Coal. This is a free country, and it would be perfectly open to organisations to make such an offer, but I repeat, for the third time, that no such offer has been received.

Mr. Meale: I beg to differ from the Minister. Once again, he is being misled by British Coal. There seems to be a problem between British Coal in Nottinghamshire and the Housing Corporation. I have a letter, dated 7 December, which states that British Coal is prepared to continue negotiations with the consortium after 4 December. I shall pass on that letter to the Minister. There is a problem. The consortium is willing to bid, and I beg the Minister at least to stall the sale until we can get back on stream.

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman has made his point. Others have heard other allegations and suggestions that have been made about offers that might be floating around. In a negotiation procedure that has gone on for many months, it is up to someone who wishes to bid up on an offer to come forward, and not to run around to the hon. Member for Mansfield or to my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood saying that he might or might not be coming forward.

It is a straightforward matter: in a negotiation, one puts forward another offer, if one wishes to. No alternative offer has been made. In these circumstances, British Coal is clear that it is right to settle for the higher offer. When the transaction has taken place, tenants will continue to be fully protected under the landlord and tenant and fair rent legislation.

It was absolutely appropriate for hon. Members to raise the matter and I hope that, in the short time that was available to me, I have answered their points satisfactorily.

It being half past Two o'clock, the Motion on the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Cystic Fibrosis Sufferers

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Neubert.*]

2.30 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): In 1968, the Labour Government reintroduced prescription charges, but undertook to exempt as many of the chronically sick as could be readily identified. With the co-operation of the medical profession, a list of exempted illnesses was drawn up. The rules laid down were that such illnesses should be a permanent condition, and be clearly identifiable and require continual medication, in most cases by replacement therapy. There was, of course, exemption for children up to the age of 16 and for pensioners over 65.

There can be little doubt that had cystic fibrosis been considered in 1968 it would have been placed on the list of exempted illnesses. It was not considered, for the simple reason that in 1968 very few children with cystic fibrosis lived past the age of 16—that was the tragedy. Since then, the miracles of modern science have ensured that most cystic fibrosis sufferers, if diagnosed early, live well past the age of 16 and, it is hoped, live life with normal expectancy.

It is therefore in fairness to and concern for those afflicted that I raise the subject today. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to ensure that a Conservative Government, who have shown more practical concern for the sick in our society than any Government in this nation's history, should soften their hitherto hard heart on this issue and add cystic fibrosis to the list of prescription-exempted illnesses. In that way, sufferers between the ages of 16 and 65 will be relieved of the additional problems of having to find the money to pay for their prescriptions.

This is the third time that I have raised this matter in Adjournment debates—I did so first in 1979 and again in 1985. The last time that I raised the matter I declared a general interest as an unofficial, unpaid parliamentary adviser to the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, which position I believe I still enjoy. I also declared a personal financial interest because I have a daughter—now aged 19½, but 16 in 1985—who sadly suffers from cystic fibrosis. As she was and is a student, I would have benefited in the foreseeable future from the addition of cystic fibrosis to the list of exemptions. Unhappily, my daughter has since contracted diabetes—as almost 12 per cent. of cystic fibrosis sufferers do—and she is therefore eligible for free prescription charges because of that affliction. I now no longer have a personal financial interest to declare in accordance with the rules of the House.

Cystic fibrosis is a condition in which mucous glands secrete abnormal amounts of mucous. Two areas of the body are affected. The first is the digestive system, because the mucous clogs and restricts the flow of digestive enzymes and the pancreas does not function properly or does not function at all. Proteins and fats are not properly digested and the child does not flourish. The necessary treatment for that malfunction is an expensive, high-protein diet and a large quantity, in capsule and concentrated form, of powdered pigs' pancreas with every meal. My daughter used to take up to 10 capsules with each meal. They do the work that the human pancreas is unable to do.

The second area is the lungs. Abnormally thick mucous builds up in the bronchial tubes and seals in bacteria and viral infection, which if not cleared causes progressive deterioration leading to lung failure and often, alas, to death.

Treatment requires physiotherapy for about 20 minutes at least twice a day. Indeed, in some cases as long as 12 hours a day must be spent in physiotherapy. Intensive courses are necessary to clear the lungs of such children during school holidays to get them fit again for the start of the school term. In addition, the illness requires sufferers to take antibiotics, to use decoagulating atomisers and sometimes to sleep in mist tents at night.

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic illness that children inherit from their parents, who usually do not have the faintest idea that they are carriers of the gene and that they have a one in four chance of producing cystic fibrosis in their children. One in 20 of the population carry the defective gene and there is a one in 625 chance of carriers marrying. There are thought to be 5,600 sufferers today in the United Kingdom. That number increases at the rate of between 200 and 300 per year. There are 2,400 sufferers over the age of 16, and it is they who are covered by this debate.

When my daughter was born, cystic fibrosis usually killed children in the first year of their lives. Now, as a result of the wonderful work done by doctors, scientists, nurses and parents, most cystic fibrosis children reach adulthood in reasonably good health. Therefore, there is even more need for the medication to be made available on prescription than when I last asked the Government to do so two and a half years ago.

I should like to pay tribute to the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, which is the organisation representing sufferers of cystic fibrosis and their parents. That charity, which celebrates its silver jubilee in 1989, is adorned by the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra, the Hon. Mrs. Angus Ogilvy, and is dedicated to raising money to fund medical and scientific research projects into the causes, treatment and, hopefully, the cure of cystic fibrosis. There are currently about 45 projects in hospitals and universities all over the country.

The trust provides education, comfort and morale-boosting support to those whose suffering may, in some cases, be even greater than that of their cystic fibrosis children—the parents. With the trust's help, we are now close to discovering the faulty gene, which is why a cure may soon be possible. That was unthought of when I addressed the House on earlier occasions. The Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust is an outstanding example of how excellent work can be done to relieve disability without state aid.

The burden of care and responsibility falling upon parents, who sometimes have more than one cystic fibrosis child, to keep their children alive and enable them to enjoy as near normality in their lives as possible, is great. To relieve such parents and their children as they grow into adulthood of the additional worry of having to meet the relentless cost of prescription charges, even with the considerable help of the season ticket formula, which has been reduced to the present £35 per year, must be a highly desirable aim, which I am sure will claim the support of all hon. Members.

What would that cost? The Association of Cystic Fibrosis Adults estimates that about 800 adults pay prescription charges, at a total cost of about £51,000 a year. Therefore, the amount involved is peanuts and would

be unlikely to cause the Chancellor one sleepless night. There can be positively no objection to the relief of that prescription charge on the grounds of cost.

Why, then, have the Government been so reluctant to help at least until now? When my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) was Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security he gave some insight into the problem when he responded to my debate in October 1979.

He explained that the medical profession had to agree any decision. He said:

"Speaking as a layman I have a great deal of sympathy with the call to add cystic fibrosis to the list, and I would hope that the medical profession, if it were asked, would agree that it seems to satisfy the normal criteria for inclusion . . .

What I have had to ponder over is whether I should ask the doctors to add cystic fibrosis to the list and I have seriously considered doing so, as I personally think that if as many CF patients had survived to adulthood when the list was originally drawn up, that condition might well have been included."

My hon. Friend went on to explain why he would not immediately take the step for which I was asking. He said:

"If one advanced the boundary a little further to include cystic fibrosis, one would also in justice have to conduct a more general review of the whole scheme, and probably put in those who have phenylketonuria or coeliac disease. Therefore, one has to take a slightly broader view of the exemptions than my hon. Friend would like . . . If I seek to add this condition to the list, can I really defend not going further? Should not I consider whether the list of exempt conditions is the best way of helping the chronic sick, and is it right to go on trying to improve the list as my hon. Friend would wish in a rather piecemeal way, instead of seeking an alternative, within the resource constraints imposed by our present financial circumstances, to help more of the chronic sick?"

I agree. If we can help everybody, there is no point in worrying about helping a few.

My hon. Friend said:

"If I have decided to make no approach to the representatives of the medical profession at present it is because I feel that we must first see whether it is possible to work out some fairer way within our present financial constraints to help all the chronic sick with the costs of drugs they need than this present method of listing specified medical conditions."

But, said my hon. Friend—here a glimmer of light was offered to me—

"If we conclude that there is no better way than the present, I will return again to the request of my hon. Friend that we should consider, with the representatives of the medical profession, whether the list is fully up to date and whether there is a case for adding cystic fibrosis to it and perhaps some other similar conditions."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1979; Vol. 972, c.688-91.]

I went away happy, or as happy as it was reasonably possible to be in the circumstances. If the Government could not see their way clear to helping everyone, they would look again to see whether cystic fibrosis sufferers at least could be further helped. Nothing happened. Did the Department conclude that there was "no better way than the present"? Did the Department return to consider cystic fibrosis? Did the representatives of the medical profession say no?

I raised the matter again on 24 May 1985 on the Adjournment. This time my hon. Friend and adversary was the new Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten). He was most sympathetic, and said:

"We all want to do what we can to help, but the case for free prescriptions for that group of people must be seen, I am afraid, within the wider context of the whole range of services provided by the NHS, the resources available, and the resources that exist to improve those services. I am well on the way to accepting my hon. and learned Friend's point that cystic fibrosis deserves very strong consideration. Alas, however, I am not at all convinced of the argument that it could be considered in isolation."

Yes, we had been over that ground. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton had told us that he would find out whether everyone could be helped and, if not, would look again at the case for cystic fibrosis sufferers.

Had that happened? Apparently not. My hon. Friend the new Under-Secretary of State explained that the list was kept under review and added:

"it was last discussed with representatives of the medical profession as long ago as 1976, when cystic fibrosis was one of the conditions considered. But the General Medical Services Committee, representing the medical profession, did not at that stage come to an agreement over the addition of any conditions to the list."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1985; Vol. 79, c. 1328-29.]

That was 1976—nothing had happened after my debate in October 1979. I had wasted my breath, and so had my hon. Friend the Minister.

I asked for the matter to be reconsidered, and I was told by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon of the answer given by the Secretary of State on 11 March 1985, stating that the case for cystic fibrosis exemption would be looked at again, that the re-examination was taking place in the Department at that very time and that it was hoped that it would be completed before the end of the year. Was it? With what result?

Presumably, the answer was, "No, we cannot help everyone with a permanent illness because it would be too costly." Incidentally, how much would it cost? Presumably the answer was, "No, we cannot give special exemption to cystic fibrosis sufferers because that would be unfair to others." By now, the case for exempting cystic fibrosis sufferers must be as well known as it is undoubtedly compelling.

I shall briefly restate the case. Cystic fibrosis would have been on the exemption list if it had been considered in 1968. Ministers have agreed to that. Cystic fibrosis meets all the criteria for exemption. Ministers have agreed to that. The amount of money that it would cost the Government to extend the list to cover cystic fibrosis would be negligible. Ministers have agreed to that. There is no rule which states that smaller groups cannot be helped until the entire larger group can be helped, but the list of cases where the Government have helped to the extent that they are able is getting quite long.

We have exempted, for example, some old-age pensioners from having to pay the television licence fee if they live in warden-controlled accommodation. We have added to the list of drugs that doctors can prescribe on the NHS as the case for their inclusion has become more compelling. I could go on.

The case for adding cystic fibrosis to the list of exemptions gets stronger every year as the splendid doctors and researchers who, with the help of parents and the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust, care for children with cystic fibrosis, bring them to adulthood and give them the prospect of a longer and normal life. They face the additional burden of a prescription charge which others in like circumstances simply do not have to pay.

As this is the very last debate before Christmas, and as the Minister who is to reply is my Member of Parliament, my friend and my much admired colleague who has done

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

so much to relieve the plight of the sick since she has assumed her present office, I am more confident than ever before that my plea will not fall on deaf ears.

I wish you, Mr. Speaker, my hon. Friend, the servants of this great House of Commons and all my colleagues on both sides of the House a very happy Christmas and a healthier new year.

2.48 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing me to butt into 30 seconds of her time. I should like to say a few words of support for what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has said.

I am fortunate in that I have no personal connection with anyone who suffers from cystic fibrosis although a small number of my constituents do. Apart from that, I have no interest to declare in the matter.

There is an extremely good case for extending the exemption to cystic fibrosis sufferers and I should like to re-emphasise the three main reasons. First, there is a genuine anomaly here, which has been caused since 1968, and purely on medical advance. Secondly, the cost to the Treasury of the Government doing something to alleviate the problem is extremely small—some £51,000 in a year. Thirdly, although it is difficult to make judgments in these matters, I think that there have been some exemptions in various areas of social policy which, if one took a hard look, one could say were less deserving than this in some ways.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton has stated the strong case for exemption being extended to cystic fibrosis sufferers lucidly and eloquently. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing me a few moments and I hope that she will give strong and urgent consideration to the excellent case advanced by my hon. and learned Friend.

2.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): First, I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) on his success in the ballot and welcome the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) for my hon. and learned Friend in this debate.

Today we have an opportunity once again to raise the question of exemption from prescription charges for suffers of cystic fibrosis, as my hon. and learned Friend did in 1979 and 1985. I am following in honoured footsteps as I attempt to answer him, but I doubt whether I have any better news for him than had my predecessors, despite his kind personal remarks, which I appreciate.

My hon. and learned Friend rehearsed well the nature of cystic fibrosis, its causes as far as they are known and the daily difficulties facing any sufferer from the condition and family concerned.

About 250 affected children are born every year. About 70 per cent. survive until the age of 16, about half to the age of 30 and a few are now in their 40s. That leaves us at present with about 3,200 children and 2,400 adults in the United Kingdom. The commonest occurrence now appears in Scotland and the incidence of live births of cystic fibrosis children seems to be decreasing from about four per 10,000 live births in 1977 to 2·9 in 1984, which is the latest figure that I have.

My hon. and learned Friend drew attention to the increasingly successful treatments now available and I join him in paying tribute to the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust. It is a model of its kind, uniting and assisting victims and their families, offering authoritative and well founded information and initiating research of the most productive nature. I understand that there is now an Association of Cystic Fibrosis Adults under its aegis, which was established earlier this year.

Between my hon. and learned Friend, my hon. Friend and me there is no need to rehearse the history of how it comes about that diabetics get free prescriptions, but cystic fibrosis sufferers do not. This is a new Parliament, so it may help other hon. Members if I set out the background of the discussions nearly 20 years ago when the then Labour Government discovered for the second time in their history that they could not manage without prescription charges. Indeed, in all the 40 years of the NHS, scripts have been free only for brief periods, first at the beginning and then in the mid-1960s.

When prescription charges were reintroduced in 1968, a list of specified medical conditions was drawn up as a means of exempting some of the chronically sick. We were told that such a scheme could operate only with the full co-operation of general medical practitioners. Their representatives made it clear that they could agree to exemptions only for readily identifiable medical conditions that called automatically for continuous, lifelong medication and, in most cases, for replacement therapy.

The comment of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) still stands. He said:

> "A doctor would not wish to enter into a debate with a patient about whether his condition was severe or permanent enough to attract exemption. Yet such arguments would be inevitable if ill-defined or complex diseases were added to the list or conditions were added that were so variable in their prognosis or treatment that exemption would not always be justified. The doctor would have to make, and defend, difficult judgments between two patients at different stages of the same disease, and that could put at risk the important relationship between doctor and patient: a relationship where we tread rather delicately and tend to leave as much as possible, quite properly, to the medical profession's ethical views."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1985; Vol. 79, c. 1330.]

On that occasion my hon. Friend reported that a review was under way, which was announced on 11 March 1985, and that review was concluded in 1986. I read the paper submitted to the Minister of State at the time and it took into account the large number of conditions which are no longer killers and which require lifetime medication. I suffer from one of them, asthma, and I shall depend on drug therapy for the rest of my life.

There is also a question of those with short-term terminal illness—the House will recall that the question was raised at the Conservative party conference some little while back — where an extensive range of expensive drugs may be needed, albeit for palliative treatment. As medical science advances the list will undoubtedly grow.

I agree entirely with my hon. and learned Friend that had children with cystic fibrosis been surviving beyond the age of 18 in large numbers 20 years ago, that disease would undoubtedly have been on the list in the first place.

Mr. Lawrence: Do either of the examples that my hon. Friend gave us involve replacement therapy, which is one of the fundamental conditions that is required, and which applies to cystic fibrosis?

Mrs. Currie: If my hon. and learned Friend will listen to the points that I have to make, he may feel that we would no longer rely heavily on some of the points which were made 20 years ago to make our case.

I agree that, had survival been possible, this disease would probably have been on the list, but it was not put on the list. Two reviews since then have both concluded that no revision of the list should be made for cystic fibrosis or anything else. I know how deeply that will disappoint my hon. and learned Friend and his supporters, and I share his feelings, but having looked into the matter with some care, I come to the conclusion that my predecessors were not wrong.

The basis for exemptions for prescriptions is arbitrary and does not reflect current medical thinking. Nor does it parallel exemptions from dental charges, nor the rules for vouchers for spectacles, which are different again. I shall not begin to attempt to defend the rules and exemptions that we have now, but the principle to which we think it is wise to cling is that no one should be denied treatment or drugs on financial grounds. If a person or his family cannot pay, the prescription is free. That applies to all receivers of supplementary benefit or family income settlement, and indeed some others on low incomes. As a result, some three quarters of all prescriptions are issued free. After the social security reforms in April, those "passports" will continue, but we expect around twice as many families to qualify for family credit as for family income supplement than is the case at present. Therefore, the proportion of exempt subscriptions will probably increase.

We go a little further in this country and we encourage those on long-term medication to purchase pre-payment certificates. The charge for them is £35 a year, or 67p a week, or £12·50 for four months, which represents a significant saving for anyone requiring multiple prescriptions. The procedure for obtaining those exemption certificates at the moment is slow and fiddly. The Cheshire family practitioner committee has been telling me about its pioneering scheme for making the certificates available directly at pharmacists' premises. I have asked officials to look into the matter and advise whether we should change regulations for the whole country in that way. It would certainly help patients and be administratively simpler.

Of course, we do not expect people to pay the full cost of their drugs, except those for very mild conditions, which we took off the NHS list two years ago. The state recognises its responsibility in that important way. The flat rate charge of £2·40 covers, on average, only 45 per cent. of the cost of a typical prescription. In 1986, the latest year for which detailed figures are available, 322 million prescription items were dispensed in England, which is 22 million more than in 1980. We expect the figure to rise to 334 million this year. Of those, 246 million—that is, 76 per cent.—are exempt and 15 million—that is, 4·9 per cent.—are covered by pre-payment certificates, so there is almost certainly more scope for pre-payment certificates to be purchased.

It follows that only 60 million out of 322 million, or around 18 per cent., attract the charge at the time of dispensing. In 1968, when charges were reintroduced, only about 42 per cent. were dispensed free of charge. The total cost in 1986-87 of drugs in the Health Service was £1·8 billion, and that included dispensing costs. The charges raised £145 million or 8 per cent. I think that that will help to answer some of the questions that were put to me by my hon. and learned Friend.

My hon. and learned Friend who, as he says, is my constituent, is also a very dear friend. When I first arrived in the House in 1983, he offered me friendship and kindness, for which I shall be eternally grateful. My heart goes out to him and his family as he speaks of his personal experience of cystic fibrosis. Perhaps we are all lucky to be living in this country. My family in America suffered catastrophic financial consequences from the severe diabetes of my aunt whose needs rapidly outran all insurance cover. It took years to pay off all the medical bills.

Most of the other care and treatment that my hon. and learned Friend mentioned — the diagnosis, the physiotherapy, the support of the GP, the consultants, any necessary hospital treatment, and so on — are all provided without assessment or payment in this country. Indeed, over 92 per cent. of the cost of health care for all of us is provided by the state in Britain, and that is the highest proportion in the free world.

Perhaps I can comfort my hon. and learned Friend by saying that we all hope that in the years to come cystic fibrosis will be brought under control, as diabetes, epilepsy and asthma now largely have been, so that sufferers can lead normal lives, take their place as workers and taxpayers and look forward to old age. If the report in *The Times* of 30 November 1987 is anything to go by, I understand that

> "Scientists at Celltech, the British biotechnology company have identified a naturally occurring enzyme which will be the basis of a new drug to help sufferers of the condition."

The enzyme is called human gastric lipase, and if all goes well, the product will be generally available by 1994. However, we are some way off at present.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will permit me to offer him and his family, you, dear Mr. Speaker, and all those here who are still listening, the compliments of the season and a very happy new year.

Mr. Speaker: Before I adjourn the House, I should echo the remarks of the Under-Secretary of State and wish all hon. Members and the staff of the House, who serve us so faithfully and well, a very happy Christmas.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock, till Monday 11 January 1988, pursuant to the Resolution of the House of 8 December.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 7 December 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Emigrant Scheme (Nottinghamshire)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the chairman of social services of Nottinghamshire county council regarding Mrs. Humphries and the child emigrant scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Charities

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many charities in England and Wales registered in 1986 are specifically undertaking medical research projects.

Mr. John Patten: Information available centrally does not make it possible to identify which registered charities are currently undertaking medical research.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many charities in England and Wales are currently undertaking medical research projects.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available centrally for either registered or unregistered charities.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many charities are currently exempt from registration under sections 4(4) and (9) of the Charities Act 1960; and if he will list the figures by class of exemption.

Mr. John Patten: Information on exempt charities is not collected centrally.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many charities were registered in England and Wales in 1986.

Mr. John Patten: Three thousand, nine hundred and forty-two.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many charities are currently registered in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: At the end of October 1987, this figure stood at 161,014.

Nottinghamshire Constabulary

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 114 additional police posts for the Nottinghamshire constabulary since May 1979 were granted since May 1981.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None of these additional police posts was approved since May 1981. One hundred and fifteen additional police posts were approved on 31 December 1979, and an application to decrease the authorised police establishment by one post of sergeant was approved on 19 February 1981.

Fingerprinting

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many times section 27 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, which allows fingerprinting after conviction, has been used.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not recorded centrally.

Police Stations (Lay Visitors)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many lay visitors' schemes there are for police stations; whether he will now seek to put the schemes on a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Twenty six lay visitor schemes have been approved in the Metropolitan police area, 18 of which are operating. In the rest of England and Wales, 34 police authorities are either operating or have indicated an intention to operate schemes. We have no plans to put the arrangements for lay visiting schemes on a statutory basis.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has as to whether the Data Protection Registrar has used his powers under section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act to report on how the personal data held by the security services affect his functions of supervising the workings of the Data Protection Act;

(2) what information he has as to whether the Data Protection Registrar has used his powers under section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act to report on how the use of personal data collected for the electoral register affects his functions of supervising the workings of the Data Protection Act;

(3) what information he has as to whether the Data Protection Registrar has used his powers under section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act to report on how the use of personal data collected for the community charge will affect his functions of supervising the workings of the Data Protection Act;

(4) what information he has as to whether the Data Protection Registrar has used his powers under section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act to report on how the use of personal data collected in share registers affects his functions of supervising the workings of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Renton: In his third annual report to Parliament in July 1987, made in accordance with section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act 1984, the Data Protection Registrar did not make any reference to the security services but commented, at pages 3 and 4 on electoral registers, community charge registers and share registers.

Body Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details on a monthly

basis of the number of body searches, cell searches and cell changes and strip searches carried out on each of the category A prisoners being held at Her Majesty's prison, Durham, between April and November.

Mr. John Patten: As the hon. Member knows, records are not kept of the occasions when rub down searching or "frisking" is carried out in prisons and it is not the practice to disclose detailed information about security arrangements such as that requested about the frequency of cell searches and cell changes.

Comprehensive records of strip searches are available only in respect of category A women prisoners, of whom there were three in Durham prison during the period in question. The number of occasions on which each was strip searched in each month from April to November is shown in the table:

	Inmate A	*Inmate B*	*Inmate C*
April	3	2	4
May	7	5	3
June	2	5	3
July	2	3	1
August	3	3	2
September	3	4	4
October	2	4	3
November	3	3	2

Prisons

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total time taken between announcement and completion of each of the prisons built since 1979.

Mr. John Patten: The table sets out the year in which each prison was included in the building programme and the year it was completed. Projects may be admitted to this programme with a view to planning and other preparatory work starting at a later date.

Prison	*Included in Programme*	*Completed*
Wayland	1978	1984
Stocken	1978	1985
Thorn Cross	1978	1985
Full Sutton	1979	1987
Littlehey[1]	1981	1987
Swaleside[1]	1980	1987
Mount	1980	1987
Garth[1]	1980	1988

[1] almost complete.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the completion of his Department's review of the specification of prison design and construction.

Mr. John Patten: The review of the prison building design guides is scheduled for completion late in 1988.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to name the members of the Prisons Building Board.

Mr. John Patten: We expect to announce the names of the Prison Building Board shortly.

Firearms

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving firearms have been committed by gun clubs members in possession of a firearms certificate, in each year since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information relating to notifiable offences recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" at chapter 3 of the issue for 1986, (Cmnd. 233) copies of which are in the Library. Information on the suspected offender is not collected centrally.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to require licensed gun clubs to use pattern targets rather than targets depicting a human figure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The Government's proposals for the reform of firearms legislation are set out in the White Paper "Firearms Act 1968, Proposals for Reform", (Cm. 261) published on 2 December.

Prisoners

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are estimated to be suffering from mental illness, as defined by the Mental Health Act.

Mr. John Patten: The latest returns from prison medical officers of the number of inmates considered to be suffering from mental disorder of a type or degree such that they would be detainable under the Mental Health Act 1983 show that on 31 March 1987, 95 sentenced and 145 unsentenced inmates were suffering from mental illness. These and numbers considered to be detainable in other categories defined by the Mental Health Act are given on page 69 of the "Report on the Work of the Prison Service 1986-87" (Cm. 246) a copy of which is in the Library.

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are estimated to be suffering from mental disorders not falling within the terms of the Mental Health Act, for the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. Two censuses have been undertaken by prison medical officers of inmates serving sentences of six months and more considered to require specialised therapeutic facilities by reason of mental disorder or abnormality. The censuses showed that on 4 December 1985, a total of 1,583 inmates and on 1 October 1986 a total of 1,340 inmates were suffering from mental disorder that was not of a type or degree such that they would be detainable under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Citizenship

Mr. Millan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will extend by at least six months the date of 31 December by which certain categories of applications to register as British citizens have to be made under the British Nationality Act 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. We do not believe we would be justified in seeking the necessary powers.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if, in view of the shortage of

registration forms for British citizenship and of the delays in acknowledging receipt of completed forms, he will extend the deadline for registration as a British citizen to allow for sufficient forms to be printed and distributed and then completed by those wishing to register;

(2) how many forms for registration of British citizenship were printed by his Department; what has been the level of demand; and how he plans to make allowance for any shortfall;

(3) why registration forms for British citizenship are being rationed and orders for forms are only being partially met after delays of several weeks.

Mr. Renton: About 850,000 Forms R and W (the two main forms for those eligible to apply before 31 December 1987), have been printed. Nearly 810,000 have been distributed. Stocks are closely monitored. Although on occasions some orders were partially met pending delivery of reprinted supplies, the position now is that adequate stocks are available. We accept that the large number of applications has inevitably led to some delay in acknowledging receipt of completed forms, but the deadline of 31 December 1987 refers to applications, with fees, being lodged by then, not to their acknowledgement.

I see no need to seek powers to extend the deadline.

Anton Gecas

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking action against Mr. A. Gecas, a resident of Edinburgh, in relation to alleged war crimes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Around 2,000, mostly in the form of pre-printed postcards. We are now considering the policy and legal implications of the documents provided by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Africa

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a list of the names of the officers of his Department based in London who have current responsibilities for each country in Africa; and if he will detail those responsibilities.

Mrs. Chalker: The Library already contains Her Majesty's Stationery Office publications "The Diplomatic Service List (1987)" and the "Civil Service Yearbook (1987)". These list senior and middle-ranking officers of the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibilities for Africa.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate his Department holds of the number of British subjects currently employed in (i) Benin, (ii) Togo, (iii) Mali, (iv) Niger and (v) Burkina Faso.

Mr. Mellor: We do not have separate figures for those British nationals currently employed in Benin, Togo, Mali, Niger or Burkina Faso, but the following indicate the approximate size of the respective British expatriate adult (over 18) communities in these countries: 20, 45, 62, 44, 41.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will place in the Library a list of the maps of Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger currently held by his Department that are available for reference purposes to right hon. and hon. Members; and if he will indicate the scales on which the maps are available;

(2) if he will place in the Library a list of the maps of Benin held by his Department that are available for reference by right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Mellor: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office holds the following published single sheet maps of Benin, Togo, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali and Niger, available for reference purposes to right hon. and hon. Members, at the scales indicated.

Benin: I.G.N. (Paris) scale 1: 600,000 (1984)
Burkina Faso: L.G.N. (Paris) scale 1:1,000,000 (1968)
Cote d'Ivoire: Michelin scale 1:800,000 (1982)
Mali: MOD Series 2201 scale 1:2,000,000 sheets 11, 12, 16 and 17 (1969)
Niger: I.G.N. (Paris) scale 1:2,500,000 (1969)
Togo: I.G.N. (Paris) 1:500,000 (1960)

The Michelin series Africa North and West (sheet 153), scale 1:4,000,000 also covers all these countries. They may be inspected in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Library.

Argentina

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the nuclear weapons capability of Argentina.

Mr. Mellor: We have no evidence to confirm that Argentina has a nuclear weapon capability. We remain, however, concerned that Argentina has neither signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty nor ratified the treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America.

Mr. J. A. Smith

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British high commission in Harare has yet received the doctor's certificate sent to them by Mr. J. A. Smith of Newmarket in connection with the disablement pension to which he is entitled in Zimbabwe.

Mrs. Chalker: Yes. The medical certificate dated 22 September was forwarded by the British High Commission in Zimbabwe to the Zimbabwe social welfare pensions office on 15 October.

Guatemala

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the Belize/Guatemala territorial dispute.

Mr. Mellor: The territorial dispute is a matter for bilateral settlement between Belize and Guatemala. We should like to see the problem resolved at an early date and are willing to assist the parties directly involved by being present as observers at negotiations if both sides so wish.

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present state of relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala.

Mr. Mellor: We have normal diplomatic relations with Guatemala, whose return to democracy in late 1985 we warmly welcomed.

Falkland Islands (Fishing)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the criteria used in awarding fishing licences in the Falkland Islands conservation zone.

Mr. Mellor: Representations have been received from a number of governments and commercial organisations requesting clarification of the licence allocations for 1988. Licences are allocated by the Falkland Islands Government in accordance with the conservation requirements of the fishery.

RMS St. Helena

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements he has made to ensure that no further expense is incurred by Her Majesty's Government after the handing over of the recently ordered vessel to replace the RMS St. Helena, in the event of Hall Russell of Aberdeen going into liquidation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The contract for this ship has not yet been finalised, but will require Hall Russell to provide a post-delivery guarantee backed by a bond equivalent to some 2 per cent. of the contract price. Manufacturers of major items of equipment, such as engines, will provide separate warranty cover in accordance with normal commercial arrangements.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases there have been of legal aid money being recovered from law firms acting without a certificated solicitor since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not available, but the legal aid head office's practice is to recover all legal aid moneys paid in respect of a solicitor who at the relevant time did not hold a current practising certificate.

Uncertificated Solicitors

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General how many firms of solicitors have been proved to have been practising uncertificated in the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

The Attorney-General: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ENERGY

International Atomic Energy Agency

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what encouragement of, and support for, the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency is being given by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In his address to the general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in September, my right hon. Friend stated that the agency's work was of vital importance for world peace and international nuclear safety. The Government contribute both to the agency's regular budget and to its technical assistance and co-operation fund. Support is also given in a number of practical ways including the participation of experts in meetings of technical and other groups.

Power Stations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what information he has on talks the Central Electricity Generating Board has had with entrepreneurs concerning the reopening of electricity generation of Connahs Quay power station, Deeside, Clwyd; what is his estimate of the cash value of Connahs Quay power station as an energy producing unit; if he will direct the Central Electricity Generating Board to discuss the implications of renewed energy production at Connahs Quay with the Alyn-Deeside and Clwyd county council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom coal-fired power stations which are currently closed but which could be refurbished to begin production of electricity again in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* England; and what is his estimate of the total capital value of such power stations with a capability to produce energy;

(3) what information he has on the current estimated cash value of the Central Electricity Generating Board's Connahs Quay power station site.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibilities of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Connahs Quay Power Station

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will meet the leaders of Alyn-Deeside district council to consider the future of the Connahs Quay power station site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall be meeting the hon. Member and a delegation from the local authority on 16 December 1987.

Plutonium

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when, pursuant to his answer of 30 October, *Official Report* columns *447-48*, he now expects to publish the information on plutonium production in civil reactors referred to therein.

Mr. Michael Spicer: As I said in my answer of 30 October 1987 to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) at columns *447-48*, I shall publish the information as soon as possible.

Sizewell B

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made on the implementation of each of the 13 recommendations made in the report of the Sizewell B public inquiry by Sir Frank Layfield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) dealt with the recommendations contained in Sir Frank Layfield's report in his letter to the chairman of the CEGB of 12 March 1987. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House. Further action was relevant to only some of the recommendations:

Recommendations 2 and 3: The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate advises me that these have been implemented through appropriate conditions attached to the nuclear site licence.

Recommendations 4 and 7(b): The HSE advises me that it plans to publish in the new year a discussion document on tolerable levels of risk. Work is also in hand on the other items covered by these recommendations.

Recommendation 6: The Government's thorough review of nuclear emergency planning, being carried out in the light of the Chernobyl accident, has taken full account of this recommendation. In relation to paragraph *(f)* of this recommendation, the CEGB advises me that it has recently revised its local consultative arrangements for all nuclear power stations. Parish councils adjacent to the site are now invited to nominate representatives to attend the newly established local community liaison councils. In addition, these liaison councils may agree to appoint additional members, being local representatives of other organisations who, in the opinion of the liaison council, may be able to contribute to its deliberations.

Recommendation 7(a): The CEGB advises me that the version of the pre-construction safety report on which the NII issued the site licence for Sizewell B will (apart from matters of commercial sensitivity) be made publicly available before the end of the year.

Recommendation 10: This is a matter for Suffolk county council in consultation with the CEGB. I am informed that a study of alternative routes for heavy goods vehicle traffic has been carried out and is under consideration by both parties.

Recommendation 13: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on 30 October at columns *447-48*.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Forces

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the oral answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column 761, if she will give a detailed breakdown of the statistical evidence on which she based her statement about the comparison between Trident, Polaris and the Soviet Union's nuclear forces; why she chose 1970 as the baseline; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The answer I gave referred to strategic nuclear warheads. The first part of the comparison assumed 192 United Kingdom Polaris warheads and approximately 1,800 Soviet strategic warheads. The Trident part of the comparison assumed a maximum of 512 United Kingdom Trident warheads and 6,000 Soviet strategic warheads. The figures give ratios of 11 per cent. and 9 per cent. respectively. 1970 was used as a convenient baseline because this was the year in which the fourth United Kingdom Polaris submarine first became operational.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her answer of 1 December, she will make it her policy to notify the House when any new contract for the export of equipment or know-how to make weapons-grade plutonium is approved by Her Majesty's Government; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave him on 27 October 1987 and 6 November 1987 at columns *217* and *903*, respectively.

Sir Philip Woodfield

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister how she intends that Sir Philip Woodfield will be able to make known to right hon. and hon. Members the scope and nature of his work as staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services.

The Prime Minister: The staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services will report to me, and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary as appropriate. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment publicly on security and intelligence matters.

Surplus Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 1 December, if she will place in the Library or otherwise identify the financial rules which led the Commission of the European Economic Community to the view that the declaration of the European Court of Auditors on the legality of the transfer of responsibilities for the cost of the subsidised export of butter surplus to member states could be set aside; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In its opinion, the Court of Auditors expressed the view that deferred reimbursement for the programme of butter stock disposal conflicted with the principal of the annuality of the budget, as laid down in article 199 of the treaty and articles 4 and 5 of the financial regulation. The Commission explained its reasons for considering that there was no breach of this principle in its report to the Council of 15 June 1987 on the financial impact of this measure on Spain and Portugal (document 7124/87). A copy of this document is in the Library of the House.

Civil Servants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if she will specify the criteria and considerations which have led Her Majesty's Government, in the latest guidance on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers, to place greater emphasis as specified in paragraph 8, on the possible use of civil legal action to enforce the duty of confidentiality owed by officials; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if, for each difference of *(a)* substance and *(b)* emphasis as between the latest guidance on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers and the last such guidance issued, she will specify the reasons for making the change; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The only change of substance is the inclusion of a provision for appeal to the Head of the Home Civil Service on fundamental issues of conscience, which the Government accepted in principle in their response (Cmnd. 9841) to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's seventh report of 1985-86. Other changes are for the sake of clarification or completeness.

European Council, Copenhagen

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if she will place in the Library details of the proposals made by Mr. Pohl Schlueter, Prime Minister of Denmark, concerning the proposals to be discussed at Copenhagen on 4 and 5 December, and her response thereto.

The Prime Minister: The working papers circulated by the presidency as the basis for discussions between the member states are confidential. I shall be making a statement on the outcome of the Copenhagen European Council shortly.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Questions

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if, for each of the last five years, he will give the total number of questions tabled for oral answer.

Mr. Wakeham: The total number of questions tabled for oral reply during each of the last five sessions and for the present session to week ending 27 November 1987 is as follows:

	Number
1982-83	6,125
1983-84	13,386
1984-85	14,800
1985-86	18,139
1986-87	12,766
1987-88	[1]4,255

[1] To 27 November 1987.

Mineral Waters

37. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal which English, Welsh and Scottish still and carbonated mineral waters have been selected for consumption in parliamentary refreshment facilities; how much of each he estimates will be consumed during the coming year, based on last year's consumption figures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: A decision on the selection of mineral waters has not yet been taken by the Catering Sub-Committee of the Services Committee, since it has not had an opportunity to meet. The estimated consumption of still and carbonated mineral waters during the coming year is expected to be between 10,000 and 11,000 litres.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Primary Schools (Technology)

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to technology in primary schools to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Dunn: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 14 December to Friday 18 December.

Foreign Language Teachers

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many native Spanish speakers are currently teaching Spanish in maintained schools;

(2) how many teachers of French nationality are currently teaching French in maintained schools;

(3) how many teachers of German nationality are currently teaching German in maintained schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. In maintained schools in England in 1984 there were 1,834, 19,694 and 5,890 teachers of, respectively, Spanish, French and German. It is not known how many of these were of Spanish, French or German nationality or were native speakers of those languages. There are also 163 Spanish, 1,760 French and 481 German language assistants currently in England and Wales, most of whom are teaching in maintained schools and are native speakers.

O-level Passes

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of school pupils in *(a)* England, *(b)* the shire counties and *(c)* Essex, respectively, succeeded in securing five or more O-levels passes at the higher grades in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: The percentages of pupils in 1985-86 leaving maintained schools in Essex, the shire counties and England respectively with five or more higher grades at O level/CSE (O level grades A-C/CSE grade 1) were 26·0, 25·4 and 23·6.

Secondary Education

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he has received from Her Majesty's Inspectorate about the standard of secondary education in Essex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has not received advice about the general standard of secondary education in Essex. Reports of inspections of a number of individual schools have been published in the usual way.

Storm Damage

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action the National Environmental Research Council is taking to study the natural development of mature British woods in south-east England in the circumstances created by the hurricane of 16 October.

Mr. Jackson: The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council, undertakes research on the ecology of woodlands, including work on natural regeneration and conservation. The institute has not instigated new work since 16 October. It has, however, a wide knowledge of developments following natural disturbances to woodlands, and this is available to authorities concerned with the replanting and natural restoration of woodlands, including those damaged recently in south-east England.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from local education authorities from the south and east of England about storm damage to education buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no written representations. In his statement on 21 October, at column 731, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced limited additional allocations for capital expenditure incurred in the current year by authorities restoring buildings damaged by storm. His Department wrote on 23 October to the chief executive of a number of authorities inviting applications for all services direct to that Department.

Teacher Training

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students entered courses of initial teacher training in England and Wales in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: About 19,160 students entered courses of initial teacher training in 1987, an increase of some 2,271 over 1986. Recruitment to primary training has exceeded target by 3 per cent; and intakes to secondary training are 14 per cent. higher than last year.

I particularly welcome the major increases in recruitment to courses in the key subjects of mathematics, craft, design and technology, and physics. Intakes to mathematics and CDT courses are some 33 per cent. higher than last year; recruitment to physics courses has increased by some 50 per cent; and in all these subjects recruitment is much closer to targets, which themselves have increased.

I am placing in the Library the principal findings of my Department's survey of this year's recruitment.

ENVIRONMENT

Storm Damage

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many trees were destroyed in *(a)* Essex and *(b)* the Basildon area as a result of the storms in October; and how the figures were calculated.

Mr. Moynihan: Essex county council estimates that 72,000 isolated trees were destroyed by the hurricane force winds, and a further 750,000 badly damaged. They have not provided separate estimates for the Basildon area. The Department has commissioned an aerial photographic survey in the affected area by Hunting Technical Surveys Ltd. The sample areas being photographed include 20 in Essex and one in the Basildon area. However the survey is being delayed by adverse weather conditions.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from environmentalist groups in the Essex region in connection with the damage caused by the storm of October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has received no such representations. However, I understand that the Essex Naturalist Trust and a number of national conservation bodies have been in touch with Taskforce Trees, a unit of the Countryside Commission, about funding for various projects in the Essex region relating to storm damage to the landscape. The Task force expects to announce its decisions on these applications very shortly.

Council House Sales

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many council houses, flats and maisonnettes have been sold by each London borough between May 1979 and November 1987;

(2) what percentage of council houses sold in each London borough between May 1979 and November 1987 were sold *(a)* under the right-to-buy legislation and *(b)* as vacant possession sales;

(3) how many applications to exercise the right-to-buy have been received by each London borough between *(a)* May 1979 and March 1987 and *(b)* for each month from November 1986 to November 1987.

Mrs. Roe: Information on council house sales and right to buy applications has been collected almost wholly in regular quarterly returns and the figures in the table are those reported for the period from 1 April 1979 to 30 June 1987:

Sales of dwellings by London Boroughs

	[1]*All sales April 1979 to June 1987*			*Right to buy applications: October 1980 to June 1987*				
	Number	*of which*		*Total*	*of which, in quarters ending:*			
		RTB per cent.	*Vacant per cent.*	*Number*	*September 1986*	*December 1986*	*March 1987*	*June 1987*
City of London	1,091	65	8	3,035	52	86	229	190
Barking and Dagenham	6,245	100	0	11,143	..	..	..	..
Barnet	4,535	80	4	7,883	391	263	407	620
Bexley	2,742	11	1	..	..	..	..	..
Brent	1,798	96	3	4,559	210	206	330	342
Bromley	5,207	86	4	8,083	276	291	577	672
Camden	725	94	6	4,975	228	228	515	625
Croydon	4,932	70	4	7,215	312	263	..	434
Ealing	4,592	44	1	3,978	..	..	0	0
Enfield	4,210	83	8	7,054	301	295	704	..
Greenwich	2,552	100	0	6,329	295	..	..	0
Hackney	828	96	2	3,308	..	..	..	..
Hammersmith and Fulham	2,029	59	25	4,025	231	158	335	35
Haringey	2,475	97	0	5,977	295	256	485	516

	[1]All sales April 1979 to June 1987			Right to buy applications: October 1980 to June 1987				
	Number	of which		Total	of which, in quarters ending:			
		RTB per cent.	Vacant per cent.	Number	September 1986	December 1986	March 1987	June 1987
Harrow	1,943	85	2	3,369	150	117	192	229
Havering	4,921	53	6	4,059	..	..	..	..
Hillingdon	2,693	16	48	1,469	..	..	..	..
Hounslow	2,681	96	0	6,694	281	260	390	448
Islington	1,108	83	17	4,915	109	152	183	94
Kensington and Chelsea	780	54	39	1,653	101	65	197	233
Kingston	1,550	72	11	2,457	85	89	189	149
Lambeth	745	93	6	3,866	..	..	..	..
Lewisham	2,826	100	0	7,800	414	317	687	746
Merton	3,724	53	8	3,348	..	146	92	0
Newham	2,544	90	10	6,577	484	268	517	685
Redbridge	2,868	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Richmond	1,698	90	0	3,691	139	160	236	292
Southwark	2,117	76	19	4,318	105	182	268	518
Sutton	2,251	84	6	4,163	225	182	263	274
Tower Hamlets	1,010	78	22	897	..	..	..	..
Waltham Forest	2,524	73	27	3,693	..	..	..	..
Wandsworth	10,673	40	55	10,693	..	564	954	..
Westminster	1,830	66	22	4,209	287	154	750	..

.. Not available.
[1] All sales include voluntary sales to sitting tenants.

Waste (Public Houses)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his proposals for new regulations for imposing charges for the removal of waste in so far as these affect public houses.

Mr. Moynihan: Our proposals included the classification of waste from properties which cover both household and commercial interests (such as many public houses) as commercial waste, for which collection authorities would have a duty to recover a reasonable charge, unless they considered it inappropriate to do so. Collection authorities would be able to take account of the proportion of household waste in setting the level of charges.

An announcement about the outcome of consultation on our proposals will be made shortly.

Planning Applications

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the rules relating to the need to advertise planning applications.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend receives representations from time to time advocating that a wider range of planning applications should be subject to statutory advertisement. I believe that the best approach is that the local planning authority should continue to have discretion to decide, for the great majority of applications, the extent of advertisement which is desirable in the individual case.

Acid Rain

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's latest assessment of the effect of acid rain on Britain's trees.

Mr. Moynihan: We have just received the results of the Forestry Commission's 1987 tree health survey and are studying its results. I will answer the hon. Member's question shortly.

Wildlife Conservation

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be making an announcement following the recommendations submitted to him by the Nature Conservancy Council under section 24 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 about the protection of United Kingdom native species.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on Tuesday 1 December at column *552-3*.

Wildlife Protection

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to include the Glanville fritillary and the common dog whelk for protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Moynihan: The Nature Conservancy Council, the Government's statutory adviser on wildlife matters, recommended further protection for the Glanville fritillary along with a number of other United Kingdom butterflies, through the sale licensing provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A decision on these species has been deferred pending a review of sale licensing procedures in the light of the changes to the protected lists of plants and animals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 1 December. A further announcement will be made in due course.

The common dog whelk was not included in the NCC's recommendations for protection under the Act. Since it is hoped that the decline of this species will be arrested following the regulations of Tri-butyl tin anti-fouling paint.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the previous financial experience of those appointed to the board of the London

Docklands Development Corporation; what investigations he made before he made the appointments; and what qualifications or expertise he considers necessary for appointment.

Mr. Trippier: Current board members and their relevant background are as follows:

Mr. Christopher Benson, JP, FRICS (Chairman)—Vice Chairman and Managing Director MEPC plc—property development.
Mrs. Jennifer d'Abo—Former Chairman Ryman Group—retailing.
Mr. Alan Benjamin, OBE—Director CAP Group plc—chartered accountant, advanced technology and computing.
Sir Andrew Derbyshire, FRIBA, FSIAD—Chairman of Robert Matthew Johnson Marshall London Ltd—architects and planning consultants.
Sir John Garlick, KCB—Former Permanent Secretary and Accounting Officer of Departments of Environment and Transport.
Cllr. Jonathan Mathews—Councillor and architectural tutor.
Mr. Lewis Moss, DBE, DL—Senior partner Moss & Partners—property surveying.
Mr. Dennis Stevenson, DBE—SRU Ltd—Ex-Chairman Aycliffe and Peterlee New Town.
Mr. Wyndham Thomas—Chairman and Chief Executive, Inner City Enterprises—former general manager, Peterborough New Town.

Inquiries were made of available information.

The general qualifications for appointment are that members should have relevant experience to the regeneration of urban areas, and the board must include some members with special knowledge of the locality.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the dismissal of Mr. John Mills as deputy chairman of the London Docklands Development Corporation; what financial arrangements have been made following the dismissal; and if he has any plans to continue Mr. Mills' connection with the London Docklands Development Corporation in any form.

Mr. Trippier: Mr. Mills was removed from office on 30 November. The Secretary of State considered him unsuitable to remain a member of the LDDC board. He has not been reinstated. No financial arrangements have been made. The appointment of Mr. Mills as a special consultant to the LDDC would be a matter for the chairman and the board.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list each member of the London Docklands Development Corporation; how much they are paid; and what is the time of their working week.

Mr. Trippier: The details requested are currently as follows:

	Remuneration £	*Days per week*
Mr. Christopher Benson *(Chairman)*	27,226	2
Mr. Alan Benjamin	4,535	½
Sir Andrew Derbyshire	4,535	½
Mrs. Jennifer d'Abo	4,535	½
Sir John Garlick	4,535	½
Councillor Jonathan Mathews	4,535	½
Mr. Lewis Moss	4,535	½
Mr. Dennis Stevenson	4,535	½
Mr. Wyndham Thomas	4,535	½

Drinking Water

Sir Giles Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) over what time scale he now plans to implement the European Commission drinking water directive;

(2) if he will consult the water authorities before he determines the timetable for implementing the European Commission drinking water directive;

(3) what will be the estimated capital cost of the applications to water authorities of the maximum admissible concentration measurement in the implementation of the European Commission drinking water directive.

Mr. Moynihan: The drinking water directive was implemented throughout the United Kingdom in July 1985. In view of the recent change in interpretation of the directive which my right hon. Friend stated in his reply to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) on 2 December at column *915*, I am not able to provide costs or time scales. However, I can confirm that all public supplies are perfectly safe to drink; improvements being made to comply with the directive will now principally relate to matters such as the appearance of the water. The Department is consulting the water authorities on these matters.

Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by local highways authorities in complying with the duty to erect and maintain a signpost on all footpaths, bridleways and byways at every point where they leave a metal road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Circular 32/81 emphasised the benefits of sign posting and waymarking and encourages highway authorities to make greater progress in fulfilling their statutory obligations. But, apart from some estimates recently presented to the rights of way review committee, we have at the moment no overall information about progress made since that was issued.

Nuclear Waste (Drigg)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the low-level nuclear waste disposal facility at Drigg to be full.

Mr. Moynihan: With improved methods of waste management and at planned disposal rates, Drigg is not expected to be full until about 2016. BNFL is considering further options for development of the site that could extend the lifetime still further.

Runcorn (Housing)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on the successor landlords of new town housing in Runcorn.

Mrs. Roe: I cannot add to the answer I gave my hon. Friend on 2 December at column *629*.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a delegation from the Runcorn Residents Federation to discuss the future of new town housing in Runcorn.

Mrs. Roe: My officials met representatives of the federation on 3 December. I am receiving a full report of that meeting.

Housing Projects (Finance)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate in the *Official Report*, following the announcement on 30 November of extra finances for housing projects to help the homeless, the amount *(a)* numerically and *(b)* as a percentage of the total allocation that has been awarded to each of Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Sutton and Richmond.

Mrs. Roe: The information is as follows:

	Allocation £	*Percentage of total allocation*
Southwark	nil	—
Tower Hamlets	1,150,000	4·5
Sutton	nil	—
Richmond	nil	—

Rating Reform

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often it is intended to update the poll tax register; and what forecast he has made of the number of register changes in the course of a year.

Mr. Howard: The community charges registration officer for each area will compile and maintain an up-to-date register. He will update it continuously to reflect changes of address and circumstances within his area as they are notified to him. We have made no forecast of the number of changes in the course of a year.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has decided where to locate the next generation of urban development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I propose to set up "mini" urban development corporations in Bristol, Leeds and Central Manchester. I also propose to extend the area of the existing Black Country development corporation to take in parts of Wolverhampton.

I have placed maps in the Library today showing the areas which the UDCs are likely to cover. I will be appointing consultants shortly to advise on the development potential of the areas and on the boundaries of the UDCs. Final decisions on the boundaries will be taken in the light of the results of these studies and of the views of the local interests.

I have chosen these areas because they all have significant amounts of derelict and disused land and vacant buildings. It will be the job of each UDC to bring about the regeneration of its area by bringing sites and buildings back into productive use, to encourage the development of existing and new industry and commerce, to create an attractive environment and ensure that housing and social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area. Each corporation will attract considerable private investment to its area.

These new UDCs will be modelled on the six urban development corporations already established in England which are already clearly demonstrating the rapid progress which can be achieved with a single minded approach to urban regeneration. These new corporations, however, will be based on smaller areas than their predecessors, varying in size from 250 acres to 1,600 acres. Each UDC could spend about £15 million over four to five years. They will also be responsible for co-ordinating expenditure in their areas on urban regeneration grant, urban development grant and derelict land grant paid to the private sector. In some areas this could be considerable.

I am greatly encouraged by the achievements of the first two development corporations in London Docklands and Merseyside and also by the enthusiastic progress already being made by the four corporations I set up earlier this year on Tyneside, Teeside, Trafford Park and the Black Country. I have every confidence that the proposals I have announced today will lead to similar achievements in Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Wolverhampton.

Environment Council

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the outcome of the Environment Council on 3 December.

Mr. Moynihan: My noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water represented the United Kingdom at this meeting. I am delighted to report that the Council finally adopted the directive (known as the "Luxembourg Package") concerning exhaust emission standards for cars. We have already announced our intention to require cars to be able to run on unleaded petrol from the earliest dates permitted by the directive. We are in active discussion with other member states with the intention of harmonising, as far as possible, the dates of mandatory application of the exhaust emission standards for small and medium cars. We also intend to apply the large car standard as soon as practicable, probably in the early 1990s. The Council also adopted a directive dealing with gaseous emissions from heavy vehicles. We believe that these measures will make a significant contribution to environmental improvement.

The Council reached a common position by a qualified majority on a directive setting limits applicable in 1989-90 for emissions of particulates from diesel cars. The latter directive, which requires the Council to decide in 1989 on a further stage of tighter controls, will now be referred to the European Parliament under the cooperation procedure. Provided the European Parliament agrees, the directive is likely to be adopted next year.

Agreement was reached on a regulation concerning export from and import into the Community of certain dangerous chemicals. The regulation will ensure that when specified chemicals are exported from the Community the authorities in the importing countries are notified. The regulation requires member states to inform the Commission of notifications from third countries concerning the import into the Community of dangerous chemicals. This measure represents a useful and practical step forward in protecting importing countries from the risks of certain dangerous substances.

The Council reached agreement on a proposal for limit values and quality objectives for discharges of hexachlorobenzene and hexachlorobutadiene both by-products of the chemical industry and on the list I of most dangerous substances under directive 76/464/EEC, but has to await the opinion of the European Parliament before formal adoption.

The Council had a general discussion of the presidency's proposed guidelines for future work on the

proposed directive on large combustion plants. The Council took note of several positive elements and looked to the German presidency to take the ideas further.

A resolution outlining future Community action to combat environmental pollution by cadium was agreed.

There was a first exchange of views on a proposal to establish a five-year Communitywide programme of projects illustrating how actions in the environment field might also contribute to employment creation. The Council agreed to discuss this again once the Community's budgetary situation had been clarified.

The Council also discussed the extension to inland waterways of the Community's marine pollution system as well as a proposed directive for quality objectives for chromium in water.

270-272 Heathway, Dagenham

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive a recommendation from the Property Services Agency in respect of the application by the London borough of Barking and Dagenham to purchase the leasehold interest in 270-272 Heathway, Dagenham.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* I am currently considering the application by the London borough of Barking and Dagenham to purchase 270-272 Heathway, Dagenham. I shall write to the hon. Lady shortly.

WALES

A55 Expressway

16. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects work to start on realignment of the A55 expressway at Rhuallt Hill.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Rhuallt Hill improvement was included in "Roads in Wales 1985" for a start of work in the period January 1988 to December 1990. This is still my expectation, subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and availability of resources.

Road Infrastructure

17. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the next financial year to improve the road infrastructure in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Local authority capital allocations for 1988-89 were announced on 30 November. They will enable a start to be made on four major new schemes. Details of central Government expenditure will be announced in the new year. I expect it to enable us to continue with a substantial programme of new work.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

18. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many groups of Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin his Department helped to fund in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the latest available year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Financial support to Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin under S26 of the Development of Rural Wales Act is provided on an all-Wales basis. It is allocated by Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin centrally to its county committees for distribution, according to local need, to individual groups, of which there were 280 in 1979 and 720 in 1987.

Theatre Nurses

19. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients in *(a)* South Glamorgan and *(b)* Wales have had their operation cancelled due to lack of theatre nurses; and how many have had their operations cancelled twice for this reason since 1979.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available centrally.

Industrial Assistance

20. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount of regional assistance funds to industry allocated through his Department during the last year for which full figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: During 1986-87, a total of £123 million in regional assistance was paid to industry in Wales through my Department.

Anglesey Coast (Sewage Sludge)

21. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his response to proposals by the North-West water authority to dump sewage sludge off the Anglesey coast.

Mr. Grist: I have received no application from the North West water authority for a licence to dump sewage sludge off the Anglesey coast.

Hospital Waiting Lists

22. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he will take to cut hospital waiting lists in the Rhondda, in Mid-Glamorgan and in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The prime responsibility for cutting waiting times in Wales rests with district health authorities, and I have asked each of them to submit plans for doing so. The Welsh Office is supporting these efforts in Mid Glamorgan and throughout Wales by improved funding of the NHS, by £1 million of specific funding of local initiatives and by the work of its waiting list catalyst team.

European Development Fund

23. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by county, how much money Wales has received from the European regional development fund since 1 January 1985.

Mr. Peter Walker: European regional development fund commitments to Wales since January 1985 have amounted to £131 million. With permission, I will circulate the county breakdown in the *Official Report*.

Education Reform Bill

24. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in support of the Education Reform Bill, as it relates to Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Many representations I have received have given support to proposals incorporated in the Education Reform Bill. Copies of the principal responses from organisations in Wales to the consultation exercise are being placed in the Library.

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for how long he will receive representations relating to the Education Reform Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am taking account of representations received since the formal deadline for responses to the consultation papers, and I will continue to do so.

Advance Factories

26. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what figures he has for the relative take-up rates between advance factories in development areas and those in areas without development status.

Mr. Peter Walker: 8·5 per cent. of Welsh Development Agency and Mid-Wales Development factory floor space in the assisted areas was vacant and available for letting as at 31 October 1987, compared with 15 per cent. in the non-assisted areas. Separate figures for advance factory units alone are not readily available.

27. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to allocate more advance factories in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd.

Mr. Peter Walker: I announced in the House on 2 December that the Welsh Development Agency had been given approval to make an early start on a further package of schemes comprising advance factory units with a total floor space of 100,000 sq. ft., including some in Clwyd.

When decisions on the aggregate funding for 1988-89 for the Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development have been made, I will give priority to considering their related property development proposals.

Job Vacancies

28. **Sir Raymond Gower:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many notified job vacancies there were in Wales, in South Glamorgan and in the area of the Vale of Glamorgan borough council at the latest convenient date; and if he will make a statement regarding job opportunities in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The number of vacancies notified to Jobcentres and careers offices in Wales on 2 October 1987 were 15,640 and 342 respectively. Figures are not available at district local authority area level, but the corresponding figures for South Glamorgan are 1,888 and 67 respectively.

Therapists

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by each Welsh health district, the numbers of *(a)* speech therapists, *(b)* occupational therapists and *(c)* physiotherapists employed; and what were the comparable figures in 1979.

Mr. Grist: Information on the number of whole-time equivalents as at 30 September is given in the following table:

	Speech therapists		*Occupational therapists*		*Physiotherapists*[1]	
	1979	*1987*	*1979*	*1987*	*1979*	*1987*
Clwyd	12·0	23·3	5·0	25·3	46·2	71·5
East Dyfed	7·1	13·3	6·3	9·9	38·0	35·2
Pembrokeshire	7·1	6·0	6·3	5·8	38·0	13·6
Gwent	10·5	14·9	17·4	46·8	41·6	82·1
Gwynedd	3·2	10·0	5·0	18·7	26·7	48·7
Mid Glamorgan	9·8	17·0	19·7	31·7	62·8	75·0
Powys	3·3	3·8	3·3	10·6	13·6	24·7
South Glamorgan	11·0	27·6	54·4	64·5	79·4	120·3
West Glamorgan	7·4	14·2	10·3	27·6	41·9	57·0

[1] Includes remedial gymnasts.

Forestry

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the direct cost to his Department of forestry grants in Wales during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: In the period from 1 April 1987 to 1 November 1987, the Forestry Commission's grant payments to private woodland owners in Wales totalled £395, 583.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy with regard to privatising the Forestry Commission, or any part of its activities in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government has no plans at present to privatise the Forestry Commission or any part of its activities in Wales, but looks to the Commission to continue to rationalise its estate by selling properties that are surplus to its needs or are difficult and expensive to manage.

Further and Higher Education Trades Unions

25. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next proposes meeting representatives of further and higher education trades unions to discuss the proposals for reform of the further education and higher education structure in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received the views of the further and higher education trades unions in response to the consultation paper on maintained further and higher education in Wales; and these have been fully considered.

Roads

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of motorway and major roads within the responsibility of his Department were completed during each of the past five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	Miles
1982	9·2
1983	12·5
1984	16·6
1985	16·7
1986	9·6
1987[1]	13·1

[1] To 30 November.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for 1983 and for the latest year available the total number of hospital beds for each of the following services, broken down by district health authorities *(a)* general medical, *(b)* general surgical, *(c)* non-psychiatric acute, *(d)* geriatric, *(e)* maternity, *(f)* mental illness, *(g)* mentally handicapped and *(h)* total.

Mr. Grist: Information for the average daily available number of beds, is given in the table:

	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Pembroke-shire	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan
1983									
General Medicine	201·5	113·4	280·9	125·3	332·1	55·4	—	254·1	231·0
General Surgery	269·6	188·5	277·1	156·9	339·1	70·9	—	259·0	266·6
Other non-psychiatric acute	928·1	439·6	957·1	388·1	1,175·0	137·7	241·5	1,351·0	952·6
Geriatric	576·0	393·5	632·0	399·6	828·5	139·3	248·0	458·1	464·4
Younger disabled	—	—	—	8·2	19·0	—	—	1·8	15·6
Maternity[1]	162·3	62·0	170·8	79·5	242·0	40·0	40·0	152·8	157·8
Mantal Illness[2]	720·8	602·8	933·0	—	1,268·3	—	345·5	663·3	374·1
Mental Handicap	92·0	69·0	440·5	356·0	519·0	32·0	213·3	427·0	134·8
Total	2,950·3	1,868·8	3,691·4	1,513·6	4,723·0	475·3	1,088·3	3,567·1	2,596·9
1986									
General Medicine	186·4	129·2	277·9	155·1	391·8	61·3	—	234·7	261·1
General Surgery	259·0	204·4	260·6	165·0	311·0	75·8	—	243·1	249·8
Other non-psychiatric acute	891·0	361·3	850·2	398·6	1,110·6	129·5	220·9	1,273·2	937·0
Geriatric	580·6	385·5	635·2	425·1	858·2	134·5	220·3	463·9	461·6
Younger disabled	—	—	—	9·0	7·0	—	—	5·6	11·9
Maternity[1]	134·2	48·0	149·8	82·9	232·0	39·9	37·0	155·5	149·0
Mental Illness[2]	631·0	556·8	930·4	61·2	1,131·0	—	328·0	674·3	417·8
Mental Handicap	86·0	73·0	404·7	333·0	456·8	32·0	208·2	410·0	85·9
Total	2,769·1	1,758·2	3,508·8	1,629·9	4,498·4	473·0	1,014·4	3,460·3	2,574·1

[1] Includes Obstetrics and General Practitioner Maternity.
[2] Includes Mental Illness, Mentall Illness Children, Adolescent Psychiatry, Psychogeriatric and Elderly Mentally Infirm.

NHS (Agency Staff)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each year since 1983 and for the latest available financial year, for each district health authority, regional health authority and special health authority the total expenditure on agency staff, expressed at current prices, constant prices and as a percentage of health authority's budget.

Mr. Grist: The following tables set out the information requested.

Revenue expenditure on non-NHS staff (agency etc.)

	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Pembrokeshire	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	WHCSA	All-Wales
Actual expenditure £'000											
1983-84	57·6	—	112·0	44·5	3·8	1·7	(1·5)	14·1	—	7·9	240·1
1984-85	100·3	—	26·0	58·8	35·3	35·9	15·0	22·3	3·5	7·6	304·7
1985-86	142·2	9·4	13·5	62·9	14·9	12·2	10·1	49·4	33·5	5·7	353·9
1986-87	228·8	88·8	17·8	172·5	12·7	198·6	14·5	49·4	95·1	3·2	881·4
Expenditure at constant prices £'000s[1]											
1983-84	65·6	—	127·8	50·8	4·3	1·9	(1·7)	16·0	—	9·0	273·7
1984-85	109·5	—	28·4	64·2	38·6	39·2	16·4	24·4	3·8	8·3	332·8
1985-86	146·5	9·6	13·9	64·8	15·3	12·7	10·4	50·9	34·5	5·9	364·5
1986-87	228·8	88·8	17·8	172·5	12·7	198·6	14·5	49·4	95·1	3·2	881·34
Expenditure as a percentage of total revenue expenditure[2]											
1983-84	0·09	—	0·13	0·11	—	0·01	—	0·01	—	0·19	0·04
1984-85	0·14	—	0·03	0·13	0·03	0·24	0·07	0·02	0·01	0·17	0·05
1985-86	0·19	0·02	0·01	0·13	0·01	0·08	0·05	0·04	0·04	0·12	0·06
1986-87	0·28	0·17	0·02	0·34	0·01	1·13	0·06	0·04	0·11	0·06	0·13

[1] Actual expenditure expressed at constant prices by revaluation to 1986-87 levels by use of the GDP deflator.
[2] Rounded to two decimal places.

Expenditure on agency staff charged to capital—WHCSA only[1]
Actual expenditure

	£'000
1983-84	65·2
1984-85	66·1
1985-86	78·8
1986-87	108·0

Expenditure at constant prices[2]

	£'000
1983-84	74·3
1984-85	72·2
1985-86	81·2
1986-87	108·0

Expenditure as a percentage of total capital expenditure[3]

	Per cent.
1983-84	0·13
1984-85	0·13
1985-86	0·15
1986-87	0·18

[1] Figures relate to the Welsh Health Common Services Agency only—information is not available centrally on any agency staff employed by the works departments of District Health Authorities in Wales.

[2] Actual expenditure expressed at constant prices by revaluation to 1986-87 levels by use of the GDP deflator.

NHS Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each district health authority and special health authority for 1986 the total number of staff expressed as the total number of staff and as whole-time equivalents in the following categories: *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* professional and technical, *(d)* administrative and clerical, *(e)* ancillary and *(f)* total non-medical staff.

Mr. Grist: The requested information, which relates to 30 September 1986, is given in the following table:

	Medical and Dental		*Nursing and Midwifery*		*Professional[2] and Technical*		*Administrative and Clerical*		*Ancillary*		*Total non-medical Staff*	
	Number[1]	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*
Clwyd	329	287	4,116	3,671	626	535	890	779	1,527	1,221	7,577	6,614
East Dyfed	240	197	2,538	2,170	396	333	568	517	1,010	795	4,821	4,115
Gwent	367	345	5,221	4,354	773	684	1,141	947	2,183	1,562	9,885	8,103
Gwynedd	228	165	2,277	2,031	439	367	618	560	1,079	812	4,761	4,116
Mid Glamorgan	459	392	5,952	5,160	760	686	1,200	1,067	2,680	1,978	11,290	9,578
Pembrokeshire	84	70	808	676	127	115	192	166	310	204	1,522	1,246
Powys	99	32	1,380	1,104	157	117	187	171	515	372	2,444	1,939
South Glamorgan	829	674	5,395	4,596	1,459	1,341	1,645	1,424	2,427	1,859	11,520	9,813
West Glamorgan	341	308	3,989	3,425	664	590	895	798	1,899	1,395	7,878	6,636

[1] Medical and dental staff who work in more than one authority are included in the numbers of staff for each of those authorities.
[2] Excluding works staff.

Nurses

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual rate of loss of nurses from National Health Service hospitals in Wales; in which categories of nurses have these occurred; and how this rate of loss compares with five years and 10 years ago.

Mr. Grist: A special study was carried out in 1986 to obtain the estimated nurse wastage rates given below. Information in not available for detailed categories of nurses or for earlier years.

Leavers from the NHS in Wales[1]

	Percent
Enrolled Nurses	8·3
Registered Nurses	9·4

[1] Excluding South Glamorgan.

I am pleased to say that there are now 5,900 more nurses in NHS hospitals than there were in 1978.

Operations

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many operations in Welsh hospitals were cancelled in the most recently available 12-month period for which information is available; and in which medical categories.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available centrally.

Education Policy (Official's Address)

Mr Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if the address on education policy in Wales, given to the St. David's Forum on the weekend of 28-29 November by an official of his Department, represents official Government policy.

Mr. Peter Walker: The official said nothing which departs from Government policy.

St. David's Forum

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department is officially represented on the St. David's Forum.

Mr. Peter Walker: The St. David's Forum is not a representative body.

National Curriculum

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State of Wales when, pursuant to his answer of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *758*, he will publish his statement on his response to the consultation exercise on the national curriculum.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am today publishing a policy statement, "The National Curriculum in Wales", which sets out my policy on the implementation of the national curriculumin schools in Wales. The statement is intended to inform debate on the Education Reform Bill, now before the House, and to provide greater detail for teachers, parents and others about the Government's proposals as they affect Wales.

Copies of the statement have been placed in the Library.

District Health Authorities (Patient Treatment)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each district health authority *(a)* the total numbers of people waiting for treatment in September 1982, *(b)* the total numbers of people waiting for treatment in March 1987 and *(c)* the percentage change represented by *(b)* over *(a)*, ordering the list so that a district with the biggest increase is first and that the largest decrease is last.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The information is given in the following table:

Health authority	[1]*Waiting list*	[2]*Waiting list*	*Percentage change*
Waiting for in-patient admission			
Pembrokeshire	1,828	2,510	+37·3
West Glamorgan	4,294	5,521	+28·6
South Glamorgan	6,184	7,876	+27·4
East Dyfed	1,965	2,335	+18·8
Clwyd	4,429	4,959	+12·0
Gwynedd	1,802	1,971	+9·4
Gwent	7,542	7,705	+2·2
Mid Glamorgan	10,483	8,483	−19·1
Powys	100	36	−64·0
Waiting for first out-patient consultation			
Powys	279	640	+129·4
Clwyd	5,967	8,352	+40·0
Gwent	8,475	11,749	+38·6
Pembrokeshire	1,724	2,291	+32·9
Gwynedd	3,257	4,309	+32·3
East Dyfed	4,110	5,189	+26·3
Mid Glamorgan	15,797	16,911	+7·1
West Glamorgan	14,631	14,142	−3·3
South Glamorgan	15,490	14,381	−7·2

[1] As at 30 September 1982.
[2] As at 31 March 1987.

I am, however, pleased to say that the number of cases treated by the NHS in Wales has increased significantly over the same period as the following tables shows.

In-patient cases	*1982*	*1986*	*Percentage change*
Clwyd	51,512	57,519	+11·7
East Dyfed	28,110	31,405	+11·7
Gwent	55,099	65,991	+19·8
Gwynedd	31,227	34,867	+11·7
Mid Glamorgan	64,489	80,119	+24·2
Pembrokeshire	11,513	13,186	+14·5
Powys	5,847	6,842	+17·0
South Glamorgan	69,852	81,891	+17·2
West Glamorgan	52,583	62,050	+18·0
Wales	370,232	433,870	+17·2
New Out-Patient attendances			
Clwyd	63,908	70,506	+10·3
East Dyfed	35,137	40,368	+14·9
Gwent	62,254	75,651	+21·5
Gwynedd	34,483	37,556	+8·9
Mid Glamorgan	74,440	80,587	+8·3
Pembrokeshire	12,614	14,217	+12·7
Powys	7,815	7,492	−4·1
South Glamorgan	100,020	109,412	+9·4
West Glamorgan	57,615	68,971	+19·7
Wales	448,286	504,760	+12·6

EMPLOYMENT

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Cope: The majority of printed material used by the Department is printed on general purpose paper, which may include an element of recycled waste.

Supplies of British recycled paper suitable for general stationery purposes are limited and prices are uncompetitive when compared with a suitable general purpose woodfree printing paper. Currently, prices are approximately 100 per cent. more expensive.

Waste paper acceptable for recycling purposes is collected by an authorised contractor for reprocessing.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of unemployed people in the Nottingham travel-to-work area at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Nottingham travel-to-work area was 38,048.

Tourism

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to stimulate rural tourism.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board is encouraging the provision and improvement of rural tourist attractions and accommodation through its section 4 scheme of financial assistance. Further schemes of support for rural enterprise, including tourism, have also been introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Development Commission. The ETB is consulting these and other interested organisations on the preparation of a rural tourism strategy for England. This is intended to provide a framework to assist effective co-operation between the main public agencies concerned with rural tourism and to stimulate joint tourism initiatives.

New Workers Scheme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why he is withdrawing the new workers scheme from the end of January 1988.

Mr. Lee: Resources devoted to the new workers scheme, which does not specifically help the long-term unemployed, can be better used on other programmes provided for this priority group.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were unemployed in May 1979; and what is the number currently unemployed.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom, excluding school leavers and adjusted for seasonality was 2,714,900. The corresponding figure for May 1979 was 1,152,000.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence he has on the effect of employment rights for part-time workers on the economic conditions for the creation of part-time jobs.

Mr. Nicholls: Evidence from a number of surveys indicates that some employers are reluctant to recruit additional staff because of the employment protection legislation. Although the proportions are small, they represent a significant number of employers and missed employment opportunities.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the number of part-time workers who currently qualify for employment rights but who would be excluded from these if the proposals in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" are implemented; and how many of these would be women.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not our intention to take away employment protection rights from those who currently qualify for them. Estimates of the numbers excluded in the future depend on factors such as the state of the labour market at the time. However, the latest figures available indicate that in March 1986, 313,300 people were in jobs in the categories which would be affected by the proposal to increase the part-time hours thresholds in employment protection legislation. Of these some 93 per cent. were jobs occupied by women.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will now support the adoption of the European Economic Community directive on voluntary part-time work, in respect of non-discrimination between part-time and full-time employees.

Mr. Nicholls: No. This directive would limit the flexibility which is a major attraction of part-time work for both employers and employees. It would increase employers' costs and have an adverse effect on employment.

Restart Scheme

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been interviewed in Avon for the restart scheme in 1987.

Mr. Lee: Up until the end of September, 19,593 people have been interviewed in Avon under the restart programme in 1987.

Farm Accidents

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of fatal and other accidents in farming in each category of adults and children for each year since 1985.

Mr. Nichols: The number of fatal and other accidents in farming in each category of adults and children for each year since 1985 is given in the table:

	1985	*First quarter 1986*	[1]*1986–87*
Fatal			
Adults: Employees	22	3	21
Self-Employed	40	4	20
Others	6	1	6
	68	8	47
Children: Employees	1	0	1
Others	9	0	9
Total	10	0	10
Major			
Adults: Employee	216	46	382
Self-Employed	32	7	67
Others	20	1	57
Total	268	54	506
Children: Employees	2	0	3
Others	23	0	33
Total	25	0	36

[1] Fiscal Year: Provisional.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the effect on the retail prices index of the average 8·5 per cent. electricity price increase assumed by Her Majesty's Government for 1988-89; and what is his estimate of the effect on the cost of living of low-income households, in particular.

Mr. Lee: An average increase of 8·5 per cent. in the price of electricity would currently increase the Retail Price Idex by about 0·25 per cent.

I have no estimate of the effect on the cost of living for low-income households.

YTS

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the number and *(b)* the percentage of YTS trainees, in each London borough, for each year since the YTS began, who have obtained full-time jobs during or at the end of this period on that scheme.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available in the form requested. The Manpower Services Commission has conducted regular follow-up surveys of all YTS leavers since April 1985. The table shows the number and

percentage of those who responded to the surveys and were in full-time jobs at the time of the surveys, for each London local authority district:

Leavers from YTS Schemes during the periods:

	April 1985-March 1986		April 1986-June 1987	
	Number of leavers in full-time jobs	*Percentage of leavers in full-time jobs*	*Number of leavers in full-time jobs*	*Percentage of leavers in full-time jobs*
Harrow	183	68	205	76
Brent	188	47	107	48
Enfield	209	65	250	64
Barnet	140	66	75	77
Harringey	120	53	70	43
Camden	279	66	93	59
Westminster	348	72	274	80
Lambeth	271	58	267	58
Southwark	185	46	260	51
Lewisham	110	53	207	64
Greenwich	167	50	197	58
Bromley	361	67	445	70
Bexley	304	59	415	68
Croydon	317	65	363	71
City of London	303	77	197	77
Islington	123	49	310	57
Hackney	99	56	72	40
Tower Hamlets	124	49	181	48
Newham	163	57	199	56
Barking	166	50	251	67
Havering	279	63	386	68
Redbridge	367	66	418	77
Waltham Forest	190	57	219	60
Kensington and Chelsea	50	53	40	63
Hammersmith	81	58	95	57
Hillingdon	135	59	246	63
Ealing	208	65	174	63
Hounslow	268	68	340	80
Richmond upon Thames	99	79	58	81
Kingston upon Thames	106	75	150	75
Sutton	151	73	236	72
Merton	88	55	168	69
Wandsworth	126	44	83	57

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Caledonian (Proposed SAS Purchase)

Mr. Soames: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to refer any proposed purchase of shares by SAS in British Caledonian to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State announced on 3 December that he had decided not to refer this proposal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. His decision was in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Electronic Rentals (Granada Television Takeover)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will refer the proposed takeover by Granada Television of Electronic Rentals to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: The proposed acquisition of Electronic Rentals Group plc by Granada plc is being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. and noble Friend will make his decision whether to refer the proposed acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of the Director General's advice.

Customs Procedures

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes to customs procedures will be introduced from January 1988; and what their effect will be on figures of imports and exports.

Mr. Alan Clark: The two main elements of the changes are the introduction of the "single administrative document" for freight declaration and an extensively revised tariff and statistical classification based on a new "harmonised system" of commodity classification. The SAD is being introduced at the same time in all European community countries and the HS is expected to be adopted worldwide by most major trading countries. The SAD will reduce the administrative burden on traders; in the United Kingdom alone it will replace 27 existing forms. It is an important step in the creation of a single Community market. The HS is a more up-to-date and useful classification of goods than the present one. It is more detailed and will improve international comparisons of visible trade statistics.

In the first few months of 1988, some traders may be relatively unfamiliar with the new procedures and system

of classification. The visible trade statistics, which are derived from freight declaration documents, may suffer a temporary drop in quality — especially at the more detailed commodity levels. Users of visible trade statistics will, where possible, be advised if there are major effects on the figures.

However, I am sure that all British exporters and their agents, and importers, will co-operate in ensuring a smooth introduction of these quite radical changes—the primary purpose of which is to facilitate trade. The Department of Trade and Industry and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have been involved in an extensive awareness and training programme with trade associations and organisations — and will continue to help traders with questions about the impact of these changes.

An article in *British Business* of 27 November provides more details of the changes and their likely effects. A copy is available in the Library.

Mergers and Takeovers

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will make a statement on the proposals submitted by the Commission of the Common Market on a requirement that Commission approval be required for mergers and takeovers of large United Kingdom companies; and what was the outcome of the meeting on 30 November when this proposal was discussed;

(2) if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting of the Council of Ministers on 30 November in relation to the preparation of a directive to give the Commission powers on the control of mergers;

(3) why he concurred with the Commission proposal on the preparation of the directive designed to give the Commission powers over mergers and takeovers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The proposed EC regulation on the control of concentrations (the "merger control" regulation) was discussed at the Internal Market Council on 30 November, where I represented the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom reserved its position on the principle of such a regulation, indicating that it had substantial difficulties with the proposal.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster under what powers the European Economic Community Commission is seeking to initiate a court action on their jurisdiction over mergers and takeovers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The EC Commission has indicated that it may seek to apply articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome to mergers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department is treating the proposed directive on mergers as one which falls to be considered by majority vote at the EEC Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The proposed EC regulation on the control of concentrations (draft merger control regulation) is based on articles 87 and 235 of the treaty of Rome. Its adoption would therefore require unanimous agreement of the Council of Ministers.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has as to what percentage of the original six members of the European Economic Community's imports of manufactured goods came from the United Kingdom in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable percentage in 1972;

(2) what percentage of the United Kingdom's imports of manufactured goods came from the original six members of the European Economic Community in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and what was the comparable percentage in 1972.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is in the table.

	Share of United Kingdom imports from EC(6) per cent.	*Share of EC(6) imports from United Kingdom per cent.*
1972	34	6·1
1986	49	7·1
12 months to October 1987	48	..

.. Not available. The share in the 12 months ending March 1987 is estimated to be 7·2 per cent.
Sources: United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics, OECD.

Accountancy Firms (EC Directive)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the draft directive relating to outside investment in accountancy firms; when the directive will be considered by the Council of Ministers; and if his Department is treating this proposal as one which falls to be considered by majority vote under the Single European Act.

Mr. Maude: The eighth company law directive, which has been adopted, sets conditions for shareholdings in incorporated firms of auditors: I shall make an announcement later this week of the Government's proposals for implementing this directive.

Girobank

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of *(a)* the turnover of Girobank and *(b)* the profits of Girobank is derived from (i) social security payments and (ii) other Government transactions; and if he will express the figures in cash terms.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is commercially confidential to Girobank, as with any other bank.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to respond to the Countryside Commission for Scotland's report "Forestry in Scotland"; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Countryside Commission for Scotland has not sought a formal, public response from the Government at this stage. Discussions are, however, continuing at official level.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of Scottish gross domestic product in the calendar year 1986 was represented by identifiable public expenditure in Scotland in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Lang: Identifiable public expenditure in Scotland in the financial year 1986-87 was 48 per cent of the estimated Scottish gross domestic product at factor cost in the calendar year 1986.

Devolution

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further representations, pursuant to his statement of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 45, he has received from Scottish industry and commerce about the implications of a devolved assembly with tax-raising powers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I receive frequent representations from industry and commerce expressing concern on this score. Any higher tax burden in Scotland, or even the threat of it, would inevitably have an adverse effect on Scottish industry and commerce and, consequently, on employment. These fears were very much in evidence in the responses to the recent survey of industry and commerce conducted by the Scottish Conservative party.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1983 the total number of hospital beds for each of the following services broken down by health board: *(a)* general medical *(b)* general surgical, *(c)* non-psychiatric acute, *(d)* geriatric, *(e)* maternity, *(f)* mental illness, *(g)* mentally handicapped and *(h)* total.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average available staffed beds in the specialty groupings requested in all NHS hospitals in each health board are set out in the table. Data relate to the year ending 30 September in each case except for 1987 which is the year ending 31 March.

Specialty	*Scotland*	*Argyll and Clyde*	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Borders*	*Dumfries and Galloway*	*Fife*	*Forth Valley*	*Grampian*	*Greater Glasgow*	*Highland*	*Lanark-shire*	*Lothian*	*Orkney*	*Shetland*	*Tayside*	*Western Isles*
1983																
General medicine	4,912	357	266	63	87	175	209	431	1,229	216	408	1,014	—	18	421	26
General surgery	3,789	361	248	67	124	170	151	296	790	221	388	519	41	44	343	36
Other non-psychiatric acute specialties[1]	12,208	681	617	203	246	568	388	1,280	3,219	421	1,186	2,245	10	—	1,277	22
Geriatric	10,401	982	683	235	322	600	565	978	2,125	388	966	1,429	51	87	885	105
Maternity	2,664	244	213	32	73	145	149	256	522	116	252	402	12	11	220	17
Mental illness	16,466	1,448	775	296	664	877	868	1,617	3,832	686	1,732	2,096	—	—	1,582	2
Mental handicap	6,479	327	116	32	26	478	1,125	707	1,454	241	613	773	—	—	388	—
Young Chronic Sick	376	39	—	—	—	14	—	—	193	1	38	46	9	—	36	—
Total	57,295	4,438	2,918	928	1,540	3,026	3,446	5,486	13,355	2,290	5,491	8,522	131	160	5,304	210
1984																
General medicine	4,869	354	271	66	82	174	185	444	1,210	205	412	1,000	—	18	421	27
General surgery	3,797	360	250	69	124	182	146	310	749	226	386	534	44	45	337	35
Other non-psychiatric acute specialties[1]	12,668	679	694	198	252	567	394	1,198	3,163	379	1,068	2,176	15	—	1,263	22
Geriatric	10,780	984	794	240	326	647	601	1,026	2,206	414	971	1,450	52	87	886	105
Maternity	2,633	246	203	33	69	145	146	257	521	117	237	401	12	11	219	17
Mental illness	16,500	1,474	818	292	662	950	868	1,629	3,793	692	1,680	2,091	—	—	1,540	2
Mental handicap	6,255	310	119	33	27	475	1,096	711	1,331	241	613	753	—	—	547	—
Young Chronic Sick	394	38	—	—	—	12	—	20	193	3	38	46	9	—	36	—
Total	57,216	4,445	3,059	931	1,542	3,161	3,436	5,595	13,166	2,277	5,404	8,451	132	161	5,248	208
1985																
General medicine	4,897	360	272	70	86	174	182	454	1,221	201	431	995	—	18	404	27
General surgery	3,715	351	239	69	134	170	141	313	703	232	367	531	42	43	316	33
Other non-psychiatric acute specialties[1]	11,761	670	660	195	262	541	399	1,195	3,095	361	968	2,122	15	—	1,266	23
Geriatric	10,690	981	708	241	326	673	613	1,010	2,193	402	976	1,444	52	84	880	108
Maternity	2,563	241	191	30	70	135	139	255	523	115	211	393	12	11	221	17
Mental illness	16,307	1,457	810	289	633	972	868	1,599	3,710	684	1,685	2,087	—	—	1,503	1
Mental handicap	6,016	316	121	33	29	475	1,066	713	1,211	238	613	664	—	—	536	—
Young Chronic Sick	386	39	—	—	—	12	—	20	193	5	30	46	9	—	32	—
Total	56,336	4,415	3,001	927	1,531	3,152	3,407	5,558	12,907	2,220	5,283	8,279	129	157	5,158	211
1986																
General medicine	4,900	373	271	77	84	176	176	454	1,248	191	424	966	—	22	413	27
General surgery	3,647	340	229	72	125	181	147	308	706	199	360	500	43	40	301	35
Other non-psychiatric acute specialties[1]	11,523	672	637	195	268	539	403	1,194	2,932	353	946	2,039	15	—	1,249	23
Geriatric	10,889	977	716	241	329	701	631	1,039	2,229	405	1,008	1,486	52	87	879	110
Maternity	2,436	239	190	32	65	135	131	252	505	107	203	318	12	11	218	17
Mental illness	16,029	1,424	809	288	598	1,026	862	1,607	3,609	655	1,576	2,077	—	—	1,497	1
Mental handicap	5,948	303	122	35	38	475	1,066	702	1,210	233	592	637	—	—	536	—
Young Chronic Sick	385	39	—	—	—	12	—	20	193	6	34	46	9	—	27	—
Total	55,757	4,367	2,974	939	1,507	3,262	3,417	5,575	12,691	2,149	5,164	8,089	131	160	5,120	212
1987																
General medicine	4,917	386	269	80	85	173	174	449	1,255	190	426	969	—	22	412	27
General surgery	3,613	335	226	74	122	184	149	301	767	196	361	492	42	38	293	35
Other non-psychiatric acute specialties[1]	11,365	621	634	194	266	562	403	1,189	2,882	356	950	2,027	17	—	1,242	23

Specialty	Scotland	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanark-shire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Geriatric	10,940	973	709	241	329	703	634	1,040	2,229	425	1,032	1,512	52	87	881	113
Maternity	2,598	229	187	33	65	154	126	245	498	106	280	384	11	11	219	17
Mental illness	15,820	1,430	865	288	564	1,046	837	1,570	3,549	655	1,469	2,066	—	—	1,501	1
Mental handicap	5,888	290	120	36	42	475	1,066	699	1,191	233	571	631	—	—	536	—
Young Chronic Sick	395	39	—	—	—	12	—	20	893	5	34	46	9	—	27	—
Total	55,338	4,312	2,951	944	1,480	3,290	3,410	5,513	12,559	2,165	5,042	8,047	131	159	5,109	216

[1]Other acute specialties, including supra-area specialties and special categories.
Note: Components may not sum exactly to totals due to rounding.

NHS (Agency Staff)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will give, for each year since 1983 and for each health board, the total expenditure on agency staff, expressed at current prices, constant prices and as a percentage of each health authority's budget.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is contained in the table:

Expenditure by Health Boards on Agency etc.[1] Staff

Health Boards	1983-84			1984-85			1985-86			1986-87		
	As in accounts	As converted to 1986-87 prices[2]	As proportion of gross revenue expenditure[3] per cent.	As in accounts	As converted to 1986-87 prices[2]	As proportion of gross revenue expenditure[3] per cent.	As in accounts	As converted to 1986-87 prices[2]	As proportion of gross revenue expenditure[3] per cent.	As in accounts	As proportion of gross revenue expenditure[3] per cent.
	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000		£'000	
Argyll and Clyde	141	163	0·18	183	202	0·20	1	1	—	23	0·20
Ayr and Arran	9	10	0·01	—	—	—	12	12	0·02	10	0·01
Borders	224	253	1·26	263	289	1·39	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Valley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian	2,035	2,321	1·90	2,102	2,383	1·90	2,503	2,661	2·10	3,151	2·39
Greater Glasgow	593	633	0·17	666	727	0·19	1,537	1,604	0·42	1,996	0·52
Highland	109	124	0·24	116	127	0·24	122	126	0·24	31	0·05
Lanarkshire	264	301	0·27	193	213	0·18	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian	4,637	5,311	2·76	5,830	6,360	2·79	3,706	3,810	1·68	6,347	2·65
Orkney	21	24	0·66	27	29	0·78	25	26	0·69	37	0·93
Shetland	—	—	—	38	39	0·41	40	41	0·46	51	1·03
Tayside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	8,015	9,140	0·46	9,484	10,338	0·73	8,046	8,289	0·58	11,644	0·79

[1] Includes staff supplied by private sector agencies, other casual staff not on NHS payrolls, University staff in teaching hospitals and payments to non NHS hospitals with contractual arrangements with health boards.
[2] Using Gross Domestic Product Deflator.
[3] Minimal percentage figures (ie too small to register as 0·01 per cent. have not been shown.

NHS Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1983 and for each health board the total number of staff as whole-time equivalents in the following categories: *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* professional and technical, *(d)* administrative and clerical, *(e)* ancillary and *(f)* total non-medical staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is published each year in "Scottish Health Statistics", copies of which are held in the Library.

Rating Reform

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has had discussions with the National Farmers Union (Scotland) on the introduction of the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A meeting took place on 16 March between the then Scottish Office Minister for local government and the environment and the National Farmers Union of Scotland about the effect of the community charge proposals on agriculture.

Mental Health

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of a general practitioner's surgery time is devoted to matters attributable to mental health issues.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

Glue Ear

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why the waiting time for an operation for children with glue ear in the Greater Glasgow health board area has risen from 45 days in 1985 to eight or ten months now.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information on waiting times held centrally relates to 1985. I invite the hon. Member to ask the chairman of Greater Glasgow health board whether he can provide more recent information and the underlying reasons for the current position.

Social Work Services Group

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the role of his Department's social work services group; and if he has any plans to review its effectiveness;

(2) what innovative proposals, policy guidelines or ideas for dealing with delinquency have been published by the social work services group;

(3) what innovative proposals, policy guidelines or ideas for dealing with alcohol abuse have been published by the social work services group;

(4) what innovative proposals, policy guidelines or ideas for dealing with drug problems have been published by the social work services group;

(5) what has been the published contribution of the social work services group to policy development for the mentally handicapped;

(6) what has been the published contribution of the social work services group to policy development of community services for the mentally ill;

(7) what has been the published contribution of the social work services group to the development of policy initiatives for 16 to 21-year-old offenders;

(8) what has been the published contribution of the social work services group to the development of policy intiatives for the care of the elderly in the community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The main function of the group is to advise and support Ministers in the exercise of the responsibilities laid upon my right hon. and learned Friend by the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and related legislation and to implement policy decisions taken by Ministers. Some adjustments were made to the internal organisation of the group following an efficiency review undertaken in 1985. Copies of the report on the review were placed in the library. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans meantime to undertake a further review.

I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible on the question of publications.

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987

Mr. Millan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give statistics, by direct court area, of the use made to date by procurators fiscal of the powers granted to them in section 56 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987.

Mr. Rifkind: No use has been made by procurators fiscal of the powers contained in section 56 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987. This section will not be brought into force until 1 January 1988.

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why the *Lanarkshire People* newspaper is not in the list of those newspapers in which his Department intends to advertise on the community charge.

Mr. Lang: The campaign did not cover every Scottish newspaper since there are overlaps in circulation areas. The selection of newspapers for this advertisement was designed to ensure effective coverage in Lanarkshire, as elsewhere, within reasonable cost and I believe that that objective has been achieved.

Agricultural Holdings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any proposals to bring forward legislation in the present Session to consolidate the legislation relating to agricultural holdings in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Progress is being made with the consolidation, but it may not be possible to introduce legislation in the present Session.

Latin

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of implementing standard grade Latin in schools.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: To date some £2,500 has been spent by central Government on the preparation and distribution of curricular material to support standard grade Latin. The allocation of resources within schools is a matter for education authorities.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which schools are taking part in the pilot standard grade examinations of 1986 and the limited trials of the investigative element of 1987 had begun Latin from scratch at the beginning of school year three.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Of the 10 schools which participated in the trial examination in standard grade Latin in 1986, none started Latin in S3 although two schools had courses of only one period a week in S2. Fifteen schools participated in 1987. One candidate took the optional investigative element. That candidate began Latin prior to S3.

Common Illnesses (Hospital Admissions)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which are the 10 most common illnesses for which patients are admitted to National Health Service hospitals for more than seven days in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* The information, based on the three digit codes from the international classification of diseases, ninth revision, for all acute hospitals in Scotland and in Greater Glasgow health board for 1985, the latest available year, is set out in the Table. Information is not available on a constituency basis.

(a) Scotland

1. Acute myocardial infarction.
2. Acute but ill-defined cerebrovascular disease.
3. Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung.
4. Fracture of neck of femur.
5. Heart failure.
6. Cataract.
7. Osteoarthrosis and allied disorder.
8. Other forms of chronic ischaemic heart disease.
9. Chronic airways obstruction, not elsewhere classified.
10. Other symptoms involving abdomen and pelvis.

(b) Greater Glasgow

1. Acute myocardial infarction.
2. Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung.
3. Cataract.
4. Other forms of chronic ischaemic heart disease.
5. Fracture of neck of femur.
6. Acute but ill-defined cerebrovascular disease.
7. Rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory polyarthropathies.
8. Heart failure.
9. Other symptoms involving abdomen and pelvis.
10. Chronic airways obstruction, not elsewhere classified.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which are the 10 most common illnesses for which patients

are admitted for more than seven days into National Health Service hospitals in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* the Clydesdale area and *(c)* Lanark.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* The information, based on the three digit codes from the international classification of diseases, ninth revision, for all acute hospitals in Scotland and in Lanarkshire health board for 1985, the latest available year, is set out in the table. Information is not available on a constituency basis.

(a) Scotland

1. Acute myocardial infarction
2. Acute but ill-defined cerebrovascular disease
3. Malignant neoplasms of trachea, bronchus and lung
4. Fracture of neck of femur
5. Heart failure
6. Cataract
7. Osteoarthrosis and allied disorders
8. Other forms of chronic ischaemic heart disease
9. Chronic airways obstruction, not classified elsewhere
10. Other symptoms involving abdomen and pelvis

(b) Lanarkshire

1. Acute myocardial infarction
2. Acute but ill-defined cerebrovascular disease
3. Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung
4. Heart failure
5. Other symptons involving abdomen and pelvis
6. Cholelithiasis
7. Other and unspecified disorders of back
8. Fracture of neck of femur
9. Cataract
10. Diabetes mellitus

Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of expenditure in real terms in the Scottish Health Service annually since 1979, indicating what proportion of that expenditure relates to *(a)* wage inflation, *(b)* debt charges and *(c)* committed capital expenditure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* The information is not available in the form requested. I have listed in the table gross capital and recurrent expenditure on the NHS in Scotland in real terms since 1979-80.

£ million

	Capital	*Percentage of total*	*Recurrent*	*Percentage of total*	*Total*
1979-80	109·9	6·3	1,642·2	93·7	1,752·1
1980-81	93·6	5·0	1,774·6	95·0	1,868·2
1981-82	121·6	6·3	1,820·9	93·7	1,942·5
1982-83	123·8	6·3	1,841·7	93·7	1,965·5
1983-84	123·3	6·1	1,881·7	93·9	2,005·0
1984-85	128·9	6·3	1,930·4	93·7	2,059·3
1985-86	136·1	6·6	1,921·3	93·4	2,057·4
1986-87	116·2	5·5	2,009·9	94·5	2,126·1
1987-88	118·0	5·3	2,106·2	94·7	2,224·0

The figures given are for gross expenditure expressed in 1986-87 cost terms, using GDP deflator factors. The figures for 1987-88 are estimated.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fish Diseases

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) of 16 November, *Official Report*, column *432*, when he hopes to bring gyrodactylus salaris within the control provisions of the Diseases of Fish Act 1937; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: A statutory instrument under section 13 of the Diseases of Fish Act 1937 (as amended) will be laid before Parliament shortly.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the dumping of sewage sludge by the Wessex and Welsh water authorities off the coast of Devon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

None, except for recent correspondence from my hon. Friend about the quality of bathing waters on the north Devon coast. I understand that current sludge disposal operations in the Bristol channel 11 miles north of Ilfracombe have no measurable effect on bathing water quality in north Devon.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Leicestershire (Capital Projects)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list with the dates any significant capital projects his Department intends to commence in the next five years in the borough of Oadby and Wigston;

(2) if he will list with the dates those sigificant capital projects his Department intends to commence in the next five years in the district of Harborough.

Mrs. Currie: No major National Health Service capital schemes are planned for these boroughs although, of course, recent major developments and future agreed developments in Leicestershire will benefit their residents. These developments include Glenfield general hospital phase I (official opened by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent in March 1986) and phase II (building work started in May 1987) and phase 4B at Leicester royal infirmary (building work started in October 1987) totalling in excess of £60 million between them. The Department does not hold details of schemes costing under £1 million and my hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the Leicestershire district health authority for this information.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria he uses when deciding on the scale of resources to be made available to *(a)* health authorities for treatment and *(b)* the Health Education Authority for educational work in connection with AIDS over the next five years.

Mr. Newton: It is for health authorities to provide treatment services for AIDS and AIDS-related illnesses from within their general allocations. Where additional funds have been made available specifically to help meet AIDS treatment costs they have been directed to those regions carrying the heaviest case loads. Decisions will be made shortly on general allocations to health authorities for 1988-89 and on the allocation of earmarked money for AIDS-related services. Allocations are made on an annual basis and the costs of AIDS treatment services will be kept under reveiw.

Resources allocated to the Health Education Authority for AIDS public education in 1987-88 cover the costs of the operational plan based on the authority's initial AIDS strategy agreed by Ministers. Future funding will take account of the need to sustain levels of knowledge among the general public; to provide effective support to health professionals; and to provide specific information and advice for groups at particular risk.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any extra resources will be made available to local authorities arising from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's recent announcement and the increase in incidence of AIDS.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) on 24 November at column *130*.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest information about the *(a)* concentration and *(b)* contagiousness of the human immunovirus as found in the saliva of carriers.

Mr. Newton: I am advised that the human immunodeficiency virus can sometimes be detected in saliva of infected individuals. Precise quantification of this virus in saliva in those individuals in which it is present has not been performed. There is no evidence that saliva from a HIV-infected person is capable of being infectious to humans.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the amount of money devoted currently and cumulatively to research work on AIDS in the United Kingdom; and what equivalent information he has for France, Germany and the United States of America.

Mr. Newton: It is estimated that expenditure on Government-funded research on AIDS in the United Kingdom in 1987-88 will be £10·5 million. Expenditure for the financial years 1984-85 to 1987-88 inclusive is estimated to total £13·8 million.

Information on the amount spent on AIDS research by non-governmental organisations in the United Kingdom is not available; nor are totals of Government and non-government expenditure in France, Germany and the United States of America.

Dentist's Prescribing Patterns

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what procedures are currently adopted if a dentist's prescribing patterns are considered to be excessively high.

Mrs. Currie: Responsibility for the monitoring of prescribing in general practice rests with the Dental Estimates Board. If the board considers a dentist's prescribing to be substantially out of line with that of his colleagues, it carries out an investigation. This may include arranging for an examination of the dentist's patients by the Department's dental reference service. If evidence of abuse is found, or the dentist is considered to be in breach of his terms of service, the board may initiate disciplinary action in accordance with the appropriate regulations; this was done in 399 cases in 1986-87.

Income Support

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to introduce a linking rule, as for existing benefit entitlements, to ensure that after April 1988 transitional protection is not lost after very short periods of loss of entitlement to income support.

Mr. Scott: We have already provided a linking rule for transitional additions. Normal transitional additions of £10 or more will not cease as a result of loss of entitlement to income support for a period of eight weeks or less, eight weeks being the normal linking period for socal security benefits. This rule also applies to special transitional additions — the protection against loss of domestic assistance additional requirements—of any amount.

Disabled Persons

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why the Government have refused to index-link the transitional protection given to disabled people, presently on benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Protection in cash terms is the normal way to give protection when benefit rules are changed. However, the special transitional addition which will be payable to disabled people in receipt of high amounts of the domestic assistance addition will be index-linked. We will also be monitoring the position of those people in receipt of other transitional additions.

Bradwell Hospital (Domestic Contract)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will establish an inquiry into the decision by North Staffordshire district health authority to award a domestic contract at the new Bradwell hospital, Newcastle under Lyme, to ISC Initial, following agreement that Initial could correct various omissions and mistakes in its tender after the closing date for tenders;

(2) if he will establish an inquiry into the awarding of a domesic contract at the new Bradwell hospital, Newcastle under Lyme, to ISC Initial, in relation to observance by the authority of paragraph 11.1 of its conditions of tender;

(3) if he will establish an inquiry into the awarding of a domestic contract at the new Bradwell hospital,

Newcastle under Lyme, to ISC Initial, in relation to the authority's observance of paragraphs 2.2, 6.2 and 8.5 of its conditions of tender.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that both tenders for this contract were given the opportunity to clarify their documentations after the closing date for tenders. However the award of contracts is a matter for health authorities and the hon. Member may therefore wish to to write to the chairman of the North Staffordshire district health authority for further detailed information.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Sheppey General Hospital

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he will make a decision about the Sheppey general hospital;

(2) what has been the context of representations received about Sheppey general hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Medway health authority has made proposals for changes in the pattern of health care provision in Swale for the next five years, involving seven hospitals in the district, including services at Sheppey general hospital. Following formal objection by the Medway community health council, the proposals have recently been referred to Ministers for decision and we are giving them careful consideration. In the meantime Medway health authority found it necessary to close the in-patient obstetric and gynaecology beds at Sheppey general hospital on an urgent temporary basis from 1 August, because of continuing staffing difficulties. The final decision on the future services will however be considered as part of the Swale proposals. Representations have been received from hon. Members and members of the public about both the Swale proposals and the closure of beds at Sheppey general hospital.

Children (Intensive Care)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by each health district, the amount spent on intensive care for children in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: I regret the information requested is not collected centrally.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list each licensed private clinic with the number of abortions performed in each in 1986.

Mr. Newton: For the list of approved places in England, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 26 October, at columns *170-75*. Information on the number of abortions performed in any individual approved place is not released, for reasons of maintaining confidentiality.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on how many occasions in the past 10 years an abortion has been refused by a private clinic, licensed by his Department, on the grounds that it did not comply with the statutory grounds listed in the Abortion Act 1967.

Mr. Newton: Pregnancy advice bureaux are required to maintain registers which show, inter alia, whether or not women are referred for abortion. These registers, which are inspected by the Department's investigative officers in the course of their inspection visits, show that in some cases women do not proceed to abortion because the grounds of the Abortion Act are not satisfied. As there is no requirement for such cases to be notified, this information is not collected centrally.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the grounds on which abortion is available *(a)* in France after 10 weeks, and *(b)* in Italy after 12 weeks.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the position is as follows:

(a) France—The law provides for abortion after 10 weeks if the continuing pregnancy will place the health of the woman in grave danger or if there is a strong probability that the child will suffer from a particularly serious condition recognised to be incurable.

(b) Italy—Italian law permits abortion after 90 days if her continuing pregnancy would endanger the woman's life or her physical or mental health, for example because of the risk of fetal abnormality.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to *(a)* the maximum number of weeks pregnancy within which an abortion may legally be performed, and *(b)* the grounds on which legal abortion is available, in (i) Austria, (ii) Bulgaria, (iii) Finland, (iv) the German Democratic Republic, (v) Hungary, (vi) Norway, (vii) Poland, (viii) Sweden, (ix) Switzerland, (x) Turkey, and (xi) Yugoslavia.

Mr. Newton: I understand that the position is as follows:

Austria

1. Up to 12 weeks gestation the law allows abortion on demand, providing the woman first visits a medical counselling panel.

2. After 12 weeks gestation abortion is allowed:

(i) if it is necessary to avert a grave danger of the pregnant woman's life or serious damage to her physical or mental health;

(ii) if there is a grave danger that the child's mental or physical health will be seriously damaged;

(iii) if the woman was a minor at the time of conception.

3. There is no gestational age beyond which all abortions become illegal.

Bulgaria

Abortion is allowed on demand up to 10 weeks gestation for married women with two or more living children, married women over 40 with one living child, unmarried women of any age and in the case of rape or incest.

Finland

Abortion is allowed:

1. Up to 12 weeks gestation when:

(i) domestic circumstances are such that caring for the child would be a great strain on the mother;

(ii) when conception takes place in certain specified circumstances, such as rape;

(iii) when either or both parents is unfit, through illness or otherwise to look after the child.

2. Up to 20 weeks gestation when the mother was under 17 or over 40 at the time of conception or had already borne four children.

3. Up to 24 weeks gestation where there are reasons to believe that the child will be feeble minded or physically unhealthy.

4. At any gestational age when the continued pregnancy or childbirth would endanger the life or damage the health of the mother.

Hungary

1. Abortion is legally available on demand up to 12 weeks gestation (or 18 weeks in the case of a single mother).

2. Beyond this, individual cases are considered on their merits by a committee which normally includes the woman's GP. This committee takes into account the mother's health, marital status, number of children, previous abortions etc. 24 weeks is the latest gestational period normally considered by the committee but in exceptional cases a later abortion might be permitted.

Norway

The law permits abortion:

1. Up to 12 weeks gestation on demand.

2. Up to 18 weeks on the following statutorily defined grounds:

(i) if the pregnancy, birth or care of the child may result in unreasonable strain upon the physical or mental health of the woman;

(ii) if the pregnancy, birth or care of the child may place the woman in a difficult life situation;

(iii) if there is a major risk that the child may suffer from a serious disease as a result of its genotype or disease or harmful influence during pregnancy;

(iv) if the woman becomes pregnant as a result of rape or incest;

(v) if the woman is severely mentally ill or mentally retarded.

3. After 18 weeks abortion is only permitted to save the life of the mother or if the fetus when born will not be viable.

Poland

1. The law allows abortion on demand up to 12 weeks gestation.

2. At any genstational age after 12 weeks abortion is only permitted when the mother's health is at risk or when the fetus develops abnormally.

Sweden

1. Abortion is allowed on demand up to 12 weeks gestation.

2. Between 12 and 18 weeks abortion on demand is still available but must be preceded by a special investigation which includes counselling.

3. After 18 weeks, special grounds must be shown and the permission of the Board of Health and Welfare is required. No abortions are permitted if there are grounds to suppose that the fetus is capable of surviving.

Switzerland

Swiss law permits abortion at any gestational age if it is performed by a qualified doctor who has taken a second opinion and when no other means is available to remove a risk to the life or health of the mother. Decisions on whether or when to terminate pregnancies are taken by doctors and it is understood that interpretation of the legislation varies considerably from Canton to Canton.

Turkey

1. Turkish law allows abortion on demand up to 10 weeks gestation provided there are no grounds for concern for the mother's health.

2. After 10 weeks gestation abortion is permissible if:

(i) the pregnancy represents or is expected to represent a threat to the mother's life;

(ii) the pregnancy is expected to produce disabilities in the baby to be born or in future generations.

Yugoslavia

1. Yugoslav law allows abortion on demand up to 10 weeks gestation.

2. Up to 20 weeks gestation abortion is allowed by permission of the Medical Commission.

3. Exceptionally, if medical indications exist abortion may be allowed regardless of the length of gestation.

Stockport Infirmary

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what further capital expenditure plans at Stockport infirmary by Stockport district health authority he has approved.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Supplementary Benefit Offices

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amounts were paid out by the supplementary benefit offices at Seaham and Peterlee in the form of *(a)* single payments and *(b)* urgent needs payments from (i) March 1985 to March 1986 and (ii) March 1986 to March 1987.

Mr. Portillo: Information about urgent needs payments is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information about single payments is given in the table.

	1985-86 £	[1]*1986-87* £
Seaham	237,886	197,572
Peterlee	453,083	417,003

Notes: Information given is for the periods 10 April 1985 to 8 April 1986 and 9 April 1986 to 7 April 1987.

[1] The figures for 1986-87 are provisional and subject to amendment.

Social Security Payments

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures available for the cost to the United Kingdom of social security payments for non-United Kingdom nationals resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that no information is collected about social security payments to non-United Kingdom nationals resident in the United Kingdom.

Surplus Land Sales

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norwich, South of 26 November, whether the proceeds of the sale of surplus land by health authorities may be used to offset revenue deficits or to fund capital projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Receipts from the sale of surplus land and buildings are treated by health authorities as appropriations in aid to capital and used to offset gross capital spending.

General Practitioner Prescriptions

Mr. Bell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of general practitioner prescriptions is paid for by National Health Service patients; what income was received from such charges by the Government in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of general practitioners prescriptions would be paid by patients if the exemption categories were the same as for optical charges; what would be the estimated extra annual revenue at the current prescription charge rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Of the total number of items prescribed by general practitioners and dispensed by pharmacists in England in 1986-87, 18 per cent. attracted the standard prescription charge and a further 5 per cent. went to persons holding prepayment certificates. The total income received was about £140 million.

If the present exemption arrangements were reduced so as to be the same as those applying to optical charges, it is estimated that around 62 per cent. of all prescription items would become chargeable and the additional revenue based upon the current prescription charge would be about £330 million.

Staffing Requirements (Review)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the review of staffing requirements for adjudication, as requested by the Chief Adjudication Officer, has been carried out.

Mr. Portillo: A full review of complements of social security local offices was completed at the end of 1986 which took account of all work including adjudication falling to local offices. A total of over 4,800 additional staff has been allocated to local offices for supplementary benefit work. Adjudication work cannot be identified separately, but part of the additional resources was allocated to this task. A further review of local office staffing for adjudication work is not envisaged.

Benefit Adjudication Officers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his answer of 19 November, what was the total numbers of disallowances of unemployment benefit for each year since 1980, shown under each heading used in the annual analysis of decisions of adjudication officers.

Mr. Portillo: The information available is as follows:

Total numbers of disallowances in Great Britain

Reasons for disallowance	*1980*	*1981*
All questions	949,477	892,198
Days of unemployment		
Availability	40,835	39,642
Capability	3,545	3,408
Employment not terminated	21	27
Failure to attend for interview	424	156
Failure to keep signing time	108	36
Following on occupation	27,751	43,034
Employed to full normal extent	1,606	2,138
Normal idle day	781	1,183
Pay in lieu of notice or wages etc.	181,578	242,975
Recognised or customary holiday	2,431	3,218
Restricted availability	11,391	9,804
Whether employed	25,277	31,205
Delayed claim	83,781	81,289
Leaving voluntarily	350,303	245,779
Misconduct	134,870	103,172
Employment		
Neglect to avail	736	585
Refusal of	8,227	4,194
Refusal or premature termination of training	447	366
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	264	122
Trade disputes	4,291	1,775
Seasonal workers	3,410	3,274
Share fishermen		
Work as	174	408
Neglect to avail	164	1,163
No work available	1,159	3,146
Dependants benefit		
Child	8,402	7,889
Adult	4,478	4,599
Earnings-related supplement	940	1,141
Other questions	51,883	56,470

Total numbers of disallowances in Great Britain

Reasons for disallowance	*1982*	*1983*	*1985*	*1986*
All questions	943,553	977,978	999,441	1,081,394
Capability	4,656	5,518	7,040	8,298
Employment not terminated	147	94	212	21
Engaged in employment	65,350	96,760	71,676	59,361
Employed to full normal extent	3,194	11,636	28,473	35,997
Normal idle day	1,914	1,912	1,773	1,862
Payment in lieu of notice or wages etc.	232,436	232,355	196,394	215,831
Recognised or customary holiday	4,090	5,725	7,254	7,676
Whether unemployed	39,983	47,596	56,872	63,719
Share fishermen				
work as	233	309	230	310
no work available	477	502	305	202
Dependants benefit				
child	6,688	5,162	440	187
adult	4,469	4,249	5,130	4,139
Delayed claim	94,754	104,478	125,241	152,212
Failure to attend for interview	152	325	254	617
Failure to keep to signing time	43	32	78	45
Occupational pensions	262	191	100	143
Availability	52,725	50,243	48,020	61,402
Restricted availability	9,290	6,994	5,660	7,371
Share fishermen—neglect to avail	183	176	117	203
Trade dispute	586	976	2,457	892
Seasonal working	3,995	5,015	6,185	6,658
Leaving voluntarily	255,822	261,284	298,206	314,229
Misconduct	96,318	94,696	98,738	99,503
Employment				
neglect to avail	434	433	762	1,242
refusal of	2,248	1,450	1,534	1,945
Refusal or premature termination of training	274	1,249	7,008	6,322
Refusal to carry out written recommendations	68	94	116	32
Restart	—	—	—	505
Other questions	62,762	38,524	29,166	30,471

Notes:
[1] The headings used in the Annual Analysis changed from 1982.
[2] Figures for 1984 are not available.

Pensions

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what informationhe has, for both a single and a married old age pensioner, as to the total pension he may receive from the state, the amount of supplements to the pension that may be claimed, the other benefits that are available from central and local government and the payments that are necessary for health care, in each European Economic Community country.

Mr. Scott: I refer my hon. Friend to sections II, IV and IX of the Department's publication, "Tables of Social Benefit Systems in the European Communities (Position at 1 January 1987)", a copy of which is in the Library. This covers all the major cash benefits available nation-wide in each member state. Comprehensive information on occasions and benefits from local authorities is not available.

Hospital Car Service

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider establishing a set level of mileage payments to drivers working in the hospital car service so that all drivers wherever they may be working will receive the same mileage allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Under existing arrangements health authorities are free to reimburse drivers in the hospital car service at rates notified annually by the Department, which are based upon those agreed by the General Whitley council for NHS staff. Alternatively, they may determine their own rates to take account of local needs. Given that these can and do vary considerably, it would not be practicable to restrict authorities to a particular fixed rate.

Japanese Experimentation Camp

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what the Government have done to support survivors of the Japanese experimentation camp 731; and what action they intend to take to support the widows of those who have died.

Mr. Portillo: Under the war pensions scheme, administered by the Department, a war disablement or widow's pension is payable where an ex-service man suffers any disability or illness or dies as a result of service in the armed forces, which includes periods spent as a prisoner of war. The Government fully recognise the great hardship and suffering endured by Far Eastern prisoners of war and their claims to war pension are given special and very careful consideration. All Far Eastern prisoners of war are offered a tropical disease investigation to ascertain whether they are suffering any residual effects of disease suffered whilst a prisoner.

Agency Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year since 1983 and for the latest available financial year, and for each regional health authority, special health authority, and district health authority the total expenditure on agency staff, expressed at current prices, constant prices and as a percentage of each health authority's revenue budget.

Mr. Newton: Information derived from the annual accounts of health authorities has been placed in the Library.

Health Authority Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each health authority the total number of nursing staff employed in *(a)* 1979, where possible, *(b)* 1982 and *(c)* 1986.

Mr. Newton: The available information is in the table. Data for district health authorities could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

NHS Nursing and Midwifery Staff (including agency) by Regional Health Authority at 30 September

Whole-time equivalent[1] [2]

Region	*1979*	*1982*	*1986*
Northern	23,900	26,400	27,400
Yorkshire	27,000	30,000	30,300
Trent	32,500	35,400	37,100
East Anglian	12,800	14,400	15,600
North West Thames	26,800	29,100	28,700
North East Thames	30,900	35,100	34,300
South East Thames	29,000	31,600	30,400
South West Thames	23,800	25,000	24,400
Wessex	19,700	21,600	23,100
Oxford	14,700	16,700	16,900
South Western	23,600	26,100	27,000
West Midlands	36,300	41,100	42,500
Mersey	21,000	22,500	22,300
North Western	32,200	37,000	37,900
London Post-Graduate Special Health Authorities	4,100	5,200	4,900
England	358,400	397,100	402,700

Source: DHSS — Annual Census of NHS Non-medical Manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.

[2] No adjustments have been made for the change in nurses' working hours (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week) during 1980-81.

Kidney Treatment

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1982 *(a)* the number of people receiving kidney dialysis treatment and *(b)* the number of people who have received kidney transplants.

Mrs. Currie: According to information supplied by the European dialysis and transplant association registry, the number of patients treated on all forms of dialysis on 31 December in each year since 1982 was as follows:

Number of patients treated in United Kingdom

Year	*Number*
1982	4,751
1983	5,156
1984	5,661
1985	6,381
1986	[1]6,890

[1] Provisional data.

Statistics provided by the United Kingdom Transplant Service on the number of cadaveric kidney transplants performed with the National Health Service in the calendar years from 1982 are as follows:

Kidney transplants with the National Health Service

Year	Number
1982	1,033
1983	1,144
1984	1,443
1985	1,336
1986	1,493

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the report by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg about the kidney transplant service will be released; and if he will make a statement about the delay in its release.

Mrs. Currie: We have been considering this report carefully, and hope to publish it shortly.

Young Claimants

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many 16 year and 17-year-old persons who are not in education chose to remain on social security rather than take up work or accept a training place in the last year.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the form requested, but in August 1987 there were more than 54,000 school leavers in the claimant count, excluding this year's summer leavers. A school leaver for this purpose is a person under 18 who has not entered employment since terminating education. It is not known how many of these have been offered jobs or youth training scheme places, but it is known that there are enough YTS places available for anyone who wants one.

Specialist Treatment

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he proposes to take to ensure that patients received by National Health Service hospitals obtain the necessary specialist treatment in the nearest hospital compatible with patient safety.

Mrs. Currie: I do not think this is a matter in which central direction would be helpful. Patients admitted for a planned course of treatment or an operation will usually have been referred to a hospital near their homes, although a more distant referral may be arranged if this would reduce waiting time. Where the patient is found to require specialist treatment which is provided in only a limited number of hospitals he or she may have to be sent further from home, normally to the nearest hospital which is able to provide the treatment at that particular time.

Job Training Schemes

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many people to date have lost benefits of any kind because they refused places on the YTS and job training scheme;

(2) how many people in Scotland to date have lost benefit of any kind because they refused to accept YTS or job training scheme places.

Mr. Portillo: Between December 1983, when figures were first kept, and 20 October 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, 2,263 people in Great Britain, including 179 people in Scotland, have had their supplementary benefit reduced for refusing a place on the youth training scheme without good cause. Benefit sanctions are not applied to people who refuse places in the new job training scheme.

Gloucester Health Authority

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many in-patient cases and out-patient cases have been treated by Gloucester health authority in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table.

Number of patients treated in NHS hospitals and clinics in Gloucester District Health Authority in the years 1982 to 1986

Year[1]	Deaths and discharges	Day cases	Out-patient attendances[2]
1982	33,624	3,169	186,154
1983	34,009	3,292	186,204
1984	34,341	3,178	189,039
1985	36,562	2,809	193,264
1986	38,175	3,194	186,836

[1] Due to NHS re-structuring in April 1982 comparable data for earlier years is not available.

[2] The reduction on out-patient attendances between 1986 and 1985 was due to the transfer of mental illness services from Gloucester to Cheltenham District Health Authority.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of patients waiting for operations with the Gloucester health authority, for the most recent month for which figures are available, for the same month for each of the last 10 years and May 1979.

Mr. Newton: The available information is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list in Gloucester District Health Authority—NHS hospitals

Month/Year[1]	Surgical specialties	All specialties
September 1982	4,886	4,959
March 1983	4,932	5,018
March 1984	4,416	4,482
March 1985	4,272	4,339
March 1986	4,324	4,346
March 1987	4,138	4,214

[1] Due to NHS re-structuring in April 1982 comparable data for earlier years is not available.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much capital spending the Gloucester health authority has undertaken in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and if he will express the figures in actual and in constant 1987 prices;

(2) how much the Gloucester health authority has spent on revenue services for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and if he will express the figures in actual and in constant 1987 prices.

Mrs. Currie: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of the Gloucester health authority:

	Revenue expenditure		Capital expenditure	
	Per annual accounts £ million	At 1986-87 prices £ million	Per annual accounts £ million	At 1986-87 prices £ million
1982-83	44·7	53·3	3·0	3·6
1983-84	47·6	54·2	2·2	2·5

	Revenue expenditure		Capital expenditure	
	Per annual accounts £ million	*At 1986-87 prices £ million*	*Per annual accounts £ million*	*At 1986-87 prices £ million*
1984-85	50·8	55·5	3·1	3·4
1985-86	53·0	54·6	2·8	2·9
1986-87	59·8	59·8	4·4	4·4

Notes:

1. The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1986-87 prices by the use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator.
2. The figures for capital expenditure include sums in respect of capital schemes within the district recorded in the accounts of the South Western Regional health authority. Revenue and capital expenditure incurred by the latter authority for the region as a whole is excluded.
3. Prior to 1 April 1985 the health district had an associated family practitioner committee and the relevant expenditure figures recorded in the table include small, not separately identifiable elements relating to family practitioner committees' administrative expenses.
4. Prior to 1 April 1982 the health district formed part of the Gloucestershire area health authority and district based figures were not collected centrally.

Dental Care

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the statement of the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) on primary health care, *Official Report,* 25 November, columns *259-60,* what assumptions he has made about future demand for dental inspection and sight testing in calculating the estimated contribution to be made by 1990-91 by those making payments towards dental care and sight testing.

Mr. Newton: The estimates of resources to be released by charges for dental examinations and the other changes to dental charges I announced on 25 November do not need to take into account any assumptions about changes in demand for treatment. This is because over a three-year period, dentists' fees, to which all charges will in future be linked, will be adjusted to take account of changes in demand.

Similarly, the estimated contribution from optical services is not based on assumptions about the future demand for sight tests by those who will pay privately. It reflects the savings from restricting the availability of National Health Service sight tests to certain groups.

Computer Centres

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has hired outside consultants to work in his Department's computer centres; what has been the cost as compared with equivalent Civil Service staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Consultants have been contracted to work in the Department on a number of information technology projects, principally in the development of our operational strategy, the major programme to computerise the assessment and delivery of social security benefit in the 1990s. The Department benefits from the direct input of their technical and information technology management expertise, which is not available in the Civil Service. This means that the major benefits and economies arising from computerisation will be achieved more quickly and effectively — indeed many of these very complex tasks undertaken in the computer centres would not be possible without the skills available in the private sector. As well as providing advice and guidance, consultants sometimes work along-side civil servants in joint teams responsible for delivery of specific products to tight time scales; such an arrangement has been used so that in-house staff can learn skills from the consultants whilst project development continues.

It is not possible directly to compare costs between civil servants and consultants because, as indicated, staff with equivalent skills and the ability to deliver to the same time scale are not available.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of firms withholding national insurance contributions which had been deducted from the pay of employees have been discovered by his Department during each of the years 1980 to 1986 inclusive; what were the amounts involved; how many members of his Department are engaged in investigating such matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested on numbers of cases and amounts involved is not available. There are some 2,000 national insurance inspectors engaged on work, including examination of employers' records, to ensure compliance with national insurance contributions regulations.

Instances of employers collecting, but not paying over national insurance contributions could come to light in routine examination of employers' records by the Department's inspectors or Inland Revenue PAYE auditors and through employees receiving from the Department a statement informing them that their national insurance record was deficient. All such cases are investigated urgently and there are special arrangements to protect the national insurance records of the employees affected to avoid loss of benefit entitlement. The Department has no evidence suggesting that this type of abuse is widespread, but it is investigating a recent report alleging instances in the west midlands.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of recipients of mobility allowance at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The number of recipients, at 1 December 1987, was 509,000.

Health Authorities (Employment)

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will itemise the numbers employed by each regional health authority in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie: The figures are shown in the table:

NHS Directly Employed Staff by Regional Health Authority[1]
at 30 September Whole time equivalents [2]

Region	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern	50,800	52,600	54,100	54,000	54,500	54,200	53,800	53,500
Yorkshire	56,800	59,000	62,300	62,000	61,700	61,000	60,600	59,600
Trent	70,200	70,600	74,000	74,700	74,400	74,500	74,800	74,300
East Anglian	27,400	28,500	29,600	30,000	30,500	30,700	30,600	30,500
North West Thames	58,300	58,700	61,700	60,400	59,700	58,600	56,500	54,800
North East Thames	66,700	67,200	69,400	74,800	74,400	73,100	70,800	69,100
South East Thames	65,300	66,400	68,000	67,800	67,400	65,300	63,400	61,900
South West Thames	50,000	50,700	52,200	50,700	50,800	49,100	47,200	45,700
Wessex	41,100	41,600	43,100	43,800	44,200	44,300	44,200	43,500
Oxford	32,200	33,000	34,200	34,200	34,000	34,500	33,600	33,200
South Western	49,900	51,400	53,100	53,400	53,200	52,800	52,400	52,400
West Midlands	78,100	80,700	84,500	84,700	84,600	84,000	84,400	84,200
Mersey	43,400	43,800	45,200	45,200	44,800	44,000	43,600	42,900
Northern Western	68,000	71,700	74,800	76,200	76,300	75,400	74,700	74,100
England[3]	775,300	793,800	824,400	830,600	829,400	819,300	812,900	801,600

Source:
DHSS(SR7) annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.
Notes:
[1] Includes all permanent paid, honorary and locum medical and dental staff, and agency nursing and midwifery staff. No adjustments have been made for the effects of the reduction in nurses' working hours during 1980-1981 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week) or for the transfer of operating department assistants from ancillary to professional and technical staff group in April 1984.
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.
[3] Includes all staff of regional health authorities, London post-graduate special health authorities, Dental Estimates Board, Prescription Pricing Authority, London ambulance service and family practitioners committees.

Radiographers

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has now received the report which he was awaiting on the examination results from the various bodies training radiographers, and whether he will publish the results.

Mr. Newton: We have not yet received this information from the College of Radiographers. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible. The publication of the results is a matter for the college.

Girobank

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services until what date the Government are contracted to use Girobank for transacting social security payments.

Mr. Portillo: The Department has a continuing agreement with National Girobank for the payment of social security benefits by girocheque. This agreement can be terminated by either party giving 12 months' notice in writing.

Unit General Managers

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each district health authority within the Mersey region, the numbers of unit managers currently employed, the date of their appointment and the total cost in salaries to the district of such appointments.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each district health authority within the Yorkshire region, the number of unit managers currently employed, the date of their appointment and the total cost in salaries to the district of such appointments.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The number of unit general manager (UGM) posts is as follows:

District	*UGMs*
Mersey Regional Health Authority	
Southport and Formby	3
Wirral	3
Halton	2
Warrington	4
Crewe	2
Macclesfield	3
Chester	3
South Sefton	3
St. Helens and Knowsley	3
Liverpool	6
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	
Hull	3
Scunthorpe	3
East Yorkshire	3
Airedale	2
Scarborough	2
Pontefract	2
Wakefield	3
Leeds West	5
Grimsby	2
York	3
Calderdale	3
Harrogate	2
Leeds East	3
Bradford	3
Huddersfield	3
Dewsbury	2

The pay structure for unit general managers comprises five grades with individual posts graded according to the revenue budget and teaching status of the unit. The 1986-87 annual pay rates for these grades are:

	£
UGM 1	28,000
UGM 2	25,500
UGM 3	23,000
UGM 4	20,000
UGM 5	16,500

In addition, a discretionary amount of up to 15 per cent. of the grade rate may be added to reflect the different weights of individual posts, and unit general managers whose performance is assessed as meritorious are eligible for further additions in the form of performance related pay.

The number of unit general managers posts in each grade is as follows:

Mersey RHA
UGM 1 — 2
UGM 2 — 9
UGM 3 — 12
UGM 4 — 8
UGM 5 — 1

Yorkshire RHA
UGM 1 — 2
UGM 2 — 9
UGM 3 — 19
UGM 4 — 12
UGM 5 — 2

Information about the current occupancy of these posts, dates of appointment and total salary costs is not held centrally.

Women (Doctor Consultants)

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he intends to take to ensure that women have the right to consult a woman doctor.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* We accept that many women prefer to have access to female medical staff, particularly for the treatment of gynaecological conditions. Everyone has a right to seek to register with the family doctor of her choice. The Department has issued guidance asking general practitioners, where possible, to refer female patients to a female consultant if they so wish. Women general practitioners and consultants are not always available, but the fact that almost half those now entering medical schools are female should mean an increasing number of women doctors in the National Health Service in future. Because of the length of training, however, it will be some years before parity is reached.

In the meantime, the Department is taking several measures to help women doctors who have children to continue their careers. In addition in the recent White Paper, "Promoting Better Health" (Cm. 249) the Government announced that they would discuss with the professions what arrangements might be made to ensure that more women are encouraged to enter and remain in general practice.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his Department's latest estimate of the number of local authorities operating local schemes under the housing benefit scheme, and the total cost to the authorities concerned of such enhancements.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* A total of 259 authorities are estimated to have operated discretionary local schemes in 1986-87, the latest year for which information is available. Total expenditure on discretionary enhancements to benefit was about £32·4 million. This figure includes expenditure on local schemes and also a small additional amount of expenditure on discretionary increases in cases of individual hardship, for which a separate total is not held.

TRANSPORT

Driving Test

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to make an announcement arising from the review of the driving test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When we have the results of our consultations with the driving instructors' organisations —referred to in the Answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) on 20 November —we shall take a view on the way forward.

Underground (Train Doors)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column 433 what steps have been taken to eliminate sabotage as a cause of recent incidents of underground train doors opening while the train is in motion, with particular reference to the two incidents on 12 November; what safeguards are attached to the special keys which activate the doors; if, for each of the incidents listed by the previous answer for which no cause has been positively identified, he will give the suspected cause; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Unauthorised interference with the operator's panel for opening the doors was one of the possibilities considered by London Underground Ltd. when investigating the recent incidents. Possible measures to prevent such interference are being considered by LUL and will be covered in the report referred to in my answer of 30 November at column 433. The special operators' keys are issued against a signature to those members of the staff who require them for their official duties. The cause of the incidents on 12 November is still under investigation by LUL; the probable cause of the others was given in my earlier answer.

Accident Prevention Exercise (Wiltshire)

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what purpose his Department is carrying out an accident prevention exercise in Wiltshire; what form it is taking; which villages it covers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The purpose of the study is to investigate accident problems on A36, A303 and A419 trunk roads in the county, and to identify possible low-cost improvements or other remedial measures to improve road safety. The study involves an analysis of the accident records; a review of the physical characteristics of problem sections of the roads; and the development of the remedial measures considered to be necessary.

London City Airport

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his oral answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column 592, what steps he has taken, or intends to take, in respect of safety in uncontrolled air space used by commercial airline flights to and from London City airport; and what advice he has received from the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through National Air Traffic Services, for all aspects of airspace management. I understand that the authority is satisfied with the arrangements for commercial airline flights to and from London City airport.

Air Safety

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards air safety in the light of the conclusions contained in the paper presented to the EEC symposium on air safety last week by the director of Cranfield air safety centre regarding the number of fatalities involved in the Manchester airport tragedy which occurred as a direct result of smoke and toxic fumes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Any action on civil aviation safety arising from the conclusions of the paper are a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, which is wholly responsible for aviation safety regulation.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the accident investigation branch has yet reported its conclusions to him regarding the Manchester airport tragedy and any recommendations for the implementation of measures to reduce the risk and severity of such accidents in the future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The investigation by the air accidents investigation branch into the Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport in August 1985 has been complex and exhaustive, going deeply into the problems of survivability.

The investigation is now complete and the draft report is shortly to be sent to the persons entitled to it under the regulations, for their representations. The chief inspector of accidents anticipates submitting the report to the Secretary of State in the spring and it will be published shortly afterwards, subject to any request for a review board.

Soon after the accident the Civil Aviation Authority took airworthiness action on engine failure as a result of information passed by the AAIB. The AAIB also made several recommendations between September and December 1985 concerning the safety of passengers.

Smoke Hoods

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had during the last six months in support of the introduction of regulations requiring the provision of smoke hoods in passenger transport aircraft.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is wholly responsible for aviation safety regulation. A number of representations concerning the provision of passenger smoke hoods have been discussed with the chairman.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the results of the aircraft evacuation tests carried out by Linacre college at Teesside airport in connection with the donning of smoke hoods;

(2) what survey information he has concerning passenger acceptability of smoke hoods;

(3) when the Civil Aviation Authority expects to publish its cost-benefit analysis of safety measures to improve air passenger transport protection.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All aspects of civil aviation safety regulation, including passenger evacuation and the provision of passenger smoke hoods, are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I understand that the authority intends shortly to announce the results of its considerations into the provision of passenger smoke hoods. I will draw the hon. Member's questions to the attention of the chairman of the authority.

Air Services

Mr. Sackville: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to what route licence applications have been received for air services out of *(a)* Manchester and *(b)* Gatwick; and which of each have been (i) rejected, (ii) approved and (iii) are still under consideration.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Air transport licensing is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I am drawing the question to the attention of the chairman of the authority so that he may reply.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusion the collaborative research programme with other countries has drawn, concerning the potential effectiveness of smoke hoods in protecting against smoke and toxic fumes in fire-related civil air passenger transport accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: All aspects of civil aviation safety regulation, including passenger evacuation and the provision of passenger smoke hoods are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. I understand that the authority intends shortly to announce the results of its considerations into the provision of passenger smoke hoods. I will draw my hon. Friend's questions to the attention of the chairman of the authority.

Wortley Curve Rail Line

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will, in the light of the recent court judgment, give a direction to British Rail to reopen immediately the Wortley Curve rail line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It is British Rail's responsibility to decide what action is required following the judgment.

Air Fares

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further progress has been made towards a free market in European air fares; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I am pleased to say that, earlier today, the European Community's Transport Council formally agreed a package of measures liberalising civil aviation within the Community. This is a package which first took shape under the British Presidency in the second half of 1986. Its measures provide important new opportunities for airlines to introduce lower fares, to decide for themselves what capacity to operate, to open up new routes and for greater competition between airlines on routes already operated.

While this represents a major agreement, it is only a first stage. The Council is committed to agreeing on a second, more far reaching, step during 1990 as part of the wider process of completing the Community's internal market by the end of 1992.

London Underground

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library copies of the reports of the fire brigade annual inspections of the London Undergound for 1978 and each year up to and including 1986.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. Now that the formal investigation into the King's Cross fire has begun, LRT will be making all relevant material available to it. I fully recognise the concern of the hon. Member and all Members of the House, and of the general public in the aftermath of the disaster, but it is the investigation that has the responsibility to establish the cause of the accident and to examine the circumstances attending it.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will furnish information on the transportation of nuclear waste through Liverpool airport; how much waste has passed through in the last 12 months; what route it takes from its source; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that British Nuclear Fuels plc has not transported radioactive material through Liverpool airport since November 1985.

Tyres

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to warn motorists about unsafe second hand and remould tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Anybody buying second-hand or retreaded tyres should check their standard and condition carefully first.

To help motorists know what to look for, the Department has sent a poster to MOT testing stations, motor trade associations and other suitable outlets for display.

Drivers should look out for the compulsory E mark required on used tyres and the British Standard BS AU 144b marking required on retreaded or re-moulded tyres. It warns them to check for adequate tread depth and for any signs of damage or unacceptable repair work on second-hand tyres.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if will make a statement on the operation of the vehicle inspectorate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspectorate's annual report for 1986-87 is published today. It provides a useful overall picture of the general condition of Britain's road vehicles. It also sets out the excellent progress made in introducing a more businesslike approach into the inspectorate's work. Unit costs have been reduced significantly and standards of service improved. To enable it to continue to develop this approach and to respond quickly to changes in demand for its fee-earning services, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has agreed that it should be exempted from gross running cost controls as from 1 April 1988. It will be required instead to work within a new system of unit cost and performance targets.

The picture is less satisfactory on the state of Britain's vehicles. Twenty per cent. of buses and lorries continue to fail their annual test. For cars and light goods vehicles the figure is 41 per cent. The vehicle inspectorate is working closely with the vehicle user associations to pin point the causes of the high failure rate and to see how best they can be tackled. The Government will continue to take a tough line against those who consistently fail to maintain their vehicles properly.

Airports

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the growth in numbers of passengers using *(a)* Manchester, *(b)* Birmingham, *(c)* Leeds-Bradford and *(d)* Bristol airports in the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Growth for the 12-month period ending September 1987 (the latest period for which Civil Aviation Authority statistics are available) compared with the previous 12 months was:

	Per cent.
Manchester	16
Birmingham	28
Leeds-Bradford	22
Bristol	35

NATIONAL FINANCE

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing how much tax revenue was collected in capital gains tax *(a)* from gains on quoted shares, *(b)* from gains on unquoted shares, and *(c)* from other gains in the financial year 1986-87; and what the corresponding costs of collection were.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A little over £1 billion was collected in capital gains tax in 1986-87. It is estimated that 40 to 50 per cent. was derived from ordinary shares quoted on the United Kingdom stock exchange, about 20 per cent. from other shares and securities, and the rest from other

property. Corporation tax receipts in 1986-87 from companies gains are estimated at £650 million. I regret that a breakdown by type of gain is not available.

The cost of collecting capital gains tax in 1985-86 is estimated at 1·7 per cent. of the yield.

Company Taxation

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average period for companies to receive repayment of tax from elections under section 177(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information is not available centrally. The repayment period will vary depending upon the precise circumstances. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind, I would be very happy to ask the Inland Revenue to look into it.

Business Expansion Scheme

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing how many companies have equity *(a)* of up to £100,000, *(b)* between £100,000 and £250,000, *(c)* between £250,000 and £500,000, *(d)* between £500,000 and £1 million and *(e)* over £1 million invested under the terms of the business expansion scheme; and what the amount of capital for which relief was given in each of these brackets was in the last three financial years for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is as follows:

Total BES investment per company in each year

	1983-84		*1984-85*		*1985-86*[1]	
	Companies	*Amount £ million*	*Companies*	*Amount £ million*	*Companies*	*Amount £ million*
up to £100,000	495	15	527	15	440	12
£100,000—£250,000	118	19	159	25	110	17
£250,000—£500,000	58	20	59	20	54	18
£500,000—£1 million	32	20	33	22	30	22
over £1 million	12	31	29	66	36	88
Total	715	105	807	148	670	157

[1] Provisional. Final results for 1985-86 are expected to show a slight increase on those quoted above.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the contribution of the relief given to companies raising over £1 million in equity under the business expansion scheme towards stimulating the development of small businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: An assessment of the contribution made by the business expansion scheme towards stimulating the development of small businesses is contained in the Peat Marwick report which was published in March 1986; a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Taxes

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, for each year from 1978-79 to 1986-87, the proportion of total Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise and national insurance fund receipts accounted for by *(a)* income tax, *(b)* employees' national insurance contributions, *(c)* employers' national insurance contributions, *(d)* value added tax, *(e)* excise duties, *(f)* corporation tax and special taxes on profits, *(g)* petroleum revenue tax and supplementary petroleum duty, *(h)* stamp duty, *(i)* estate duty, other death duties and capital transfer tax, and *(j)* capital gains and development land taxes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Details of net receipts by the board of Inland Revenue and by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise by head of duty are given in "Financial Statistics" tables 3.13 and 3.14 and total national insurance contributions are given in table 3.1. Figures for employees' and employers' contributions are not readily available for the financial years requested. Some details of employees' and employers' contributions are available on a calendar year basis in the "National Accounts CSO Blue Book" (table 9.6).

"Inland Revenue Statistics"

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the reason for the delay in the publication of "Inland Revenue Statistics" for 1987; and when he expects to publish them;

(2) if he will update the information on personal wealth contained in appendix D2 of "Inland Revenue Statistics" 1986 for the years 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Norman Lamont: "Inland Revenue Statistics" is usually available towards the end of the year. The 1987 edition is expected to be published early in January 1988. It will contain information on personal wealth for 1984 and 1985. The 1986 estimates are not yet available.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate, for 1985-86 and 1986-87, the total cost of those tax allowances and reliefs detailed in table 1.6 of "Inland Revenue Statistics".

Mr. Norman Lamont: Such a figure would have little meaning, since allowances and reliefs of some kind are an essential feature of any tax system. For the cost of individual allowances and reliefs for 1986-87, I refer the hon. Member to "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90", Volume II (Cm 56-II) Table 2.29.

BP Shares

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many investors have taken up the Bank of England's offer to buy partly paid BP shares at a guaranteed price.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As of close of business on 3 December, I understand the Bank of England had made disbursements in respect of 253 acceptances.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many partly paid BP shares have been bought by the Bank of England from investors selling to the bank at the guaranteed price.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As of close of business on 3 December, I understand the Bank of England had received acceptances in respect of 72,233 shares.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the light of current share values, he has any intention of extending the final possible date for the Bank of England's offer to repurchase partly paid BP shares beyond 6 January.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each day from 20 October until 2 December, the price that will be recognised as the market value in partly paid BP shares, for the purposes of calculating allowable losses to offset against capital gains tax or for computing trading losses.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Capital gains and losses on quoted shares are normally computed by reference to the actual price at which transactions are conducted. It is only in limited circumstances — for example, where a transaction is not at arm's length or is between connected persons—that regard is had to market value. Generally, market value is computed by reference to the prices quoted in the stock exchange daily official list. However, those prices do not always give a guide to market value for particular transactions for tax purposes, particularly when there are large price movements during the day or where sizeable blocks of shares are concerned. In these circumstances it would be necessary to have regard to all the facts of the individual transaction. Against this background, it is not possible to provide a single figure for what would be the market value for tax purposes for shares in an individual company on an particular day.

EC (Payments)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total sum received from the European Economic Community in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what part of this total was in respect of the repayment of export rebates, food storage, and the destruction of food respectively.

Mr. Brooke: The United Kingdom received £2,219 million from the European Economic Community budget during the calendar year 1986. During 1986 some £330 million (14·9 per cent.) was paid to the United Kingdom in respect of the repayment of export rebates, some £151 million (6·8 per cent.) for public intervention storage and some £4 million (0·2 per cent.) in respect of withdrawals of fresh fruit, vegetables and fish. In some circumstances withdrawn produce finds no end use and may be assumed to be spoilt or wasted, although the relevant expenditure is not separately identified.

Eurotunnel

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his reply of 6 November, *Official Report*, column 908, regarding the contractual arrangements for the European investment bank loan to Eurotunnel, in his capacity as director of the bank, he regards the equity issue as having been successfully completed for the purpose of conclusion of contractual arrangements for the loan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: This is a matter for the European investment bank (of which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a governor, not a director). I understand that the bank considers that the condition regarding the raising of £750 million in equity capital has now been fulfilled.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the reply of 6 November, in his capacity as director of the European investment bank, if a decision has now been made on the portion of the European investment bank loan of £1,000 million to Eurotunnel which will be guaranteed by each of the United Kingdom clearing banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I understand that the European investment bank has still not made a decision on which banks should guarantee the £1,000 million loan to Eurotunnel. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is a governor, not a director, of the bank.

Bankruptcy

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the practice of the Inland Revenue in deciding, where moneys are owed to it, whether to take out bankruptcy proceedings rather than a garnishee order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue, like any other creditor, must have been granted judgment by a court before an application for a garnishee order can be made. A garnishee application can only seek to attach, at most, the amount in judgment. Only certain types of debt are attachable. Bankruptcy proceedings, while normally based on a judgment of a court, are commenced in respect of all monies due to a creditor, including sums not subject to judgment. Thus, one consideration in deciding the appropriate course is the relative amounts of judgment debt, tax due outside judgment and sums attachable.

If the Inland Revenue were aware of an attachable debt, it would also consider whether it was significant enough for garnishee to be worth while and what other enforcement processes, short of bankruptcy, were available. In respect of bankruptcy proceedings, it would take into account whether tax liability was accruing at a faster rate than prospective clearance by payments or recovery through other proceedings.

Value Added Tax

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards widening the base of value added tax of the opinion delivered by the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice on 2 December.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 3 December 1987, at column 698.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the European Commission with regard to their proposals to harmonise excise duties and value added tax.

Mr. Lilley: The Commission formally presented its package of tax proposals to the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers on 16 November. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor made it clear then that we would not permit to come into force any proposals that in any way conflicted with pledges the Government has given concerning the United Kingdom's zero rates of VAT. The Council confirmed that the Economic Policy Committee should carry out an economic analysis of the Commission's proposals before further consideration of them by Economic and Finance Ministers.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the current standard rate of value added tax applied in each EEC member state and, where there is no standard rate in a particular country, that rate which produces the highest tax revenue.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) on 3 December 1987 at column *583*, which lists all the VAT rates applied in the individual member states of the EC, including the standard rates to which he refers.

Job Creation

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the average cost of each job created in the following Government programmes: *(a)* enterprise zones, *(b)* the business expansion scheme, *(c)* urban development corporation and *(d)* regional selective assistance.

Mr. Major: These programmes are part of the Government's wider policy of helping markets to work more effectively. That policy, combined with the sound macro-economic policies we have pursued has secured great success, helping to generate 1·25 million new jobs in the United Kingdom since 1983. Adult unemployment (seasonally adjusted) has fallen for 16 months in succession.

Cost per job is one of a number of measures used in assessing programmes which are aimed at job creation. Where relevant and available, information is given in the public expenditure White Paper. Questions on such measures in relation to individual schemes are a matter for the Secretary of State responsible for them. No current information on cost per job is available for the business expansion scheme.

Income Tax

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate of the revenue yield from an increase in the rate of income tax of 1p taking into account current economic growth and unemployment figures.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimated direct revenue effect would be about £1·25 billion in 1988-89 and £1·60 billion in 1989-90, as published in table 4.5 of the Autumn Statement 1987.

Corporation Tax

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give *(a)* the total revenue received from corporation tax and *(b)* that sum as a percentage of all revenue received from taxation, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

Net receipts of corporation tax[1]

	£ million	*Per cent.*[2]
1978-79	3,940	8·1
1979-80	4,646	7·6
1980-81	4,645	6·5
1981-82	4,930	5·7
1982-83	5,679	6·2
1983-84	6,184	6·4
1984-85	8,341	7·8
1985-86	10,708	9·4
1986-87	13,495	11·3

[1] Including advance corporation tax.
[2] As percentage of total taxes and royalties.
Source: Table 3.13 and S24 Financial Statistics.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his policy towards the use of prosecution as a means of dealing with tax evasion.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The law provides for money penalties to be the normal punishment for tax evasion. However the possibility of prosecution is an important deterrent to the spread of tax evasion. The Inland Revenue therefore considers prosecution where a fraud is particularly prevalent or where a case is a very serious one of its type.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Excehquer if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of full-time equivalent posts dedicated solely or mainly to the detection of tax evasion.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* 3,264 Inland Revenue officers, measured in staff unit equivalents, were assigned solely or mainly to investigation work at 31 March 1987.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details or estimates of the amounts of unpaid tax recovered by the Inland Revenue for each year since 1979 from *(a)* persons prosecuted for tax evasion and *(b)* persons dealt with but not prosecuted for tax evasion.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The total yield—tax, interest and penalties—due from Inland Revenue investigations for each year since 1979 is as follows:

Year ending 31 October	*£ million*
1979	111·6
1980	137·9
1981	165·1
1982	265·6

Year ending 31 March	£ million
1983	304·8
1984	399·2
1985	594·4
1986	694·5
1987	741·3

It is not possible, except at disporportionate cost, to distinguish amounts relating to prosecution cases from those relating to non-prosecution cases. Nor is it possible to state how much of the amount due was ultimately recovered.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details or estimates of the number of persons dealt with by methods other than prosecution for tax evasion since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The Inland Revenue figures do not distinguish between cases of outright fraud and other cases which have been investigated. Nor are the figures for the number of individuals concerned available. However, the number of cases where additional tax has become due as a result of an investigation is as follows:

Tax Office and Enquiry branch investigations

	Number yielding extra tax only	Number involving interest, or interest and penalties (in addition to tax)
Year to 31 October		
1979	31,651	21,229
1980	30,870	22,344
1981	32,589	22,515
1982	35,649	27,656
Year to 31 March		
1983	35,392	31,417
1984	33,585	37,249
1985	31,747	38,859
1986	27,105	37,484
1987	22,949	38,707

PAYE audit investigations

	Number where only current year adjustments necessary	Number where adjustments of earlier years necessary
1984-85	3,920	17,179
1985-86	3,879	20,431
1986-87	4,480	23,848

The method of recording information altered in 1984 and comparison with earlier years would not be meaningful.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of estimates of the amount of tax due but not recovered from persons known to be involved in tax evasion since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* This information is not held centrally.

May Day Holiday

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on the gross national product of abolition of the May Day bank holiday.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* None. The Government at present have no plans to abolish the May Day bank holiday.

Pay-as-you-earn

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the numbers of persons paying pay-as-you-earn, for the last 10 years for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The table gives estimates of the numbers of individuals who were liable to tax on their total income and had income subject to PAYE which was greater than the PAYE threshold. Married women are included if their earned income exceeded the maximum amount of wife's earned income relief. I regret that information for earlier years could be compiled only at disproportionate expense.

Year	Number of individuals (millions)
1980-81	22·9
1981-82	22·8
1982-83	22·6
1983-84	22·2
1984-85	21·8
1985-86	21·9

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prisoners

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings have been convened by the Life Sentence Review Board; how many prisoners' cases they have reviewed; and what were their recommendations, in each of 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Stanley: The information is set out in the following table:

	1985	1986	[1]1987
Number of meetings	9	11	8
Number of cases considered	127	108	112
Cases recommended for consultation with the judiciary with a view to the setting of a provisional release date	26	26	20
Cases put back for further review	101	82	92

[1] To date.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many applications were made for the severe weather heating allowance at the social security offices in Downpatrick, Ballynahinch, Newcastle, Kilkeel, Banbridge and Newry (County Down) during the winter of 1986-87;

(2) how many successful applications were made for severe weather heating allowance and how much money was paid by the social security offices in Downpatrick, Ballynahinch, Newcastle, Kilkeel, Banbridge and Newry (County Down), during the winter of 1986-87.

Mr. Needham: Information is not readily available in the precise form requested. The available figures are as follows:

Social Security Office	Number of payments	Amounts	Claims disallowed
Downpatrick	1,331	6,655	334
Ballynahinch	602	3,010	268
Newcastle	931	4,655	335
Kilkeel	835	4,175	223
Banbridge	1,784	8,920	307
Newry	4,794	23,970	1,363

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will increase the amount payable in respect of severe weather heating allowance to old age pensioners in Northern Ireland; and if he will consider making the allowance available throughout the year.

Mr. Needham: No.

Security

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current estimate of the cost of security related to the Northern Ireland conflict as an absolute figure, a percentage figure of all Government expenditure in Northern Ireland and as a per capita figure for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* In 1987-88 it is estimated that expenditure by the Northern Ireland Office on law, order, protective and miscellaneous services (LOPMS) will amount to some £512·4 million. This comprises approximately 10·5 per cent. of total Government expenditure in the Province. In addition, the cost of deploying the armed forces in support of the Royal Ulster Constabularly is estimated at £168 million in 1987-88. Taken together this works out to be a cost of some £12 per person in the United Kingdom.

Note: The LOPMS budget includes expenditure on items (for example, civil defence) not directly related to the terrorist campaign, and the bulk of LOPMS expenditure (for example, on the RUC and on prisons) does not all arise from the terrorist campaign.

Mr. Anthony Hughes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will call for a report from the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary as to when the clothes and car belonging to the late Anthony Hughes will be returned to his wife; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The motor vehicle and clothing belonging to the late Mr. Anthony Hughes are items of important evidential value to the RUC in its investigations into his death. Until these investigations are completed and it is clear that the items are no longer required either by the Director of Public Prosecutions or Her Majesty's coroner they will need to be retained by the police.

Children (Intensive Care)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, by each health authority, the amount spent on intensive care for children in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham: It is not possible to give this information, as expenditure on hospital services for children is not identified separately and could be derived only at disproportionate cost.

Terrorism

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding Her Majesty's Government's policy towards attempts by constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland to make common cause against IRA terrorism and its sympathisers.

Mr. Needham: None recently, but I would welcome any efforts to bring about a constructive dialogue between the constitutional political parties.

Playgroups

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent by each board on grants for pre-school playgroups in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

	Year ending 31 March		
	1985 £	1986 £	1987 £
Northern board	61,833	54,067	75,054
Southern board	12,496	18,757	31,361
Eastern board	753,422	734,216	823,948
Western board	122,557	114,941	142,837
Northern Ireland Total	950,308	921,981	1,073,200

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Maghaberry, in each month from April to November; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making a remand appearance at court, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Stanley: The information requested is as follows:

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Total number of searches carried out	49	34	22	33	24	36	20	46
Total number of inmates searched	27	22	14	22	18	28	15	33
Number of prisoners searched once	9	13	8	12	12	20	10	20

	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Number of prisoners searched twice	15	7	5	9	6	8	5	13
Number of prisoners searched three times	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
Number of prisoners searched four times	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
Reason for Search								
First admission on remand awaiting trial	8	11	2	6	7	10	6	12
First admission on sentence/ final discharge	25	13	14	20	12	23	12	29
Attending Remand Court	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Attending Trial	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Attending Appeal	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bail Court appearances	7	4	—	1	3	2	1	2
Going on and returning from home leave	2	4	6	4	1	—	—	2
Inter-prison visit	2	—	—	2	1	1	1	—
After a visit	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1

No prohibited article was found during these searches and no prisoner refused to be searched.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year and since 1983, the total number of hospital beds for each of the following services, broken down by health board: *(a)* general medical, *(b)* general surgical, *(c)* non-psychiatric acute, *(d)* geriatric, *(e)* maternity, *(f)* mental illness, *(g)* mentally handicapped and *(h)* total.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Available beds in Northern Ireland by Board 1983-86

	1983				1984				1985				1986			
	E	N	S	W	E	N	S	W	E	N	S	W	E	N	S	W
General medicine	714·1	363·9	335·1	206·5	728·4	346·7	333·7	206·3	728·2	349·7	332·2	211·2	634·8	357·1	317·4	222·9
General surgery	789·0	381·3	369·4	234·8	759·5	367·9	372·1	231·7	797·3	370·0	389·5	227·5	714·6	375·3	390·2	219·1
Non-psychiatric acute	2,656·9	424·8	292·7	435·8	2,611·3	401·0	294·1	322·3	2,565·5	415·2	302·3	416·9	2,302·5	374·3	300·4	406·3
Geriatric medicine	1,194·7	545·6	420·1	443·8	1,180·1	548·8	418·7	444·8	1,173·9	546·0	417·2	438·0	1,234·7	535·4	415·0	441·9
Maternity	362·6	181·0	171·1	177·4	152·3	181·2	171·6	177·2	363·5	182·0	172·2	175·3	339·5	180·5	176·6	154·0
Mental illness	2,128·8	647·0	563·0	1,378·0	2,059·8	626·8	558·0	1,339·3	1,919·8	640·0	558·0	1,345·0	1,889·8	629·5	510·8	1,285·0
Mentally handicapped	837·3	—	454·5	209·0	823·0	—	458·1	209·0	826·3	—	436·5	209·0	814·0	—	445·0	209·0
Total[1]	8,736·4	2,518·4	2,605·9	3,100·3	8,367·4	2,477·4	2,606·3	2,945·6	8,426·5	2,507·9	2,607·9	3,037·9	7,981·9	2,457·1	2,555·4	2,953·2

[1] Includes young chronic sick beds, which are not included in the table.
E = Eastern Health and Social Services Board.
N = Northern Health and Social Services Board.
S = Southern Health and Social Services Board.
W = Western Health and Social Services Board.

NHS Staff

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1983 and for each health board, the total expenditure on agency staff, expressed at current prices, constant prices and as a percentage of each health authority's budget.

Mr. Needham: Since 1983 only two health and social services boards have incurred expenditure on agency staff. The information is as follows:

	(1) Expenditure on agency staff	(2) Constant prices[1]	(3) Percentage of boards' revenue expenditure
	£	£	£
Eastern Board			
1982-83	83,593	96,800	0·03
1983-84	54,900	60,778	0·02
1984-85	49,478	52,466	0·02
1985-86	1,685	1,685	0·0005
1986-87	Nil	—	—
Western Board			
1982-83 to 1984-85	Nil	—	—
1985-86	10,500	10,500	0·01
1986-87	Nil	—	—

[1] Figures have been adjusted for inflation (at 1985-86 prices) by using the GDP deflators.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each year since 1983 and for each health board the total number of staff as whole-time equivalents in the following categories: *(a)* medical and dental, *(b)* nursing and midwifery, *(c)* professional and technical, *(d)* administrative and clerical, *(e)* ancillary and *(f)* total non-medical.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Northern Ireland Health and Personal Social Services Staff at 31 December by Health and Social Services Board (Figures are W.I.E.)

Health and Social Services Board/Category	Year 1983	1984	1985	1986	[1]1987
Eastern:					
Medical and Dental	1,288·82	1,308·34	1,306·65	1,307·46	1,326·29
Nursing and Midwifery	9,984·84	9,822·65	9,583·24	9,492·56	9,361·54
Professional and Technical	2,070·33	2,072·16	2,039·67	2,025·57	1,962·41
Administrative and Clerical	2,909·66	2,957·94	2,988·23	3,037·56	3,051·74
Ancillary	7,698·48	7,545·24	7,357·57	7,157·47	7,092·50
Total Non-Medical	22,633·31	22,397·99	21,968·71	21,713·16	21,468·19
Northern:					
Medical and Dental	274·53	280·18	271·59	276·15	283·91
Nursing and Midwifery	2,831·13	2,901·07	2,895·35	2,905·50	2,920·17
Professional and Technical	520·81	526·32	511·78	510·23	486·27
Administrative and Clerical	994·12	1,029·05	1,059·37	1,053·45	1,050·07
Ancillary	2,519·53	2,497·69	2,502·85	2,404·20	2,337·24
Total Non-Medical	6,865·59	6,954·13	6,969·35	6,873·35	6,793·75
Southern:					
Medical and Dental	244·97	252·68	256·35	254·58	252·00
Nursing and Midwifery	2,968·81	2,932·68	2,969·14	2,827·82	2,856·35
Professional and Technical	424·35	437·40	455·03	417·50	371·05
Administrative and Clerical	782·88	814·61	824·76	821·21	815·32
Ancillary	2,677·73	2,613·93	2,551·34	2,449·99	2,400·74
Total Non-Medical	6,853·77	6,798·62	6,800·27	6,516·52	6,443·46
Western:					
Medical and Dental	219·77	229·54	233·46	243·81	247·87
Nursing and Midwifery	2,889·44	2,863·56	2,871·89	2,886·51	2,915·22
Professional and Technical	403·09	[illegible]16	386·08	391·45	359·30
Administrative and Clerical	693·44	715·86	745·15	756·69	781·46
Ancillary	2,299·78	2,284·27	2,299·56	2,237·84	2,271·89
Total Non-Medical	6,285·75	6,272·85	6,302·68	6,272·49	6,327·87

Note: Total Non-Medical is the total of Nursing and Midwifery, Professional, Technical, Administrative and Clerical and Ancillary.
[1] 1987 figures at 30 September.

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to appoint a social fund commissioner to be responsible for the social fund as it applies to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Mrs. Rosalind Mackworth has been appointed to serve as social fund commissioner in Northern Ireland as well as in Great Britain for a period of three years from 1 December 1987.

DEFENCE

Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last discussed the proposed intermediate range nuclear forces treaty and its consequences with his NATO colleagues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend last discussed the prospective INF agreement collectively with his NATO colleagues at the defence planning committee meeting in Brussels on 1-2 December, a copy of the communiqué from which will be placed in the Library.

Low-Flying Aircraft

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to his reply of 10 November, *Official Report*, column *160*, he is now in a position to make a statement following his review of low-flying training over the residential developments of Hardwiche and Quedgeley.

Mr. Freeman: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 30 November 1987.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the accident analysis capabilities of the computer installed in the RAF inspectorate of flight safety; and what information it provides on low-flying accident rates per 10,000 hours.

Mr. Freeman: The computer system used by the Royal Air Force's inspectorate of flight safety is designed to allow the timely retrieval of accident data relevant to the safety of RAF aircraft. It contains information on all serious accidents to RAF aircraft since 1979. The time actually spent at low level by RAF aircraft during training sorties is not recorded. The information requested is, therefore, not available.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he proposes to reply to recent letters sent to him by hon. Members on the subject of low-flying aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: I will send full replies to those hon. Members who have written to me on the subject of low flying as soon as possible. Correspondence from hon. Members normally requires investigations and the number of such letters has recently risen significantly. In the meantime, I have sent either acknowledgements or interim replies to all such Members.

Home Defence

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost to his Department's budget of providing home defence for the protection of the United Kingdom in the event of hostilities in Europe.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to figure 10 in the 1987 "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Foxhunter

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 5 November about negotiations with Marconi Defence Systems over the Foxhunter radar programme, when the negotiations started; for what reasons they have lasted so long; and when he expects them to be concluded.

Mr. Sainsbury: Negotiations began early this year. I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 12 November at column *303*.

Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 5 November, when he expects to be in a position to make a further statement about the cost overrun in the redevelopment programme at Aldermaston.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to my answers to the hon. Member of 30 October and 12 November at columns *485* and *303*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the precise purposes in relation to the Trident project for which the new capital facilities at Aldermaston are designed.

Mr. Sainsbury: The programme to improve or replace aging capital facilities at Aldermaston was announced in 1979, before the decision to purchase Trident. The facilities relate basically to plutonium processing, waste management and supporting facilities such as conventional power generation. None are solely for the purposes of Trident.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards collaboration in relation to the joint targeting and maintenance of nuclear weapons within NATO, with specific reference to the United Kingdom and French deterrent forces.

Mr. Ian Stewart: All our nuclear forces are assigned to NATO although they remain at all times under the control of the British Government and are capable of being employed independently when supreme national interests are at stake. In their NATO role, United Kingdom nuclear warheads are targeted by SACEUR in accordance with the Alliance's general political guidelines. The servicing or maintenance of United Kingdom nuclear warheads has always been and will continue to be a purely national responsibility.

France's nuclear forces are outside the integrated military structure of the Alliance.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 13 November, *Official Report*, column *334*, regarding nuclear weapons in Europe, how the minimum number of weapons to be maintained by NATO will be assessed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The size of NATO's forces in Europe is determined by politico-military assessments of what is required to implement the strategy of flexible response. Details of these assessments are classified.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Freeman: The use of recycled paper by the Ministry of Defence remains as set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) in his reply to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 26 January 1987, at column *128*.

The Ministry arranges for scrap paper and board to be collected from its units and establishments through contracts let by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Depending on the quality and suitability of the material, it is understood that much of it is recycled by the industry in a range of papers and cardboards.

Sea-launched Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given by his Department to the problems of verification posed by sea-launched cruise missiles.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The United Kingdom is not involved in arms control negotiations on these systems. However my Department maintains a continuous and close interest in all aspects of verification.

Trident

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions officials of his Department met the Comptroller and Auditor General or his staff in the course of the preparation of the most recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the control and management of the Trident programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: The report on the control and management of the Trident programme (HC 27) was compiled by the staff of the Comptroller and Auditor General after thorough examination of my Department's records and after extensive discussion and correspondence with a number of my officials.

This process covered all parts of my Department engaged in the control and management of the United Kingdom Trident programme and covered a period of some 15 months.

US Submarines (Holy Loch)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of incidents involving the leak of radioactive material from United States nuclear-powered submarines in Holy Loch since 1975; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There have been no incidents involving leakages of radioactive materials from United States nuclear-powered submarines in the Holy Loch since 1975.

Air-Launched Stand-Off Weapons

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *34*, he will place in the Library the memorandum of understanding on the development and production of air-launched stand-off weapons.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have today placed in the Library of the House a copy of the memorandum of understanding concerning general arrangements for the collaborative development and production of a modular stand-off weapon system.

Flying Accidents (Compensation)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many relatives of aircrew killed in flying accidents have been able to benefit from compensation from his Department, following the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has received no claims from relatives of aircrew killed in flying accidents since the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987 became law on 15 May. Any claims for compensation will be dealt with on their merits and on the basis of any legal liability on the part of the Ministry of Defence.

RAF (Accident Reports)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to place copies of Royal Air Force aircraft accident reports in the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. It is already the usual practice, however, to place in the Library of the House unclassified summaries of the findings of boards of inquiry into major Royal Air Force aircraft accidents.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many animals have been subjected to penetration wounds in order to assess the effectiveness of military weapons, for each year since 1979;

(2) how many animals have been subjected to blast wounds in military experiments, for each year since 1979;

(3) how many animals have been subjected to chemical weapons tests by his Department, for each year since 1979;

(4) how many animals have been killed in military experiments, in each year since 1979;

(5) whether animals involved in wounding or blast experiments by his Department are anaesthetised prior to the experiments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: A relatively small number of scientific procedures involving animals is carried out, principally in order to assess the safety and effectiveness of protective measures against chemical and biological attack. Some procedures are also carried out in order to improve our understanding of wounds and our ability to treat them. Animals involved in all such procedures are deeply anaesthetised. In no instance are animals used in work to improve weapon performance. Scientific procedures involving animals are carried out on important work only after careful consideration of alternatives has shown that none is an adequate substitute and the lowest possible order of animal is selected, usually mice, guinea pigs and rats. It is not our policy to make detailed information available on scientific procedures involving animals in the defence field, but I can say that the overall annual figure which was less than 7,000 in 1986, constitutes less than one half of one per cent. of all animal experiments conducted in the United Kingdom.

Harrier GR 5

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any Harrier GR 5 aircraft have been flown since the loss of a GR 5 in October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Harrier GR 5 test flying has been suspended until the cause of the accident on 22 October has been fully investigated. A board of inquiry, which was convened on 24 October, is still in progress, and flying is unlikely to be resumed before early next year.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the order for the second batch of Harrier GR 5 aircraft has been postponed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 16 November at column *454*. The second batch order has not been postponed and ordering is consistent with the need to maintain the manufacturing programme and aircraft deliveries.

Bird Strikes

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force aircraft have been lost as a result of bird strikes for each year since 1979, listing the aircraft type and the location.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Aircraft Type*	*Location*
1979	Jaguar	Federal Republic of Germany
1980	Harrier	Dyfed
1980	Jet Provost	North Yorkshire
1980	Nimrod	Grampian
1981	Jaguar	Tayside
1982	Hawk	Devon
1983	Jaguar	Grampian
1983	Jet Provost	North Yorkshire
1984	Hawk	Gwynedd
1984	Harrier	Falkland Islands
1985	Nil	—
1986	Nil	—
1987[1]	Nil	—

[1] To 4 December.

RAF Aircraft (Losses)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force aircraft have been lost as a result of technical malfunction for each year since 1979, listing the type of aircraft involved.

Mr. Freeman: On those losses of Royal Air Force aircraft for which board of inquiry findings are available, the following have been identified as having occurred owing to technical malfunctions:

Year	*Number of Aircraft*	*Aircraft Type*
1979	5	Hunter/Jet Provost/Harrier Buccaneer/ Lightning
1980	7	Buccaneer/Hunter/Phantom/Jaguar/ Harrier/Canberra
1981	3	Hunter/Lightning
1982	6	Hunter/Jaguar/Victor/Harrier
1983	2	Jet Provost/Tornado
1984	5	Harrier/Tornado/Hawk/Lightning/ Chinook
1985[1]	0	——
1986	1	Harrier
1987[1]	0	——

[1] To 4 December

The statistics only relate to accidents where technical malfunction was identified as the cause. Accidents where the board of inquiry has not yet reported are excluded, as are also those where the cause cannot be positively determined.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Jet Provost aircraft have crashed as a result of technical malfunction for each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Aircraft lost through technical malfunction as positively identified are as follows:

	Number
1979	1
1980	0
1981	0
1982	0
1983	1
1984	0
1985	0
1986	0
[1]1987	0

[1] To 4 December.

RFA Argus

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argus will be tasked as an aviation support ship for the Royal Marines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: RFA Argus will replace RFA Engadine. Her peacetime role will be as an air training ship. In war, her task would depend on the priorities at the time and she could be used to provide helicopter support in the amphibious group.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Argus will enter Royal Navy service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is expected that the ship will leave the shipyard in the new year. Following a period of extensive trials and training, the vessel is scheduled to enter service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary towards the end of 1988.

RNSSIX Satellite System

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the RNSSIX satellite system.

Mr. Sainsbury: Procurement of the SSIXS from the United States has been under way for some years, for fitment mainly in Royal Navy submarines. Interoperability between the navies of our two countries has been enhanced in consequence of this acquisition, and the equipment has proved very reliable in operation.

Sea Wolf

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met trade union representatives of Rose Packaging Ltd., Gainsborough, to discuss the Sea Wolf launcher contract.

Mr. Sainsbury: My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement met trade union officials representing employees of Rose Forgrove Ltd. in July 1986. Matters associated with the development of a launcher for lightweight Sea Wolf were discussed.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he next expects to place orders for the lightweight Sea Wolf;

(2) which Royal Navy vessels will be fitted with the lightweight Sea Wolf; and how many units will be fitted to each vessel.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 10 November at column *157*.

Thunder and Colt Balloon Factory

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why eight crew members of HMS Argonaut were flown to the Thunder and Colt balloon factory in Oswestry on Monday 9 November.

Mr. Freeman: Crew members from HMS Argonaut were flown in the ship's Lynx helicopter to the Thunder and Colt balloon factory, Oswestry, at the invitation of Per Lindstrand in recognition of the part the helicopter played in the rescue of Mr. Lindstrand following his transatlantic balloon flight in July of this year. The visit was made during a navigational training flight which included three hours instrument flying and three radar let downs. This flight was a pre-requisite for a pilot's instrument rating lost and so no extra cost fell upon public funds.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of flying a Lynx helicopter to the Thunder and Colt balloon factory in Oswestry on Monday 9 November.

Mr. Freeman: The cost of flying the Lynx from Portland to Oswestry and back was £4,476. As the flight was, however, carried out as part of the air crew's training programme, there was no extra cost to public funds.

Higher Beardon Farm, West Dartmoor (Barracks Block)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what will be the cost of building a barracks block on Higher Beardon farm, West Dartmoor;

(2) what will be the size of the barracks that his Department intends to build on Higher Beardon farm, West Dartmoor;

(3) why his Department has postponed its formal application to the Dartmoor national park committee to build a new barracks block on Higher Beardon farm; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what account his Department took of the proximity of Okehampton camp in deciding upon the necessity for a new barracks block at Higher Beardon farm; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 23 November 1987, *Official Report*, column 35-36. The Ministry of Defence proposals to replace Willsworthy camp at Higher Beardon farm, Lydford, were submitted to the Dartmoor national park authority on 19 October, in accordance with normal procedures, which we continue to follow. Okehampton training camp could not be used for this purpose, mainly because it is too far away to provide ready access to shelter from the harsh and rapidly changing weather conditions on the moor. The proposed camp is not a barracks, but would merely provide overnight shelter for up to 100 troops using the ranges. It would be a single storey building which, with a small parking area, would cover about half an acre, about a third of the size of the present camp. The cost of construction would depend on the results of a competitive tender.

Royal Naval Fleet

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what size he estimates the Royal Navy fleet will be by the year 2000.

Mr. Ian Stewart: On current plans, the size and shape of the Royal Navy in the year 2000 should not differ greatly from what they are now.

Aldermaston Defence Establishment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the recent leak of radioactive material from a pipe at Aldermaston defence establishment.

Mr. Sainsbury: On Wednesday 2 December an escape was discovered from the pipe which carries treated effluent from the atomic weapons establishment (AWE) Aldermaston to the River Thames. The escape was terminated promptly by AWE staff and no special action was required. Both the amount and the level of contamination were small, falling well below the notifiable reporting level. None the less, all the relevant authorities and the occupiers of adjacent properties were informed of the situation.

No effluent is discharged from AWE until it has been fully treated and checked to ensure that it is below the limits set by the regulatory authorities. This escape took place when the pipe was being refilled with clean water following routine maintenance, so the effluent involved in the escape was even more diluted than usual. The cause appears to have been an incompletely closed sampling point, though the precise circumstances are being investigated. At no time has there been any danger to either the public or the environment—indeed, the levels found were barely above the recommended guidelines for drinking water. However, surplus water has now been removed by tanker to AWE and the area has been subjected to a thorough check.

Noise Disturbance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what representations he has received about the noise disturbance caused by the large number of Chinook landings at RAF Molesworth on 4 December;

(2) what representations he has received about the noise disturbance caused by the large number of aircraft movements into RAF Alconbury on 3 December.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 8 December 1987

WALES

Children (Intensive Care)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by each health district in Wales, the amount spent on intensive care for children in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: This information is not collected centrally.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by each Welsh district health authority, the cost of abortions in money and as a percentage of all Health Service expenditure, in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Grist: This information is not collected centrally.

Primary Schools (Bus Transport)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if any grants are available from his Department for bus transport to Welsh primary schools in Wales where the main language of teaching is Welsh.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No, but local education authorities have powers to provide school transport free of charge where they consider it necessary. Expenditure on such transport is eligible for rate support grant.

Cleddau Bridge (Tolls)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to abolish the Cleddau bridge tolls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This is a matter for Dyfed county council which is the owner and operator of the bridge.

PRIME MINISTER

Bradford

Q11. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Bradford.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Stourton Coundle

Q33. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Stourton Coundle.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Enniskillen

Q50. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement following her visit to Enniskillen.

The Prime Minister: I found the Remembrance service which I attended in Enniskillen on 22 November a most moving occasion. I have been deeply impressed by the brave and noble response of the people of Enniskillen to the horrific murder of 11 people on Remembrance Sunday.

This Government will never concede to those who seek to pursue their aims through violence. We shall continue to give all possible support to the security forces and to the law abiding people of the Province in resisting terrorism. We shall also strengthen co-operation on security with the Government of the Irish Republic, as agreed at my recent meeting with the Taoiseach.

Godshill

Q88. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to make an official visit to Godshill in the Isle of Wight.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Polish Foreign Minister.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insurance Companies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what measures he has of the effectiveness of the monitoring by his Department of the London Life Association Ltd. life assurance company; and whether his Department has received any report on the internal management reporting and internal control systems operated by that company;

(2) if his Department receives, as part of its work on monitoring the financial and trading position of life and other insurance companies, regular reports from independent accountants on the adequacy of the management information systems and internal control systems in those companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My Department monitors the financial and trading position of non-life insurance companies mainly by examining the returns which insurance companies submit each year. In the case of life insurance companies, examination of the returns is carried out on behalf of my Department by the Government Actuary's Department.

Regulations require that there shall be annexed to each return a certificate by directors of the company which, unless such a statement cannot truthfully be made, must state

"that for the purposes of preparing the return—

(i) proper accounts and records have been maintained and adequate information has been obtained by the company, and

(ii) an appropriate system of control has been established and maintained by the company over its transactions and records".

It is also a requirement that there shall be annexed to the return a report by an auditor, who must be independent and qualified, stating, inter alia,

"in the auditors' opinion and according to the information and explanations they have received . . . whether it was reasonable for the persons giving the certificate to have made the statements therein."

The most recent return for London Life Association Ltd. relates to the year ended 31 December 1986, and both the directors' certificate and auditor's report are in standard form.

I am satisfied that the monitoring by my Department and the Government Actuary's Department of London Life Association Ltd. has been effective. Officials contacted the company in 1986 because of concern about its financial position and reviewed with the company the remedial action it was then taking. At the beginning of November this year, the company was asked for an update on its financial position and in particular about the impact of the stock market falls and my Department has been kept informed of the further remedial action initiated by the company, and continues to be in close touch with the company.

Westminster Property Group plc

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any information on the progress of the inquiry into the affairs of Westminster Property Group plc; and whether he or the inspectors have referred any matters arising from the inquiry to the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. Maude: The inspectors' report on the affairs of Milbury plc and on the membership of its subsidiary, Westminster Property Group Ltd., has been received. Certain matters arising from the investigation have been considered by the Crown Prosecution Service, which has decided that no action should be taken.

Fireworks

Miss Fookes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will finance or organise a national training scheme for the organisers of firework displays;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to require the manufacturers of fireworks to sponsor a national training scheme for the organisers of firework displays.

Mr. Maude: No. The fireworks industry already helps train organisers of major displays when requested. I am not convinced that a national training scheme is needed. Organisers should follow the instructions on the fireworks and heed the advice in the leaflet for display organisers issued by my Department.

Timber

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will adopt trade directives or regulations which positively discriminate in favour of timber from sustainable sources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Community's import regime for timber is in general a liberal one, and the Community is committed to the further liberalisation of trade in tropical products, including tropical timber, in the GATT Uruguay round. The Government would need to study carefully with Community partners any specific proposals from the world timber industry for positive discrimination world-wide in favour of imports from sustainable sources. Such proposals would need to be consistent with the Community's international trade obligations, which normally require non-discriminatory treatment as between like products from all suppliers.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure the implementation of the International Tropical Timber Organisation's policy objectives.

Mr. Atkins: The Government support the objectives of the international tropical timber agreement and recognise that they contain provisions both to promote the expansion of trade and the encouragement of sustainable tropical forestry development.

The United Kingdom was one of the first signatories to the agreement, and we have continued to be supportive in the work of the organisation.

Export Controls

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when changes in strategic export controls, recently agreed in COCOM, will be introduced in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Export of Goods (Control) Order 1987 (SI. 1987/2070) published today and coming into force on 1 January 1988 includes agreed changes to strategic export controls. My Department is also publishing a booklet on these controls for the guidance and information of exporters. Copies of both the order and the booklet are being placed in the Library.

Patents

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the expected level of throughput of patent applications through the United Kingdom Patent Office, in the light of his policy of expediting the transfer of work to the European Patent Office in Munich.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans to transfer domestic applications to the European Patent Office. For a number of reasons the demand for patent services from the United Kingdom Patent Office is reducing. I am therefore considering what steps might be taken to ensure that the United Kingdom Patent Office can provide a more cost effective service which will thereby benefit United Kingdom users.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what percentage of the European regional development fund's grants made to the United Kingdom during 1987 was made to the south-west region.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The south-west region's share of 1987 grants so far has been 6·0 per cent, but further allocations of grant in respect of 1987 remain to be made.

Sendzimir Club

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps have been taken to ensure that the

Sendzimir Club, which controls the price of stainless steel and of which British Steel is a member, promotes an efficient, competitive market in stainless steel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The main safeguard of an efficient, competitive market is EC and national competition law, for which the appropriate authorities are the European Commission and the Director General Fair Trading.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Origin Survey

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when his Department will publish the report of the latest phase of the staff-in-post ethnic origin survey of the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: A copy of the latest phase of the staff-in-post surveys covering London and the south east and East Anglia will be published tomorrow. Two other reports will be published at the same time. These are:

(a) a pilot ethnic origin survey of departmental recruitment.

(b) a joint management-trade union side response to the findings of a report by Social and Community Planning Research on school leavers attitudes to the Civil Service.

Copies of these three reports will be placed in the Libraries of Parliament.

THE ARTS

Libraries (Funding)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his proposals to provide incentive funding for public libraries.

Mr. Luce: I am glad to announce the establishment of an incentive scheme for public libraries in England. For this, I have set aside £250,000 a year for three years, 1988-89 to 1990-91. The main objective of the scheme is to promote new developments in the provision of these services. The awards given, following open competition, will cover up to 40 per cent. of the cost of development projects and feasibility studies. I shall give priority to the support of activities which involve collaboration with other libraries and the private sector. I have placed a descriptive note on the scheme in the libraries of Parliament.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the formation of new urban development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave on 7 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward).

Urban Regeneration Grant

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was budgeted for the urban regeneration grant for the last 12-month period; and how much was spent.

Mr. Trippier: Urban regeneration grant was introduced in April 1987. £30 million of public expenditure was allocated for urban regeneration grant and urban development grant together in 1987-88. Expenditure at the end of September is estimated at £14·3 million.

Council House Sales

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses and flats were sold in each London borough from 8 May to 8 May for five years up to and including 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Information on council house sales has been collected almost wholly in regular quarterly returns and the figures in the table are those reported for the period of five years from 1 April 1982.

Sales of dwellings by London boroughs
April 1982 to March 1987

	Number
City of London	915
Barking and Dagenham	[1]5,365
Barnet	3,585
Bexley	1,414
Brent	[1]1,502
Bromley	3,760
Camden	660
Croydon	[1]3,264
Ealing	[1]2,511
Enfield	3,300
Greenwich	[1]2,347
Hackney	[1]731
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,513
Haringey	[1]1,950
Harrow	1,372
Havering	[1]1,965
Hillingdon	[1]1,776
Hounslow	2,302
Islington	[1]944
Kensington and Chelsea	504
Kingston upon Thames	1,097
Lambeth	[1]700
Lewisham	[1]2,515
Merton	2,401
Newham	[1]2,104
Redbridge	[1]1,795
Richmond upon Thames	1,282
Southwark	[1]1,545
Sutton	1,719
Tower Hamlets	[1]913
Waltham Forest	[1]1,992
Wandsworth	7,627
Westminster	[1]1,367

[1] Complete returns not available for whole period.

Toxic Waste (Storage)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration is being given to proposals for the storage of nuclear or toxic waste off the North sea coast utilising existing coal mines as means of ingress; and if he will make it his policy not to adopt such proposals.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend is not aware of any proposals to store radioactive or toxic waste off the North sea coast with access via existing coal mines. We have no policy to adopt such proposals.

Wildlife

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends making a final decision on the granting of full protection under section 9(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to further wildlife species;

(2) which animals, recommended by the Nature Conservancy Council for further protection, partial protection or full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 quinquennial review, were not so included in his recent announcement of changes to the Act's protected lists;

(3) if he will give reasons for the exclusion of each of those species recommended by the Nature Conservancy Council for further, partial or full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 quinquennial review which were not so included in his recent announcement of changes to the Act's protected list.

Mr. Moynihan: Further to the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on Tuesday 1 December of wider protection for a total of 79 species of animals and plants under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, he is currently giving further careful consideration to the conservation case for those species recommended for protection by the NCC and not referred to in his announcement. The species concerned are the adder (vipera berus), allis shad (alosa alosa), basking shark (cetorhirius maximus), freshwater pearl mussel (margaritefera margaritefera) and 22 species of British butterflies (rhopalocera). A final announcement on these will be made in due course, when further evidence on these species has been secured and evaluated.

Housing Improvement Grants

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the number and value of housing improvement grants in each year since 1974.

Mrs. Roe: The numbers and amounts of housing renovation grants paid to private owners and tenants in each year from 1974 to 1983 appear in table 7.2 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1974-1984", and the figures for 1984 to 1986 are in table 2.18 of "Housing and Construction Statistics" part 2, No. 30: copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Renovation and New Building (Whitehall)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated total cost of the renovation and new building works in Whitehall incorporating Richmond terrace.

Mr. Chope: I reported in November 1986 that the estimated cost of construction and fitting-out was £36 million. The current estimate, including contractors' claims paid to date, additional inflation and variation of price payments, is £38·6 million. The final cost will depend on settlement of the final account including claims still being negotiated.

Housing Land

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the joint housing land availability studies which were recommended in his Department's circular 15/84.

Mr. Waldegrave: Joint studies by local planning authorities and housebuilders which look in detail at the housing land supply situation, have now been completed for 33 structure plan areas; details are given in my Department's "Progress Report Land for Housing", published on 13 November, copies of which are in the Library.

These studies have demonstrated their value in establishing the facts of land availability, and I hope that planning authorities and housebuilders will continue to co-operate in keeping them up to date.

Problems have arisen in some instances over the treatment of sites which are not individually identified in the study, but may in aggregate make a significant contribution to land supply. It may be helpful to amplify the advice given in paragraph 8 of annex B to DOE circular 15/84.

Land availability studies should not normally attempt to identify small sites of less than 0·4 ha (one acre) or infill sites; nor should they identify small sites which are not specifically allocated for development or redevelopment. But such sites, together with the conversion of larger houses into smaller units or the adaptation of non-residential buildings for use as housing, can make a useful contribution to total housing provision and this is to be encouraged. It is reasonable therefore that land availability studies should include a realistic allowance for supply from these sources. On the basis of past experience and appraisal of future potential, the local planning authority and housebuilders should aim to agree an allowance for this in the overall assessment. Whatever allowance is made should be clearly justified by evidence of the contribution which such sites have made to housing provision in the area in recent years, and should not be overestimated.

Larger sites of more than 0·4 ha that are likely to become available for development within the five-year period should normally be capable of being identified and should be assessed on the basis set out in the circular. While some unidentified sites of more than 0·4 ha may become available, their incidence is likely to be highly variable and their contribution to housing land supply is inherently unpredictable. To attempt to take such sites into account is likely to introduce too great an element of uncertainty into the overall assessment and no allowance should be made in the studies for this factor.

Rating Reform

Mr. Raison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his best estimate of the total annual amount of central Government support, assuming 1987-88 budgeted expenditure, that would be required to pay for rebates on the proposed commmunity charge.

Mr. Howard: The cost of rate rebates is estimated, on the basis of assumptions underlying the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, to amount to £1,370 million in Great Britain next year. As indicated in the financial memorandum to the Local Government Finance Bill, the

estimated additional cost of community charge rebates in England and Wales is £130 million. This estimate is, however, sensitive to factors such as changes in the number of claimants, the level of the community charge, and the precise details of the rebates, which have not yet been determined.

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies he has commissioned into the feasibility of a banded community charge; and if he will publish them.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* A banded community charge is a local income tax rather than a community charge. In addition to all the disadvantages of LIT, a banded community charge would uniquely have major "earnings trap" effects, whereby a person whose income rose by £1 could find his bill increasing by as much as £400.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what maximum payment of community charge including community water charge would have been payable by pensioners on basic retirement pension income, in the current financial year, for each local authority area; and if he will express each sum payable as a percentage of the total community charge in that area.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* Water is not a local government service in England. On the basis of the 1988-89 social security arrangements, all pensioners wholly reliant on a state pension would pay only 20 per cent. of the full community charge levied by their local authority and would receive help towards that 20 per cent. through income support.

Environment Council

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 3 December.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on Monday 7 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

Storm Damage Expenditure

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached following his consultation with local authorities about the exclusion of storm damage expenditure from grant penalties.

Mr. Ridley: On 21 October I announced that in view of the severe damage caused by the storm on 16 October the Government would make available to local authorities special financial assistance under the Bellwin rules. This meant that the Government would meet 75 per cent. of the costs of eligible works above a threshold.

I subsequently made it clear that the threshold proposed for the operation of the Bellwin rules would apply cumulatively to any subsequent emergency for which the Government were prepared to grant special financial assistance during the course of the financial year. To help, where expenditure was not eligible for Bellwin assistance, the Government proposed to make additional capital allocations available.

I also announced that I proposed to exclude from total expenditure—in effect to relieve from grant losses—that 25 per cent. of eligible expenditure above the threshold which authorities would have to meet themselves.

I have consulted local authorities and the associations on my proposal for a total expenditure exclusion and considered very carefully their comments.

For 1987-88, I now propose to widen the exclusion to cover all storm-related revenue expenditure above the threshold defined for Bellwin rules whether eligible for special financial assistance or not, including revenue contributions to capital outlays made by the end of March 1988.

I also propose to exclude from total expenditure all debt charges incurred in respect of capital expenditure on storm damage on 16 October up to the end of March 1989 in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, after which grant entitlement will no longer be affected by expenditure.

I shall be consulting the local authorities and associations on these revised proposals.

I have also been asked by local authorities to extend beyond 31 January the date by which work eligible for special financial assistance must be completed. I have therefore decided to extend the date by which work of an emergency nature must be completed to 1 March.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Redundancies

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many employees of his Department have been made redundant on grounds of redundancy or financial exigency in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Eight, four of whom are on notice which expires in May 1988

These redundancies occurred as follows:

1981 — One part-time cleaner in a local office. Cleaning services were arranged with the major occupier of the building.

1986 and 1987—Two typing staff. Local offices closed.

1986 — One packer, nominally on secondment to British Library at Boston Spa. Post regraded and incumbent unwilling to accept regrading.

1987—Four security guards, all over 60, given requisite notices of redundancy in May 1988 on contracting out of service.

Competitive Team Sports

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to seek to ensure that all state school children take part in competitive team sports.

Mrs. Rumbold: The working group on physical education which my right hon. Friend will set up in due course will recommend guidelines for the content of physical education as a foundation subject within the national curriculum.

Taking account also of the recommendations of the forum on school sport set up by my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider the place of sport in schools, we hope to ensure a balanced programme of physical education, including competitive sports within all maintained schools.

Religious Education

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the extent to which current teaching includes instruction on Christian history and Christian values for all pupils.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's inspectorate provides evidence through reports of inspections on the nature and quality of religious education given in schools. All the agreed syllabuses currently in use give a central place to teaching about Christianity. Where an LEA wants to update its syllabus, it is a statutory requirement that the Church of England should be represented on the conference appointed by a local education authority for this purpose.

Open University

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if there is to be any change in the arrangements for funding the Open University.

Mr. Jackson: No. The Open University will continue to be funded directly by my right hon. Friend.

Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now appoint a chairman to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following the Second Reading on 1 December of the Education Reform Bill, which makes provision for the establishment of a Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, I have invited Sir Ronald Dearing to become the first chairman of the council. I am delighted to say that he has accepted. Sir Ronald will relinquish his present appointment as chairman of the Council for National Academic Awards next summer.

Advanced Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much capital expenditure for advanced further education in each local education authority in England and Wales was *(a)* applied for and *(b)* spend in each of the last six years, respectively, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of their allocated advanced further education numbers.

Mr. Jackson *[pursuant to his reply, 12 November 1987, c. 182]:* The table sets out LEAs' bids for advanced further education capital expenditure in cash terms and on a per student basis for each of the financial years 1985-86 to 1987-88. The bids per student were calculated using the National Advisory Body target AFE student numbers (in full-time equivalents) for the year in question. Similar information for the earlier years is not available.

Local Education Authorities

	1985-86		*1986-87*		*1987-88*	
	AFE bid £000	*Bid per student* £	*AFE bid* £000	*Bid per student* £	*AFE bid* £000	*Bid per student* £
Barking	2,136	380	2,511	451	2,679	483
Barnet	2,943	423	4,048	582	6,750	989
Bexley	26	70	—	—	—	—
Brent	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bromley	62	69	—	—	90	104
Croydon	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ealing	912	303	1,211	402	1,797	597
Enfield	—	—	—	—	—	—
Haringey	—	—	—	—	—	—
Harrow	—	—	743	766	750	801
Havering	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hounslow	828	421	134	68	277	147
Kingston-upon-Thames	2,531	433	3,854	687	7,378	1,313
Merton	124	354	40	114	—	—
Newham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sutton	—	—	—	—	—	—
Waltham Forest	—	—	—	—	—	—
Inner London	2,935	92	8,757	274	13,875	422
Birmingham	403	59	2,460	353	2,606	369
Coventry	1,656	261	6,759	1,051	5,079	788
Dudley	—	—	23	62	—	—
Sandwell	22	23	—	—	25	30
Solihull	—	—	—	—	—	—
Walsall	120	146	—	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	1,910	337	3,784	678	3,966	710
Knowsley	—	—	—	—	—	—
Liverpool	4,021	466	2,802	323	5,416	653
St. Helens	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sefton	—	—	—	—	—	—

	1985-86		1986-87		1987-88	
	AFE bid £000	Bid per student £	AFE bid £000	Bid per student £	AFE bid £000	Bid per student £
Wirral	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bolton	105	52	200	98	250	121
Bury	—	—	—	—	—	—
Manchester	4,465	370	4,609	374	5,683	450
Oldham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rochdale	—	—	—	—	—	—
Salford	669	393	198	121	488	280
Stockport	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tameside	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trafford	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wigan	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barnsley	—	—	—	—	—	—
Doncaster	124	134	140	144	—	—
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	2,102	230	2,704	290	2,980	315
Bradford	322	194	795	481	1,307	796
Calderdale	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kirklees	1,776	347	3,045	592	4,936	963
Leeds	973	136	1,338	188	1,408	198
Wakefield	120	112	107	96	188	170
Gateshead	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,235	159	3,994	508	5,096	626
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	238	382	168	260	45	76
Sunderland	860	197	3,993	913	5,516	1,268
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—
Avon	4,125	494	3,796	449	1,787	218
Bedfordshire	413	192	212	97	334	142
Berkshire	372	104	495	142	400	114
Buckinghamshire	910	624	1,104	781	1,090	770
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	1,000	489
Cheshire	21	7	180	61	196	65
Cleveland	999	242	3,345	827	1,420	357
Cornwall	—	—	220	275	366	470
Cumbria	129	140	135	136	60	54
Derbyshire	240	84	910	323	1,720	638
Devon	1,751	246	1,884	264	752	104
Dorset	1,314	476	1,426	526	2,410	879
Durham	—	—	—	—	—	—
East Sussex	1,492	252	2,190	363	5,250	881
Essex	2,240	601	728	194	994	264
Gloucestershire	153	82	454	246	947	503
Hampshire	1,418	131	9,625	873	3,017	273
Hereford and Worcester	20	12	22	13	1,049	585
Hertfordshire	1,933	311	3,573	585	4,558	727
Humberside	689	200	1,372	390	1,138	328
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	111	50	326	145
Lancashire	2,155	274	3,684	461	3,202	389
Leicestershire	615	83	2,125	288	3,725	513
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	218	156
North Yorkshire	46	50	195	201	214	221
Northamptonshire	239	134	849	448	385	189
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nottinghamshire	1,193	143	1,266	151	1,602	185
Oxfordshire	4,188	873	7,179	1,513	4,780	980
Salop	—	—	—	—	—	—
Somerset	—	—	—	—	—	—
Staffordshire	989	179	4,030	729	4,858	837
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—	—
Surrey	30	15	406	204	220	109
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
West Sussex	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
England	61,284	228	109,933	408	126,603	465

ENERGY

Coal Industry (Grants)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the value of total grants made to the coal industry by the Government since 1946-47 at 1987 prices.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information on grants made to the coal industry can be obtained from the British Coal Corporation's annual report and accounts, copies of which are held in the Library of the House. To convert figures to 1987 prices one should refer to tables 114-117 (general index of retail prices—all items) of *Economic Trends* annual supplement 1987, a copy of which is also held in the Library.

Electricity (Privatisation)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, when next he meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, he will discuss with him the case for the maintenance of the national grid in the event of privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet Lord Marshall regularly to discuss matters relating to the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. Our proposals for privatisation do not envisage the breaking up of the national grid.

Electricity (Cross-Channel Link)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if there are any plans to pursue the possibility of a further cross-Channel link to secure the interchange of electricity between France and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB keeps this matter under regular review with Electricite-de-France. There are no plans at present for a further cross-Channel link.

Seismic Data

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans there are for the release of seismic data.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I have no plans for releasing seismic data.

Oil Exploration Records

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements are in hand for the public release of offshore and onshore oil exploration records held by his Department; if any changes are to be made to the time scale for the release of information on wells drilled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Arrangements have been in existence since 1976 for the release of well data after five years. I have no plans at present to change the time scale for the release of such information.

SCOTLAND

Tourism

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to assist the tourist industry in Fife, North-East.

Mr. Lang: The development of the tourist industry in Fife, North-East is primarily the responsibility of the industry itself as the main beneficiary. The local authorities and the Scottish Tourist Board co-operate with the industry in a number of ways, including the partnership in the area tourist board. For its part, the Scottish Tourist Board will continue to encourage and assist development in the area, as elsewhere in Scotland, and will consider all proposals on their individual merits and in relation to the board's overall priorities. I understand that the board, in conjunction with other bodies, is currently examining tourism opportunities in the East Neuk of Fife.

Windblow

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there will be any nature conservancy involvement in the committee dealing with windblow problems; and whether the Nature Conservancy Council will be represented on this committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to the Forest Windblow Action Committee set up by the Forestry Commission. This committee is primarily concerned at this stage with providing advice to woodland owners on the clearing of blown timber and the orderly marketing of that timber. This being so, there is no need for the Nature Conservancy Council to be represented. The committee will be able to seek the advice of the council if nature conservation issues arise in connection with the replacement of the blown woodland.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department has contingency plans to contain an epidemic of AIDS within the heterosexual population of Edinburgh in the next five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At present there is little evidence of infection among the heterosexual population in Edinburgh, apart from intravenous drug misusers. One of the objects of the Government's public education campaign is to persuade the public to take the necessary safeguards to avoid the spread of the infection. Nevertheless, an expert working party we set up in November last year under the general manager of Lothian Health Board (the Tayler working party), in assessing the likely scale of the AIDS problem in Scotland, estimated that a small number of the heterosexual population would contract AIDS by 1991. Any estimates of the numbers developing the disease have to be treated with extreme caution, but meantime health boards have been asked to plan on the basis of the Tayler report.

Children (Intensive Care)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by each health authority, the amount spent on intensive care for children in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information is not available.

Forests (Tourism)

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has regarding the number of tourist visits paid to forests run by the Forestry Commission in 1986; and what information he has about any plans to develop forests further for tourism.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available in the form requested, but surveys carried out in 1987 suggest that as many as five million visits are made to Forestry Commission forests on a Sunday in the peak holiday season. The commission is reviewing its recreation policies at present, giving particular consideration to how it might further encourage tourism and collaborate with other interested agencies to help meet the growing demand for countryside recreation. Three new forest parks were announced in 1987, with special provision for public access and recreation.

Trees

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to seek to ban the export of raw logs and endangered tree species; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans to ban the export of logs. I am not aware of any tree species in the United Kingdom that might be endangered through exports.

Egg Production

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his estimate of and basis of calculation for the cost to the Scottish egg industry of adapting to EEC battery cage legislation in Scotland;

(2) what is his Department's estimate of and basis of calculation for the costs of compliance with the additional requirements for three, two and one birds under the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987 for egg producers in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: EC directive 86/113 places inescapable obligations on all member states. The cost of compliance will vary from producer to producer according to the type of cage in use, its age, and how the space allowance and other requirements contained in the directive are to be met. No estimate of the aggregate cost to Scottish producers is available.

The same consideration will largely apply in the context of the allowances for three, two and one birds specified in the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of Scottish egg producers who will cease egg production because they are unable to comply with the additional requirements for three, two and one birds contained within the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987; and what representations he has received on this matter.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations on the regulations have been made by a number of hon. Members and by the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland. The views expressed have in some cases been critical of the additional space requirement for less than four birds and in others have condemned the retention of the cage system and complained that the space allowance is too low. No information is available on the number of egg producers who may cease production, if any.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to ensure that Scottish egg farmers are not put at a competitive disadvantage with their European counterparts in the implementation of the provisions of EEC directive 86/133/EEC, as implemented by the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: EC directive 86/113 lays down minimum standards. Other than in situations where less than four birds are housed in a cage these minimum standards will apply in the United Kingdom. In the majority of cases therefore Scottish farmers will be in an identical situation to most of their European counterparts though it is worth pointing out that in Denmark and in West Germany the minimum space allowance for four birds and more will be higher than in the United Kingdom. We shall be keeping the matter under review.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he proposes to give egg producers in Scotland as to the time at which they should comply with the provisions of the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987, implementing EEC directive 86/113/EEC, in the light of the further scientific review to be undertaken in 1993 and of the assurances given by the Government that consequential problems will be kept under continual review.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The regulations come into force on 1 January 1988. As from that date all new cages must conform: for existing cages the space allowance must be achieved by 1 January 1995. Within the seven-year lead-in period for existing cages, the timing of any change will largely be a matter for the individual producer. The Government will maintain close links with the industry on both its ongoing review and the scientific report due from the Commission by 1 January 1993.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to monitor compliance within Europe of the provisions of the European directive 86/113/EEC, on the welfare of battery hens.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Compliance with EEC directives is a matter for individual member states and for the European Commission. In this instance article 7 requires the Commission to undertake inspection programmes within member states to ensure that the directive is complied with and uniform standards applied. The Commission is also required to produce reports on these inspections.

Raspberries

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures to show the average acres of planting for the Glen Clova variety of raspberries in each year since 1982.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the areas of soft fruit grown commercially in Scotland is not collected on a varietal basis. The total areas of raspberries grown in each year since 1982 were:

	Hectarage
1982	2,593·2
1983	2,516·9
1984	2,409·6
1985	2,332·2
1986	2,206·6
1987	2,102·9

In 1987 some 75 per cent. of the total area was occupied by Glen Clova. The pattern of varietal production is likely to change as newer varieties become more widely available.

Standard and O-grade Courses

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the difference in the costs of the supplies and services required to run *(a)* standard grade courses and *(b)* the O-grade courses they supersede.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No information is available centrally on the costs of specific items. In 1988-89 £6 million will be available to local authorities generally in respect of current expenditure on non-teaching costs associated with standard grade, and there is provision of £3 million for capital expenditure. In that year there will also be current expenditure of £870,000 by central Government on support for the new standard grade courses.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list at 1987 prices the real value of Government expenditure on the Scottish Development Agency for each year from 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* The information, at 1987-88 prices, is set out in the table:

Financial year	£ million
1978-79	107·3
1979-80	112·6
1980-81	117·0
1981-82	101·6
1982-83	125·5
1983-84	105·2
1984-85	90·0
1985-86	101·6
1986-87	93·0
1987-88[1]	94·9

[1] Provision.

As Government expenditure on the SDA is expressed in net terms the figures are not illustrative of total agency expenditure resources over the years. This also partly explains the variations between years.

Roads

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of advice by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the effect of any reduction in the threshold or any increase in the proportion of works required to be put out to tender on roads authorities' ability to maintain adequate direct labour organisations, he will abandon his proposals to change the present direct labour organisation tendering regime.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. Last summer a survey of Scottish roads authorities was undertaken to find out the distribution of work between the direct labour organisations and private contractors in 1985-86, which was the first fully operational year of the present system (1984-85 having been a transitional year). The survey showed that it would be practicable to reduce from £50,000 to £25,000 the threshold above which all general roads work in Scotland must be put out to tender and, on 10 April 1987, it was announced that this reduction would be put into operation from 1 April 1988, subject to a further survey of the performance of Scottish roads authorities over the period 1986-87. The Scottish Development Department is analysing this second survey and a further announcement will be made in due course.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities regarding the impact of any further reduction in the threshold or increase in the proportion of works required to be put out to tender on the ability of roads departments to retain sufficient labour with the proper expertise to cope with a severe winter emergency.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has made known to the Scottish Development Department, on three separate occasions, its opposition to increased competition for roads work undertaken by roads authorities' direct labour organisations.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Schemes (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of places on the job training scheme in Easington for each week since it started; how many places were taken; and how many trainees have dropped out.

Mr. Cope: Since 1 April 1987, a total of 521 people from the Easington area have been offered the opportunity to attend an information session about the new job training scheme and it is known that 109 of these have started on a scheme.

Trainees leave the scheme for many reasons, some to get jobs. The Manpower Services Commission has commissioned a follow-up survey to look into the destinations of trainees. The first results will be available in the new year.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of serious accidents sustained by Manpower Services Commission trainees within Easington constituency during the last three years.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The number of major injuries to YTS trainees in the Durham area over the last three years to the end of September is 29. Comparable figures for adult trainees are not available.

MSC accident figures have been compiled on a similar basis to those prepared by the Health and Safety Executive on employed persons. However, the Commission's figures will include a number of accidents to trainees in educational establishments which may not have been reportable to the Health and Safety Executive had the individuals been employed.

Up to 31 March 1986, major injuries were classified according to the severity criteria laid down in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980. From 1 April 1986, major injuries are classified according to severity criteria laid down in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985.

JTS (Statistics)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many contracted managing agents for new job training schemes are: *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* public sector colleges, *(c)* non-profit making or voluntary organisations and *(d)* private sector commercial training agencies, what is the number of traineeships planned for each sector; and what is the number of those who have entered work placements for each sector, at the latest available date.

Mr. Cope: At 30 October 1987, there were 314 managing agents across the country, of these 41 were local authorities, 16 were public sector colleges, 55 were non-profit making or voluntary organisations, 177 were private training agencies and 25 were from the Skills Training Agency.

The number of contracted starts for each sector is as follows:

	Starts
(a) local authorities	26,544
(b) public sector colleges	8,850
(c) non-profit-making or voluntary organisations	40,295
(d) private sector commercial training agencies	103,681
(e) Skills Training Agency	18,500
Total	197,870

No information is available on the number of training placements with employers in each sector.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of new job training scheme trainees have had identified in their personal action plan a recognised qualification; and how many are expected to achieve the qualification during the training period.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available. The new JTS provides long-term unemployed people with a mix of directed training and practical experience with employers which may lead to a qualification or a credit towards one. At the outset of their training, when personal action plans are drawn up, it is not always possible to identify the potential qualifications that long-term unemployed people may achieve.

YTS (Statistics)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the regional occupancy rates on the YTS are at the latest date, and for equivalent dates for each year since the scheme started.

Mr. Cope: The table shows a regional breakdown of occupancy rates on YTS at the end of September for the five years 1983-1987.

Occupancy Percentage at end September

Region	*1983*[1]	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
South East[2]	49	68	72	69	71
London	37	59	60	54	55
South West	51	73	80	76	74
West Midlands[2]	52	73	76	74	71
East Midlands + Eastern[2]				77	76
Yorkshire and Humberside	52	74	81	77	82
North We	53	77	82	78	74
Northern	60	78	78	79	71
Wales	54	76	83	78	76
Scotland	49	70	79	75	73
Great Britain	51	72	77	74	73

[1] The 1983 figures are considerably lower than in subsequent years due to the build up of YTS in its first year. The 1983 figures also exclude about 17,000 trainees on Construction Industry Training Board schemes.

[2] From April 1986 the midlands and south-east regional boundaries were redrawn to form new south-east, west midlands and east midlands regions.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many YTS trainees left the scheme to enrol in another scheme run by a different employer or a different managing agent in the current year.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission's latest follow-up survey of all young people who have left a YTS scheme during the period April 1986 to May 1987 shows that, in Great Britain 11 per cent. of leavers were enrolled on another YTS scheme at the time of the surveys.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of unemployed people in *(a)* Burnley, *(b)* Pendle, *(c)* Rossendale and *(d)* Accrington travel-to-work areas at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 8 October 1987, the numbers of unemployed claimants in the areas requested were as follows:

Travel-to-work area	*Unemployed claimants*
Burnley	4,575
Pendle	3,322
Accrington and Rossendale	4,915

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Disarmament

79. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to sustain the disarmament process following the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

80. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to sustain the disarmament process following the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

81. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to sustain the disarmament process following the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

83. **Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take to sustain the process of arms control following the intermediate range nuclear forces agreement.

84. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he intends to take toward further disarmament measures, in the light of the United States of America, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics agreement on intermediate range nuclear forces.

89. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to sustain the disarmament process following the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

91. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to sustain the disarmament process following the signing of the intermediate range nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Mellor: NATO's priorities for arms control post-INF are for 50 per cent. cuts in the strategic arms of the United States and Soviet Union, a global ban on chemical weapons and the elimination of conventional disparities between NATO and the Warsaw pact in Europe. We shall continue actively to promote and support these objectives.

85. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the next stage in his discussions on arms control in Geneva following the signing of the intermediate range nuclear forces agreement.

87. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the next stage in the discussion on arms control in Geneva following the signing of the intermediate range nuclear forces agreement.

90. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the next stage in the discussion on arms control in Geneva following the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Mellor: The bilateral Geneva nuclear and space talks between the United States and Soviet Union will continue. We look forward to the completion of a treaty providing for a 50 per cent. reduction in the strategic offensive weapons of the United States and Soviet Union. The 40 members of the conference on disarmament will continue to work towards a comprehensive global and verifiable ban on chemical weapons.

Conventional Stability Talks

82. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's position on conventional stability talks.

86. **Mr. Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's position on conventional stability talks.

88. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's position on conventional stability talks.

Mr. Mellor: We fully support the launching of conventional stability talks covering the Atlantic to the Urals, which were first called for in the NATO Brussels declaration of December 1986. To this end we are playing an active part in informal discussions between NATO and Warsaw pact representatives in Vienna aimed at agreeing a mandate for the negotiations which it is hoped will begin in the course of next year. The establishment of a stable and secure balance of forces in Europe at lower levels will be a primary objective of the Government in these negotiations, together with the elimination of disparities and of the Warsaw pact's capability for surprise attack and offensive action.

Peace Accord (Central America)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about compliance by the Government of Honduras with the central American regional peace accord.

Mr. Mellor: The Central American Presidents will be considering the question on compliance with the peace agreement at their meeting in San José on 15 January, on the basis of information to be supplied by the International Verification and Monitoring Commission. We await their conclusions.

Notifiable Military Activities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in full in the *Official Report* the United Kingdom's calendar of notifiable military activities for 1988, as required under the 1986 Stockholm agreement on confidence-building measures.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom's calendar is set out below. The format follows that laid down in the Stockholm document. In accordance with the Stockholm provisions a copy of this calendar was passed through diplomatic channels to all CSCE states before 15 November. We shall, as required, individually notify the exercises at least 42 days before they commence. We shall also follow the procedure in paragraph 32 of the document for exercises undertaken without advance notice to the troops involved.

UNITED KINGDOM ANNUAL CALENDAR OF MILITARY ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO PRIOR NOTIFICATION

No. 1: Exercise Iron Hammer

56.1 (Type of military activity and its designation) Field Training exercise, exercise name: IRON HAMMER.

56.2 (General characteristics and purpose of the military activity) To exercise armoured divisions and support forces.

56.3 (States involved in the military activity) United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium.

56.4 (Area of the military activity, indicated by appropriate geographical features and/or defined by geographic co-ordinates) Germany in area bounded by:

Salzgitter	52.08N,	10.20E
Gottingen	51.32N,	09.56E
Bad Pyrmont	51.59N,	09.15E
Beckum	51.45N,	08.03E

56.5 (Planned duration of the military activity and the 14-day period, indicated by dates, within which it is envisaged to start) 21 days: start date between 28 October and 10 November 1988.

56.6 (The envisaged total number of troops engaged in the military activity) United Kingdom element 25,000.

56.7 (The types of armed forces involved in the military activity) Armoured division.

56.8 (The envisaged level of command, under which the military activity will take place) Divisional.

56.9 (The number and types of divisions whose participation in the military activity is envisaged) 1 armoured division (UK).

56.10 (Any additional information concerning inter alia, components of armed forces, which the participating State planning the military activity considers relevant) Also participating are one independent brigade (FRG) and one independent regiment (Belgium).

Note: This exercise involves 25,000 troops but interoperation with 1 GE (German) corps is expected.

No. 2 Exercise Teamwork

56.1 Amphibious landing. Exercise Name: TEAMWORK

56.2 To demonstrate and improve readiness and effectiveness of NATO forces in amphibious operations.

56.3 United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway
56.4 Northern Norway in area bounded by:

Harstad	68.48N	16.33E
Bjerkvik	68.33N	17.33E
Evenes	68.28N	16.43E
Salangen	68.54N	17.28E

56.5 1-2 days start between 9 and 23 September 1988
56.6 UK element 2,800
56.7 Amphibious forces
56.8 Brigade (in conjunction with Norwegian regional command)
56.9 Not applicable (one UK brigade)
56.10

(A) Involves landing craft and support helicopters.

(B) This exercise runs concurrently with Norwegian National exercise BARFROST.

(C) 700 Netherland troops will operate as an integral element of the UK amphibious brigade (this number is not included in paragraph 56.6 above).

(D) This voluntary entry is provided for information without precedent for future United Kingdom calendars.

Exercise Purple Warrior

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role of the official from his Department embarked on HMS Ark Royal during exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Mellor: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office official was playing the part of political adviser to the joint force commanders on foreign policy matters as required within the scenario of the exercise.

Afghanistan

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for relations between the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union of the presence of British mercenary forces in Afghanistan.

Mr. Mellor: We have no knowledge of any such forces in Afghanistan.

Visa Control

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost of administering visa control in the five countries which became subject to such visa control in October 1986; what is the estimated cost of administering such visa control over the coming year; how many entry control officers were in post on 1 October 1986 and 1 October 1987; how many entry control officers will be in post on 1 October 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The figures requested concerning present and future costs of administering visa control in the five countries are not immediately available. The figures will be communicated to the hon. Member as soon as they have been collated. The number of officers, excluding United Kingdom-based and locally engaged support staff, involved in entry clearance work is as follows:

Posts	*1 October 1986*		*1 October 1987*		*1 October 1988*	
	Entry clearance officers	*Supervisory staff*	*Entry clearance officers*	*Supervisory staff*	*Entry clearance officers*	*Supervisory staff*
Dhaka	17	4·15	22	4·15	23	4·15
Accra	·50	·50	2·50	·50	2·50	·50
Lagos	3	·20	12	3·20	12	3·20
Kaduna	·45	·05	2·45	1·05	2·45	1·05
New Delhi	5	1	13	3	13	3
Bombay	5	1	11	1	11	1·25
Madras	Nil	Nil	2	Nil	2	Nil
Calcutta	0·90	Nil	0·90	Nil	0·90	Nil
Islamabad	18	2·65	26	3·65	27	3·65
Karachi	1·25	·20	7·25	1·20	7·25	1·20
Total	51·1	9·75	99·1	17·75	101·1	18·00

Note: Some staff have other duties apart from their entry clearance function.

West Bank and Gaza

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to Israel concerning the right of spouses to join their partners in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Mellor: We regularly urge the Israeli authorities to ease their restrictions on the reunification of Palestinian families.

Territorial Limits

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions there have been with other member states about the effect of the extension of the United Kingdom's territorial limits on access to United Kingdom waters by European Community fishermen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Officials have had discussions with representatives of both France and Belgium and with the European Community Commission. There is a clear difference of legal opinion about the effects on other member states' fishing rights under Community law of the Territorial Sea Act 1987 which changed United Kingdom baselines in certain areas.

The common fisheries policy settlement secured in January 1983 provided among other things for the continuation of previous arrangements under which member states are allowed to exclude vessels of other member states from fishing within their coastal belts, subject to recognition of certain rights of access which, in the case of the United Kingdom, were restricted to parts of our six to 12 mile belt calculated from the baselines of the territorial sea. As the result of the coming into force of the Territorial Sea Act 1987 on 1 October 1987, the six to 12 mile belt around the United Kingdom, as measured from the new baselines, moved outwards in certain areas. Whilst our view is that the parts of our coastal belt where other European Community fishermen have access were altered accordingly, it has been put to us in the discussion that this infringed access rights under Community law.

This difference in interpretation of Community law needs to be resolved and we remain in contact with the European Community Commission and the other member states concerned. In the present circumstances and bearing in mind the importance we attach to preserving the integrity and effectiveness of the common fisheries policy in the interests of the United Kingddom fishing industry, my right hon. Friend, the Fisheries Minister has instructed our fisheries enforcement officers to refrain from taking action which might exacerbate or extend the dispute until the legal question is resolved.

TRANSPORT

Smoke Hoods

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will raise with the chairman of the British Airports Authority the refusal of a request from a franchise operator at one of the British Airways Authority's retail outlets to sell smoke hoods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. This a matter between BAA plc and the franchise operator. BAA plc did not consult us before taking its decision.

M6

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any major road works are planned on the M6 between where it meets the M1 and the Preston exit in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are currently planning to carry out the following major works on part of the M6 in 1988.

Site	*Work*	*Provisional start date and duration*
J6-7	Resurfacing	May, for approx 2 months.
J9-10	Resurfacing	April, for approx 1 month.
J13-14	Overlay	August, for approx 2 months.
J16-17	Reconstruction/ Overlay	February, for approx 5 months.
J29-31	Reconstruction/ Overlay	Advance works currently underway. Main works to commence February for approx 5 months.

There will also be various bridge works taking place which may affect the main carriageway. It is hoped to carry out at least some of the works on lane rental contracts with the aim of minimising delays to the road user.

Mersey Tunnel

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he is prepared to write off part of the capital debt of the Mersey tunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Merseyside Passenger Transport Authority has submitted an application for special financial assistance, which the Department is considering. I cannot anticipate the outcome of that examination.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is prepared to write off part of the capital debt of the Severn bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It has been the policy of successive Governments that estuarial crossings promoted on the basis that costs would be met from tolls should be paid for by users who enjoy the savings in time and money that these undertakings make possible. The Severn bridge undertaking is capable of meeting the objectives of its enabling legislation, including the repayment of its capital debt.

Traffic Offences (Vehicle Confiscation)

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to permit the confiscation of vehicles, the drivers of which have been convicted of manslaughter or dangerous or reckless driving or driving while under the influence of drink or drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Confiscation of vehicles following serious motoring offences is one of the issues being examined by the road traffic law review, under the independent chairmanship of Dr. Peter North. The report is due early next year.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about future rail links between the Channel tunnel and the north-west of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is the responsibility of British Rail to plan the provision of future rail links with the tunnel. Section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act requires them to publish proposals by 31 December 1989. I understand that the board intends to consult widely during the preparation of this plan.

Radioactive Material (Manchester Airport)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what radioactive material has been flown from or to Manchester airport; and where its destination and its departure points were, over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no requirement for this Department to keep records of this traffic. I understand that the amounts of radioactive material being transported from British Nuclear Fuels sites via Manchester airport are small samples going regularly to Euratom establishments in Europe, primarily for verification purposes.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what future plans exist to fly radioactive material through Manchester airport; to what destination; and from what departure points.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that British Nuclear Fuels has no plans to use Manchester airport for shipments of radioactive materials over and above the present consignments of very small sample quantities.

London Underground

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the railway inspectorate is consulted about layout and materials when tube stations are refurbished; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Only when the refurbishment involves significant structural alterations.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the railway inspectorate was consulted before London Underground decided to erect wire cages to prevent fare evasions at automatic ticket barriers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Underground has no plans to erect wire cages to prevent fare evasion at existing

automatic ticket barriers or the new ones which are not yet in service, hence there is no question of it consulting with the railway inspectorate on this matter. Any temporary partition which may have been seen near the sites of new barriers has been erected for short periods during construction.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent the railway inspectorate bears in mind arguments on cost when considering proposals affecting the safety of the London Underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport has a statutory duty to provide or secure the provision of public passenger transport services in London and in so doing to have due regard to efficiency, economy and safety of operation. In considering proposals affecting the safety of the London Underground the railway inspectorate also bears these requirements in mind.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the matters to do with safety on the London Underground on which the railway inspectorate has changed its advice to London Underground since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The railway inspectorate's main advice to London Underground is contained in the Department's published requirements for railway construction and operation, and in the remarks and recommendations of its accident inquiry reports. The advice given by these means has not changed in any significant manner since 1979. In the matter of the one-person operation of trains the inspectorate accepted, before the introduction of one-person operation on the Piccadilly line in August this year, LUL's revised detailed criteria for one-person operation in tube tunnels. On matters concerning staff safety, the inspectorate frequently gives advice or requires action under the health and safety at work legislation, and some of this advice may be varied from time to time in response to changing circumstances.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the railway inspectorate advises London Underground on safety training and safety procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Whilst these are primarily matters for London Underground Limited, the inspectorate has commented on them in its published accident inquiry reports. Advice is also given where necessary in furtherance of the inspectorate's enforcement duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the railway inspectorate carries out safety inspections of the London Underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Details of the inspectorate's safety inspection work, which covers all railways in Great Britain, including the London Underground, were given in the answer on 3 December.

British Rail (Line Closures)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the implications for the operation by British Rail of procedures involving the closure of lines of the recent decision of the Appeal Court in relation to the Wortley Curve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is in the first instance British Rail's responsibility to consider the implications of the judgment.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to refuse any application from British Rail for closure of the Wortley curve.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. My right hon. Friend will consider any such application on its merits.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that any public inquiry into a proposal to close the Wortley curve will have terms of reference to take account of the future social and economic effects of the closure.

Mr. David Mitchell: In considering any rail closure case, my right hon. Friend is already required by section 54(1) of the Transport Act 1968 to have regard to any matters which for the time being appear to him to be relevant, including any social or economic consideration.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total of professional and non-professional staff of the railway inspectorate in 1978-79 and in each year since.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to the answer on 3 December.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost in 1978-79 prices of the railway inspectorate in 1978-79 and each year since.

Mr. David Mitchell: I regret that reliable figures for the total cost of the railway inspectorate are unavailable for the years before 1984-85.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of the railway inspectorate staff are deployed full-time on work on the London Underground.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, since the inspectorate is not organised in that fashion.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wheat Exports

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the highest and the lowest restitution payment made in respect of wheat exported from the United Kingdom since 1 August.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Different levels of restitution are paid for grain exported from the open market and from intervention. In the latter case, the subsidy required to export the grain is reflected in the selling price, which also takes account of the level of the MCA. The refund itself is small and fixed; during the period since 1 August 1987 it has been less than the MCA, resulting in a charge on exports; the highest and lowest charges have been £6·26 and £2·98 per tonne respectively.

The highest and lowest levels of refund on exports from the open market during this period have been £65·37 and £47·98 per tonne respectively (net of the United Kingdom MCA). Since these refunds apply throughout the

Community and export licences are valid for five months, it is impossible to say what levels of refund applied to exports from the United Kingdom during this period.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what evaluation his Department is making of the progress of environmentally sensitive areas;

(2) whether he intends to produce a report on farming practices within environmentally sensitive areas;

(3) what evidence he has about the output from farmers in environmentally sensitive areas farming in accordance with regulations issued under the Agriculture Act 1986 in relation to output from comparable farmers outside the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We are in the process of establishing a monitoring programme for environmentally sensitive areas. This will gather and analyse information on landscape, wildlife, historic features, farming practices and socio-economic developments. Our objective will be to assess the scheme's effects on these inter-related items and, as the hon. Member suggests, to monitor output trends on agreement and non-agreement land. However, the scheme was launched only nine months ago and it is, therefore, too early to gather meaningful evidence about output trends. I hope to publish a first report, as required by section 18(8) of the Agriculture Act 1986, during the course of 1988.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date Her Majesty's Government accepted responsibility for paying 25 per cent. of the cost of storing food in intervention; and what has been the cost of this contribution since that date.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Further to my reply of 3 December at column *707*, the reduction in reimbursement rates from December 1985 has marginally reduced the United Kingdom's net contribution to storage of food in intervention. For 1986 our receipts from the Community were cut by about £23 million, but our payments to the Community (net of Fontainebleau abatement) dropped by about £24 million, an overall gain of about £1 million.

Butter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at what sale price, expressed in pence per pound, Her Majesty's Government released for sale the 97,190 tons of butter between 1 December 1986 and 31 October 1987 under the arrangements referred to in his reply of 30 November.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The butter referred to in my reply of 30 November was sold under two schemes, either for processing into concentrated butter for cooking at a fixed price of 12·27p per pound or for use in compound animal feed at a price, set by monthly tender, of between 2·11p and 2·19p per pound.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of butter exported by the United Kingdom in each of the calendar years 1975 to 1986; and what total amount has been exported in 1987 up till the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The data requested are set out in the table:

United Kingdom Exports of Butter 1975-1987

	(Tonnes)
1975	3,135
1976	16,029
1977	14,504
1978	57,388
1979	61,807
1980	80,075
1981	73,169
1982	63,307
1983	53,264
1984	24,517
1985	24,926
1986	33,205
[1]1987	92,039

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
[1] January-September.

Farm Wages

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many of the 2,900 holdings visited by agricultural wages inspectors in 1986 cases were discovered of the underpayment of wages; and what this represents as a percentage of the holdings inspected.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* Agricultural wages inspectors visit holdings either on routine test inspections or in response to complaints, the latter revealing a much higher proportion of underpayments than the former. The detailed figures for England in 1986 were as follows:

Type of inspection	*Holdings visited*	*Underpayments discovered*	*Underpayments as percentage of holdings visited*
Test inspection	2,577	74	2·9
Inspections arising from complaints	125	45	36·0
Total	2,702	119	4·4

Mink and Coypu

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink and coypu farms, respectively, there are at present in each region of the United Kingdom, and how many of each species are so kept.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* There are no mink farms in Wales. For other parts of the United Kingdom the position was Scotland seven, Northern Ireland one as at 1 December. By MAFF region the position in England was:

	Number	*As at*
Northern	15	24 November 1987
Midlands and West	16	24 November 1987
Eastern	7	3 December 1987
South Eastern	6	31 March 1987
South Western	7	3 December 1987

Details of the numbers of mink held on these farms are not available, but it seems likely that the total number is of the order of 100,000. There are no coypu farms in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any estimates of the number of mink and coypu presently in the wild in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* Mink are now very numerous in the wild and are spread over most parts of mainland Britain; they are also well established in Northern Ireland. However, my Department has no reliable scientific data on the numbers involved.

Coypus in the wild have been confined to East Anglia where an eradication campaign has been under way since 1981. None have been found since April 1987, but eradication cannot be confirmed until 1989 at the earliest.

Agriculture (Code of Practice)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if it is his intention to implement immediately the Health and Safety Commission's new code of practice in relation to agriculture.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* My responsibilities for such codes are limited to agricultural workers employed by my Department. It is my intention to implement them in so far as they apply to particular employees.

Rating Reform

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any special measures will be introduced when the poll tax is implemented to offset the circumstances of agricultural workers for tied cottages who at present do not pay rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* No. Rates are payable on tied cottages under the present system and farmers frequently agree to meet this bill on behalf of their employees. In such cases, rates can be treated as taxable expenses for the employers and as taxable benefits for the employees. It is intended under the new system that employees should still be able to agree with their employers to meet the community charge.

Food Regulations

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all regulations that have been made, and are still in force under section 13, sub-paragraph *(b)* of the Food Act 1984.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* Regulations made under section 13(2)*(b)* of the Food Act 1984, are made jointly with the Secretary of State for Social Services and the Secretary of State for Wales; the following deal specifically with matters referred to in paragraph (2)*(b)* and are still in force:

The Slaughterhouses (Hygiene) Regulations 1977, S.I. No. 1805,

The Fresh Meat Export (Hygiene and Inspection) Regulations 1981, S.I. No. 454 (as amended by S.I. 1983 No. 173 and S.I. 1985 No. 216),

The Food Hygiene (General) Regulations 1970, S.I. No. 1172,

The Imported Food Regulations 1984, S.I. No. 1918,

The Food Hygiene (Markets, Stalls and Delivery Vehicles) Regulations 1966, S.I. No. 791 (as amended by S.I. 1966 No. 1487), and

The Food Hygiene (Docks, Carriers, Etc.) Regulations 1960, S.I. No. 1602.

Alternative Land Use

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to bring forward detailed proposals for the set aside of agricultural land.

Mr. Gummer *[pursuant to his reply,* 19 November 1987, *c. 120]*: We are today publishing, jointly with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, a detailed consultation document seeking the views of interested organisations on the implementation in the United Kingdom of the Community scheme for extensification of production. We are placing copies of the document in the Library of the House.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Strangford Lough

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take appropriate action to have produced, as a matter of urgency, a comprehensive plan for the future development of Strangford lough which will identify suitable locations for commercial marine farming, salmon farming and the holding cages for brood salmon stock, consistent with sensible conservation policies.

Mr. Needham: It is the intention of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to bring forward a proposal to designate Strangford lough as a marine nature reserve and to designate the shoreline of the lough as an area of special scientific interest. The need to prepare a plan for the management of the lough in the context of these designations has been accepted and consideration is presently being given to the form of the plan. The urgency of the matter is readily accepted and I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I last met representatives of the Irish Government at the Intergovernmental Conference on 16 November. As noted in the joint statement issued after the meeting, a copy of which has been placed in the Library,

the discussion centered on key aspects of the security situation on which both sides agreed on the need for a very positive response.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to follow the proposed changes to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 announced by the Secretary of State for Employment on 28 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Yes. I will be bringing forward legislative proposals in due course to replicate whatever changes are made in Great Britain. Likewise a consultation document on the proposed changes to the Northern Ireland legislation will be issued in the near future.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if changes in the age limits for statutory redundancy payments proposed for Great Britain will also be introduced in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: Yes.

Playgroups

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage area health and social services boards to adopt uniform policies towards the provision of grant aid for pre-school playgroups.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* In providing grant aid for pre-school playgroups health and social services boards operate within general guidelines issued by the Departmemt. However, boards are responsible for the planning, management and delivery of services within their respective areas and consequently must be free to determine needs and priorities in the light of local circumstances, including the competing needs of other client groups. Some disparity in the provision of grant aid is therefore inevitable.

Hydraulic Rams

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications have been received by the Local Enterprise Development Unit during 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987 for grant aid to manufacture hydraulic rams; how many were successful; how many have been turned down, what was the reason for refusal; and if he will list the applications under each heading.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* I am informed that the number of applications involving the manufacture of hydraulic rams considered by the LEDU in the past four years was as follows:

	No. of applications	*No. Successful*	*No. Turned Down*
1984	1	1	—
1985	2	1	1
1986	—	—	—
1987	2	1	1

In the two unsuccessful cases I understand that LEDU considered that neither had sufficient prospects of commercial viability.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the total number of redundancies in the shipbuilding industry in Northern Ireland during the period from 1 January 1979 to 31 December 1986.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* It is estimated that the total number of redundancies during this period at Harland and Wolff—the only significant shipbuilding company in Northern Ireland—was some 4460.

Flood Relief (Coal)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who made the decision to restrict the distribution of the stockpile of coal donated by British Coal for flood relief in Northern Ireland to Omagh urban and Strabane district council areas; and by what criteria these areas and individual beneficiaries were chosen and other areas and individuals excluded.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* British Coal's generous donation of coal was made on the understanding that it would be used to help those people who suffered flood damage in Strabane and Omagh, the areas most severely affected. The criterion adopted by the voluntary organisations responsible for the local distribution of coal was that supplies should be made available to every household directly affected by the flooding within the urban area of Omagh and the district council area of Strabane.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Standing Committees (Reports)

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will give instructions to Her Majesty's Stationery Office that, in future, bound volumes covering the proceedings of Standing Committees shall include a copy of the Bills debated by the Committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: Her Majesty's Stationery Office prints Standing Committee bound volumes at the instruction of the House. Any change to the existing contents and format would therefore be a matter for the appropriate House Committee to consider.

HOME DEPARTMENT

John Manley

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when John Manley, recently sentenced to life imprisonment by Leeds Crown court, was last examined by a Home Office doctor; what assessment was made by that doctor of Manley's condition; if the doctor's report was made available to Bradford magistrates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In reports to Bradford magistrates' court on 6 November 1986 and 1 December 1986 a

consultant forensic psychiatrist indicated that, in his opinon and that of other staff at his hospital, Mr. Manley should be regarded as suffering from a psychopathic disorder of an inadequate and hysterical type. He indicated, however, that although Mr. Manley had the potential for acting aggressively after he had been drinking to excess, he was a danger to himself rather than to others. The doctor last saw Mr. Manley on about 17 December 1986.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Bradford probation service was not informed when the arrangements for supervising John Manley were transferred from Lincoln to Bradford; why his records were not passed to Bradford probation service; and why he was placed in a hostel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 9 April 1986 Mr. Manley appeared before Lincoln Crown court and was bailed to a hostel in Bradford. The decision to place Mr. Manley in the hostel was a matter for the court.

Unfortunately, as a result of a failure in communications, the Bradford probation service was not made aware of Mr. Manley's status as a conditionally discharged restricted patient. He was, however, under the supervision of the warden of the hostel and was seen by a liaison probation officer for the hostel.

On 28 April 1986 Mr. Manley was made subject to a probation order with a condition of residence at the hostel. His supervising probation officer learned a few weeks later that Mr. Manley was a conditionally discharged restricted patient. He made contact with Lincolnshire social services department, who subsequently sent him papers concerning Mr. Manley.

Traffic Wardens

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the training given to traffic wardens in traffic control procedures.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The training of traffic wardens is a matter for individual chief officers of police. Detailed information about the content of local training is not held centrally. However, we are sure that chief officers understand the need for the training to give appropriate emphasis to traffic control functions.

British Telecom

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations his Department has received from the Greater Manchester police authority concerning the costs of the new maintenance provisions introduced by British Telecom; what reply has been sent; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Department has received a letter from the Greater Manchester police authority and has replied to the effect that this is a matter for agreement between the authority and British Telecom.

DNA Blood Tests

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many DNA blood test result reports were awaiting decision at his Department on 1 January; how many such reports are currently awaiting decision; how many such reports have been received since 1 September and in how many cases a decision has been taken by his Department in the current year;

(2) in how many cases, concerning DNA blood test result reports, a decision has been taken by his Department since 1 September; and in those cases for how long on average they had been in his Department's possession before a decision was reached.

Mr. Renton: This information is not available.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to take decisions on the individual cases included in the pilot DNA study conducted by his Department and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; how many individual cases were included in the study; and when the study and its recommendation will be published.

Mr. Renton: Decisions are already being taken. The trial was intended to extend to 40 families, but the final figure is likely to be a few less than this. I expect to place a report on the outcome of the trial in the Library in the new year.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff in his Department are concerned with considering DNA blood test results; and what action he is taking to increase the number of such staff; and to raise their level of qualification.

Mr. Hurd: A number of officers in the immigration and nationality department make various administrative checks on reports of the results of DNA tests, produced in support of immigration applications. None, however, are engaged in this work full time. I am satisfied that this work is being dealt with at the right level.

In addition, 16 staff are employed in the forensic science service wholly, or mainly, in carrying out scientific tests on evidential material, involving DNA techniques. This is expected to increase to 22 by June 1988. I am satisfied that these officers are suitably qualified for their scientific duties.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases in the past year immigration appeal adjudicators have criticised his Department for delays in checking evidence of identity using DNA test results; in how many appeal cases in the past year his Department has applied for appeals to be adjourned; and in how many cases in the past year immigration appeal adjudicators have refused his Department's adjournment applications.

Mr. Renton: This information is not available but I can confirm that where DNA evidence is produced before the appellate authorities unexpectedly or at short notice it is the practice of the Department to apply for an adjournment so that checks can be made to ensure that the DNA test report is reliable, including in particular that the recommended procedures for blood sampling have been followed.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements will be made for the automatic return to France of passengers not accepted for entry into the United Kingdom who have passed through the Channel tunnel and subsequently French immigration controls.

Mr. Renton: The arrangements which will be made for the immigration control of passengers using the Channel tunnel are still under consideration. Officials are discussing them with officials of the French Government.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to publish rules concerning the reduction of the maximum time visitors may visit the United Kingdom; when he proposes to introduce this reduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We intend to publish shortly the changes in the immigration rules which my right hon. Friend announced on 16 November in respect of visitors, au pairs, business men and certain others. The changes will come into effect on 1 February 1988.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from individuals or organisations urging that the maximum time for visitors to the United Kingdom be reduced from a year to six months; what rights of appeal visitors will have against any decision to refuse an extension beyond six months; and what discretionary powers he will have to grant extensions to visitors on compassionate grounds.

Mr. Renton: None. We have, however, received a large number of representations about delays in immigration casework and it was partly in response to that concern that we are taking the measures announced in the House on 16 November. Appeal rights for a person refused leave to remain as a visitor at any point will remain unchanged. As my right hon. Friend indicated on 16 November, it will always be possible for him to exercise his discretion, as at present, to allow visitors to stay for longer than the permitted maximum on compassionate grounds. The exercise of such discretion is however to be used only very sparingly and in genuinely deserving cases.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children, having been refused visas to visit the United Kingdom, and living in the five countries which became subject to visa control in October 1986, have applied to appeal against the refusal to grant a visa; in how many cases such appeals have been (i) withdrawn, (ii) upheld, (iii) refused and (iv) pending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The information available centrally relates only to appeals received by the immigration appellate authorities from Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis, and is given in the table. Separate information on men, women and children and information on visit appeals pending, is not available.

Appeals to immigration adjudicators by visitors[1] against a refusal of entry clearance, October 1986 to September 1987

Number of persons

Nationality of appellant	*[2]Received*	*Appeals* *[3]Allowed*	*[3]Dismissed*	*[3]Withdrawn*
Bangladesh	347	23	121	25
India	166	25	44	17
Pakistan	441	23	59	19

[1] Including students.
[2] Including appeals against a refusal of optional entry clearance prior to 15 October 1986.
[3] Including those which were received prior to October 1986.

Bishara Smara

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Government of Israel on the recent deportation of Bishara Smara.

Mr. Hurd: None.

Heathrow Underground Loop

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras of 3 December, whether the practical tests on the Heathrow underground loop referred to involved staff wearing breathing equipment; and whether the tests included simulated smoke and other hazards.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The London fire brigade has informed us that two firefighters paced the distance wearing breathing apparatus in darkness using hand-held torches. Simulated smoke was not used, but account was taken in the test of its likely effect on progress.

Mr. Ivan Uribe

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce his decision on the case of Mr. Ivan Uribe, currently in Her Majesty's prison Armley awaiting the result of his application for asylum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: A decision on Mr. Uribe's application for asylum will be reached when the issues raised by the Court of Appeal judgment in the case of Sivakumaran and others have been resolved.

Firearms (Kent Police)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to in what year Sterling AR 180 automatic rifles were acquired by Kent police;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to how many Sterling AR 180 automatic rifles are currently in the possession of Kent police;

(3) whether he will call for a report from the chief constable for Kent on the use of Sterling automatic AR 180 rifles by Kent police;

(4) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to what firearms Kent police are permitted to use in training and operational exercises;

(5) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to from whom Kent police acquired Sterling AR 180 automatic rifles and when;

(6) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to the means by which Sterling AR 180 automatic rifles were disposed of by Kent police.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Sterling AR 18 automatic rifles. Twelve of these were procured by Kent constabulary from a firearms dealer in 1978 for a particular anti-terrorist operation, at the conclusion of which they were destroyed. Kent

constabulary is not currently in possession of such weapons. The firearms available to Kent constabulary for use in training and operational exercises are the same as those to which I referred in my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 27 November at column *370*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent on investigation into the disappearance of 66 jungle carbines from the premises of QED at Borough Green, Kent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Kent that this matter is the subject of an investigation as a complaint against the police under section 85 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. A report will be submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions and to the independent Police Complaints Authority upon completion of the investigation.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the special arrangements made for right hon. and hon. Members to visit prisoners apply also to members of their staff or other persons who may wish to accompany them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The arrangements in question are personal to hon. and right hon. Members and to peers, and will only be extended to members of their staff or anyone else if the responsible Minister is satisfied that exceptional circumstances make it right to do so.

Juvenile Offenders

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many 14-year-olds leaving detention centres in 1983 were reconvicted within two years.

Mr. John Patten: Information specific to 14-year-olds could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Estimates of reconvictions of detention centre trainees aged 14 to 16 who were discharged in 1983 were published in table 8.3 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1986" (Cm. 210), copies of which are in the Library.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Departmental Staff

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* administrative and *(b)* clerical staff are employed by his Department (i) throughout the United Kingdom and (ii) in London; how many of them in each role work in connection with (1) the Health Service, (2) social security and (3) other services of his Department; how many such staff are currently employed by *(a)* regional and *(b)* district health authorities; and what is the total annual cost of all such staff.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of whole-time equivalent administrative and clerical staff employed in the Department on 1 October 1987 are shown in the following table:

	Administrative	*Clerical*
Location		
United Kingdom[1]	30,825	63,201
London pay area[2]	6,500	10,000
Function[2]		
Health service[3]	2,000	2,500
Social security	29,000	60,500

[1] London staff are included in the United Kingdom figures.
[2] The numbers quoted for London staff in *Location* and all figures in *Function* are estimates.
[3] Includes staff engaged on related Personal Social Services work.

A comparable breakdown for staff employed in the National Health Service is not available. On 30 September 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, the total number of administrative and clerical staff employed by health authorities in England was estimated to be

	Number
Regional health authorities	7,800
District health authorities	95,400
Other employing authorities	8,100

At a total annual salary cost of £875 million.

Domiciliary Consultants

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to make available, on the same basis as in Scotland, information relating to the cost of domiciliary consultants in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The costs of domiciliary consultations are not currently available. However, from the statistics collected by the Department, an estimate of the cost can be made. The number of domiciliary consultations undertaken in England and Wales in the 12 months ended 30 September 1986 was 387,394. At present rates the cost in a full year is estimated to be about £13 million.

Following the sixth report of the steering group on health services information (the Körner committee), from 1988-89 arrangements have been made for the total cost of health authorities' expenditure on domiciliary visits by consultants to be identified separately in their annual accounts.

Cancer

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the incidence of each type of cancer as a percentage of the incidence of all types in *(a)* the Norwich district health authority area, and *(b)* nationally.

Mrs. Currie: The nearest available information on incidence of cancer is the registration of newly diagnosed cases of cancer. In order to avoid the problem of small numbers of registrations, the data are shown for the latest five-year period.

Percentage distribution of registrations of newly diagnosed cases of cancer by type of cancer, persons, all ages. Usual residents of Norwich Health District (1980-81), Norwich District Health Authority (1982-84), England and Wales 1980-84

ICD(9) category and site description	*Norwich* Per cent.	*England and Wales* Per cent.
140-208 All malignant neoplasms	100·00	100·00
Malignant neoplasm of:		
140 Lip	0·42	0·14
141 Tongue	0·22	0·30
142 Major salivary glands	0·20	0·16
143 Gum	0·06	0·07
144 Floor of mouth	0·12	0·13
145 Other and unspecified parts of mouth	0·09	0·16
146 Oropharynx	0·17	0·17
147 Nasopharynx	0·07	0·10
148 Hypopharynx	0·20	0·19
149 Other and ill-defined site within the lip, oral cavity and pharynx	0·05	0·08
150 Oesophagus	2·06	2·06
151 Stomach	4·71	5·85
152 Small intestine, including duodenum	0·17	0·16
153 Colon	7·76	7·39
154 Rectum, rectosigmoid junction and anus	4·69	4·80
155 Liver and intrahepatic bile ducts	0·22	0·50
156 Gallbladder and extrahepatic bile ducts	0·50	0·60
157 Pancreas	2·89	2·88
158 Retroperitoneum and peritoneum	0·20	0·14
159 Other and ill-defined sites within the digestive organs and peritoneum	0·16	0·18
160 Nasal cavities, middle ear and accessory sinuses	0·17	0·18
161 Larynx	0·73	0·88
162 Trachea, bronchus and lung	15·59	18·21
163 Pleura	0·27	0·21
163 Thymus, heart and mediastinum	0·05	0·06
165 Other and ill-defined sites within the respiratory system and intrathoracic organs	—	0·01
170 Bone and articular cartilage	0·12	0·24
171 Connective and other soft tissue	0·43	0·41
172 Malignant melanoma of skin	1·42	1·10
173 Other malignant neoplasm of skin	13·65	10·81
174 Female breast	11·27	10·85
175 Male breast	[1]0·06	0·09
179 Uterus, part unspecified	[1]0·06	0·23
180 Cervix uteri	1·84	1·98
181 Placenta	[1]0·01	0·01
182 Body of uterus	2·24	1·72
183 Ovary and other uterine adnexa	2·45	2·26

ICD(9) category and site description	Norwich Per cent.	England and Wales Per cent.
184 Other and unspecified female genital organs	0·79	0·51
185 Prostate	6·22	4·59
186 Testis	0·49	0·44
187 Penis and other male genital organs	[1]0·18	0·17
188 Bladder	3·17	4·61
189 Kidney and other and unspecified urinary organs	1·44	1·51
190 Eye	0·20	0·16
191 Brain	1·29	1.35
192 Other and unspecified parts of nervous system	[1]0·04	0·07
193 Thyroid gland	0·49	0·40
194 Other endocrine glands and related structures	[1]0·06	0·09
195 Other and ill-defined sites	[1]0·07	0·32
196 Secondary and unspecified malignant neoplasm of lymph nodes	0·30	0·28
197 Secondary malignant neoplasm of respiratory and digestive systems	3·14	1·41
198 Secondary malignant neoplasm of other specified sites	0·85	0·80
199 Without specification of site	0·42	2·18
200 Lymphosarcoma and reticulosarcoma	[1]0·18	0·46
201 Hodgkin's disease	0·57	0·63
202 Other malignant neoplasm of lymphoid and histiocytic tissues	1·57	1·50
203 Multiple myeloma and immunoproliferative neoplasms	1·02	1·03
204 Lymphoid leukaemia	0·87	0·89
205 Myeloid leukaemia	1·11	0·91
206 Monocytic leukaemia	[1]0·04	0·05
207 Other specified leukaemia	[1]0·03	0·03
208 Leukaemia of unspecified cell type	[1]0·15	0·25

[1] Based on less than 20 registrations.

Lithotripsy

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether lithotripsy is now available in the Merseyside health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The number of patients in Mersey requiring treatment on a lithotripter is at present insufficient to justify the regional health authority purchasing its own machine.

North Western regional healt authority is able to offer lithotripsy to patients from the Mersey region as a supra-regional service. Patients receive treatment at the Withington hospital, Manchester.

This arrangement works well and no patient from the Mersey region is waiting for access to the machine.

Upholstery

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to amend the standard required for National Health Service contract upholstery from BS5852 Part 2 crib 5 to crib 7; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. It has been common practice to allow the use of flammable foam upholstery core materials protected by means of fire-retardant covering fabrics. However, fire-retardant core materials have recently been introduced and we propose to specify these for use in National Health Service premises. By removing the potential hazard of the high flammability core, the desirability of seeking covering materials with higher ignition resistance is much reduced. To raise the acceptability standard of the cover material unnecessarily would reduce choice of fabrics and invite higher costs.

Present National Health Service flammability requirements are considerably more stringent than those set by the Upholstered Furniture (Safety) Regulations.

Benefits

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average length of time between being signed off sickness benefit and signing on to unemployment benefit from the receipt of the last sickness benefit and the receipt of the first unemployment benefit in cases between the Hull Britannia House and Oriel House branches of his Department and the Hull Market Place Department of Employment.

Mr. Portillo: The final payment of sickness benefit is normally issued by the Department's local office within two to three days of receipt of a final medical certificate. When a person claims unemployment benefit at the unemployment benefit office he is allocated a signing day according to the initial letter of his surname and the first payment of unemployment benefit is usually issued by the central computer system on the first day after he next signs on. The first payment of unemployment benefit will therefore normally be received between five and 17 days after unemployment benefit is claimed — the later the day of issue, the more days' benefit will be included. The result is to put the claimant in cycle for fortnightly payments thereafter. I am not aware of any particular difficulty arising at the Hull offices.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the total number of bed losses in National Health Service hospitals in each district health authority for each year since 1982; and how many of them were acute beds.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 24 November 1987]:* The available information is given in tables which have been placed in the Library. The tables also show for the acute sector the numbers of in-patient cases treated by each health authority between the years 1982 and 1986. For England as a whole the number of in-patient cases treated has risen by 10·9 per cent.

London Hospitals

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the cost per case treated for each of the London postgraduate hospitals in each of the last five financial years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The costing returns submitted to the Department show the average costs per in-patient case as follows:

Hospital	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
Hospital for Sick Children	1,457·92	1,456·19	1,539·90	1,760·25	1,930·99
Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children	660·11	772·56	795·05	715·91	796·40
Hospital for Nervous Diseases	1,591·08	1,759·10	1,875·14	2,324·29	2,086·11
Moorfields Eye Hospital	507·16	515·53	561·50	575·70	597·46
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley[1]	—	—	—	—	—
Brompton	1,383·63	1,443·72	1,517·19	1,630·90	1,891·91
Brompton Frimley[2]	765·10	834·91	1,131·03	—	—
London Chest	1,320·12	1,488·12	1,331·58	1,543·86	1,642·75
National Heart	2,491·17	2,298·89	2,501·67	2,342·67	2,480·83
Royal Marsden	1,019·06	1,118·57	1,181·51	1,188·78	1,156·96
Royal Marsden Surrey	969·61	998·75	928·87	1,042·36	1,060·16
Hammersmith	1,083·61	1,111·64	1,132·53	1,182·84	1,245·69
Acton[1]	—	—	—	—	—
Queen Charlottes Maternity	808·43	802·27	820·46	792·40	878·47
Chelsea Hospital for Women	408·70	441·73	448·33	495·45	610·72
Eastman Dental[3]	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Average costs per case in respect of hospitals providing long stay treatment are not meaningful.
[2] This hospital closed in December 1984.
[3] This hospital had no in-patients during the period.

Health Districts

Mr. Gow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which health districts in England have a higher proportion of their population over the age of 65 years than Eastbourne; and which health districts have a lower resource allocation working party target position than Eastbourne.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* The Hastings and Worthing health districts both had a higher proportion of their population over the age of 65 than Eastbourne in 1986 (the latest available population estimate). The detailed figures are as follows:

Proportion of population over 65

	Males per cent.	Females per cent.	Persons per cent.
England	12·6	18·2	15·4
Eastbourne	20·5	28·8	25·0
Worthing	21·2	31·3	26·7
Hastings	21·0	30·1	25·9

Regions use a variety of methods for calculating districts' resource allocation targets, and it is not therefore possible to draw comparisons between districts in different regions.

District Health Authorities (Hospitals)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each district health authority, and for each year since 1979 *(a)* whole hospitals closed permanently and the numbers of beds lost and *(b)* partial permanent hospital closures and the number of beds lost.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The hospitals approved for *(a)* complete closure and *(b)* partial closure, and the beds in each hospital, between January 1979 and December 1986, are listed in a table which has been placed in the Library. It should be noted that closure plans may be modified, delayed or even dropped after approval is obtained. Since many of these closures were the direct consequence of new hospitals opening and since others have reopened in the voluntary and private sector it is impossible to say how many beds were "lost".

"Pregnancy Book"

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the "Pregnancy Book", published in 1984, will be published in languages other than English; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The Health Education Authority, which publishes the "Pregnancy Book", has no plans to issue it in languages other than English. It does, however, publish the following leaflets in five Asian languages (Gujerati, Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi and Bengali):

A Healthy Pregnancy
Maternal and Child Health Clinics
Why You Need Vitamin D
Are You Pregnant?
Breast Feeding

It also supports the production of videos in Asian languages. These include "Be Prepared: Be Happy", a 20-minute video in Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Gujerati, Punjabi and Mirpuri.

Catalytic Converters

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on medical research and judgment in West Germany with regard to the effects on health of catalytic converters for motor vehicles.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* I am advised that the West German report has been examined and there is nothing to support the hypothesis that the use of catalytic converters leads to harmful health effects.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the effects on health of *(a)* platinum or *(b)* other substances produced as a result of catalytic converters in motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* I am advised that no appreciable amount of platinum would be released into the air from catalytic converters. Neither platinum nor any other substances in the quantities likely to be released from this source pose any risk to health.

District Health Authorities (Contracts)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of all new contracts

awarded since 31 December 1986 by each district health authority, by hospital, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work; and if he will give the estimated annual savings for each contract awarded;

(2) if he will give the latest figures as a percentage of services put out to tender by each district health authority for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services, and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply, 6 November 1987, c. 917*]: Continued good progress has been made by health authorities. As at 30 September 1987, tenders had been sought for 84 per cent. of these services, and estimated annual savings of some £103 million had been generated from contracts awarded. £27·5 million has come from 208 contracts awarded to private contractors and £75·5 million from 1,187 tenders secured by in-house organisations. Tables giving the detailed information requested have been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Ethiopia (Famine Relief)

8. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he now intends to send Royal Air Force Hecules aircraft to Ethiopia to assist in famine relief operations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development indicated on 30 November, the United Nations co-ordinator in Ethiopia believes that existing airlift arrangements should be sufficient to meet needs, but we are in daily contact with the United Nations in Addis Ababa and if we are requested to provide assistance through the Royal Air Force we shall consider it as a matter of urgency.

Trident

15. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the increase in explosive power which Trident missiles can achieve compared with Polaris; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Since the general election in June—when the Government's policy of modernising our strategic nuclear deterrent with Trident was overwhelmingly endorsed—my Department has received less than 20 written representations from the public criticising Trident's capabilities.

30. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he proposes to take to ensure that servicing of Trident missiles at King's bay, Georgia, will not result in job losses amongst those workers who presently service Polaris missiles at the Royal Naval armament depot, Coulport.

Mr. Sainsbury: There will be opportunities for employment on the Trident facilities at RNAD Coulport as they progressively come on line in the early 1990s. However, this task will be less than current Polaris activity and the staffing requirement will therefore be correspondingly lower.

Manpower levels for Trident and other future tasks at RNAD Coulport are presently under consideration, but a high priority is already being given to establishing what alternative employment may be possible to replace that currently offered by Polaris.

35. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current dollar cost of Trident and how it is affected by the $ US/£ sterling rate of exchange.

Mr. Sainsbury: The dollar cost included in the current estimate for the United Kingdom Trident programme of £9,265 million is $5,219 million at the exchange rate of $1·50 = £1. This rate was the one used for the annual re-costing of the defence long term programme as a part of which the cost estimate of £9,265 million was assessed.

The Trident cost estimate is currently being reviewed with the intention of an announcement being made to Parliament by my right hon. Friend early in the new year. At that time the exchange rate applicable to the new estimate and the dollar content of that estimate will also be announced.

Army-RUC Co-operation

16. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the arrangements for co-operation between the Army in Northern Ireland and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Yes. The role of the Army in Northern Ireland is to support the RUC in the defeat of terrorism. There is constant and close co-operation between the two forces at all levels of command.

European Fighter Aircraft

18. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects the European fighter aircraft to become operational.

Mr. Sainsbury: The European fighter aircraft is expected to become operational in the mid-1990s, subject to international agreement to the launch of full development.

71. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated cost of the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mrs. Ruddock) on 5 November, at column *888*.

40. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the development of the radar contract awarded for the European fighter aircraft project.

Mr. Sainsbury: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 10 November, at column *158*.

Youth Training Scheme

19. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of YTS trainees in the armed forces have subsequently enlisted in the services on a permanent basis.

Mr. Freeman: Up to 31 October 1987 1,839 participants in the armed services youth training scheme had

transferred to regular engagements. This represents 63·7 per cent. of the total outflow from the scheme to the same date.

INF Agreement

20. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what buttressing in nuclear weaponry Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Younger: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

22. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for conventional forces deployment of an International Nuclear Forces Agreement on short and medium range nuclear weapons in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Following the successful conclusion of an INF agreement, NATO's strategy of flexible response will continue to depend on an adequate mix of both nuclear and conventional forces. NATO's Defence Ministers at their meeting in Brussels last week (a copy of the communiqué from which is being placed in the Library) reaffirmed the importance both of maintaining effective conventional forces and of seeking to reduce conventional disparities between NATO and the Warsaw pact through arms control agreements.

23. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will directly discuss with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ways of reducing minimum nuclear forces following the signing of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

60. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will directly discuss with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics ways of reducing minimum nuclear forces following on from the signing of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) earlier today.

29. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates his Department has made of the number of Soviet nuclear warheads that will be eliminated as a result of the treaty to reduce the number of intermediate-range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Precise details of our assessments are classified, but we expect that more than 1,500 deployed warheads will be eliminated.

31. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what adjustments in nuclear weaponry Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

38. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensatory measures Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

41. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what buttressing in nuclear weaponry Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

45. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what enhancement measures Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

46. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what offsetting measures Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

57. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what adjustments in nuclear weaponry Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

64. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what compensatory measures Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

73. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what offsetting arrangements Her Majesty's Government are considering in the wake of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given earlier today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

32. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what arms control and disarmament negotiations he expects to contribute directly following the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

54. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what arms control and disarmament negotiations he expects to contribute directly, following the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

74. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what new arms control and disarmament negotiations he expects to contribute directly following the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) earlier today.

33. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received regarding the implications for the United Kingdom's defence policy of the proposed treaty to reduce intermediate range nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received representations from many quarters in recent months concerning the prospective INF agreement. The majority have welcomed the agreement, as do the Government, as a significant step towards greater international security.

43. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what implications the treaty to reduce intermediate-range nuclear weapons will have for the balance of conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) earlier today.

47. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will discuss with his NATO colleagues their policy on the next stage in negotiations on arms control with the Soviet Union, following the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We maintain a constant dialogue with our colleagues in NATO on the full range of defence and security issues facing the Alliance. NATO's arms control priorities, which are being pursued vigorously, were reaffirmed by North Atlantic Committee Ministers at their meeting at Reykjavik in June, a copy of the communiqué from which is in the Library.

Gulf (Minesweeping)

21. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the Royal Navy's minesweeping operations in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Royal Navy's mine countermeasures vessels in the Gulf have now completed their operations off Qatar, during which they were joined by Netherlands and Belgian MCMVs. Five mines were found, bringing the total detected and destroyed by the RN MCMVs since their arrival in the region to 10.

Weapons and Explosives (Northern Ireland)

24. **Mr. Aspinwall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many weapons and explosives have been seized in Northern Ireland since the start of the current year as a result of the work of the British armed forces.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Finds of weapons and explosives by the armed forces in Northern Ireland are not recorded separately from finds made by the security forces as a whole. At 26 November 1987, 250 weapons, 17,839 rounds of ammunition and 5,781 kg (12,718 lb) of explosives had been found by the security forces since the beginning of the year. In addition, 3,843 kg (8,454 lb) of explosives had been neutralised.

NATO Information Services

25. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent by the NATO information services and upon which principal projects in the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The following amount was spent by the NATO information services for the last five years:

	Belgian francs (million)	[1] *£ million*
1983	121	1·93
1984	128	2·04
1985	135·5	2·16
1986	143·0	2·28
1987	147·3	2·35

[1] At 3 December 1987 exchange rates.

The NATO information programme regularly devotes resources to the following activities:

Visitors to NATO
Seminars and conferences
The NATO review
Defence information liaison
Non-periodic publications
Radio, television and film
Photographs and exhibits
Cultural programme

Bullying and Cruelty

26. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many commanding officers have been disciplined following bullying incidents and initiation rituals in their units.

Mr. Freeman: No commanding officer has been disciplined as a result of bullying incidents and initiation rituals in his unit. The hon. Member will recall, however, that the commanding officer of 1st Battalion Kings Own Scottish Borderers was removed from his command following revelations about initiation ceremonies conducted by soldiers within his battalion. Investigations related to these matters are continuing and their findings will determine any further action to be taken.

39. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet reached a decision on whether to set up a parliamentary commissioner to investigate complaints of bullying in the Army.

Mr. Freeman: I wrote to the right hon. Member on 2 December. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

61. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the steps he is taking to prevent cruelty in the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Member will be aware that the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has made a number of representations on the steps taken to prevent ill treatment or bullying in the armed forces. Other than that, there have been a number of articles in the press, several supporting the firm and open action taken against those found to be guilty of this type of unacceptable behaviour.

Air-Sea Rescue

27. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the evaluation of the air-sea rescue services currently offered by the Royal Air Force, and the possibility of transferring this to Bristow's.

Mr. Freeman: An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

United States-USSR (Summit Meeting)

28. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the United States Secretary for Defence to discuss the military implications of the summit meeting between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev.

Mr. Younger: I am in regular contact with the United States Defence Secretary and last met him on 2 December, when we discussed a number of issues, including arms control and its military implications. If no earlier occasion arises, I hope to meet him next at the spring meeting of the nuclear planning group.

Alarm Project

34. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with progress on the Alarm project.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes.

Intermediate Nuclear Forces

36. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last consulted his North Atlantic Treaty Organisation partners about the deployment of intermediate nuclear forces in western Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mrs. Ruddock) on 7 December.

NATO Ministerial Meeting

37. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his last meeting with NATO Defence Ministers.

55. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his last meeting with NATO Defence Ministers.

77. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his last meeting with North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Defence Ministers.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) earlier today.

Exercise Purple Warrior

42. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what lessons were learned from exercise Purple Warrior.

75. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now in a position to make a statement on the outcome of exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A full assessment of the lessons to be learnt from exercise Purple Warrior is under way and will take some time to complete. However, our initial assessments indicate that the exercise was an outstanding success.

This has been the most ambitious national joint amphibious exercise for decades and has realised substantial gains for the United Kingdom's capability to operate outside the NATO area. Many new capabilities and procedures were exercised for the first time in a realistic operational environment. In particular, the complex command and control structure of joint amphibious operations was thoroughly tested and proven. Equally, the exercise has produced significant benefits in terms of enhanced tri-service integration and co-operation.

The very detailed consultation process which took place between the exercise planners and the local community proved to be most successful in reducing the inconvenience caused to local residents by the exercise and minimising damage to the environment. Damage repair units and suitably qualified claims assessors were on hand throughout the exercise period and are still on site to assess what repairs are necessary.

The exercise was host for the first time on United Kingdom territory to observers under the terms of the Stockholm document. We welcomed this opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the agreement and its role in lessening suspicion and mistrust, and hence improving security in Europe.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the nature and estimated value of damage caused to military property and equipment during exercise Purple Warrior;

(2) what was the nature and estimated value of damage caused to civilian property during exercise Purple Warrior;

(3) how many *(a)* military and *(b)* civilian personnel were injured as a result of military operations during exercise Purple Warrior;

(4) how many complaints have been received about disturbance or damage caused by military vehicles and troops participating in exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Damage to military property and equipment during exercise Purple Warrior was almost all of a relatively minor nature and was sustained mainly as a result of an accidental collision at sea, storm damage and a vehicle fire: the cost of this damage has not yet been finally assessed. Claims so far received in respect of damage to civilian property caused by exercise activity, are all minor in nature and relate mainly to land and fences: these claims are currently being evaluated and it is too soon to estimate the cost of damage caused. Fifty-eight military personnel required medical treatment during the exercise for a range of minor injuries; no civilian injuries were reported. A few complaints relating to instances of disturbance and damage caused by military vehicles and personnel participating in the exercise were received by the exercise planning staff during the exercise and dealt with locally; no similar complaints have been received by my Department since the exercise began.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints have been received about disturbance from low-flying aircraft participating in exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Freeman: One.

Bomb Disposal (Northern Ireland)

44. **Sir Anthony Buck:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many explosive devices have been dealt with by the Army's bomb disposal and search teams in Northern Ireland in the last 12 months.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In the 12 months up to 26 November 1987, Army explosive ordnance disposal teams in Northern Ireland neutralised 134 devices containing 4,238 kg (9,324 lb) of explosives.

Tanks and Helicopters

48. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give his assessment of the likely changes in the balance of battlefield power between tanks and helicopters arising from changes in technology in the next 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 2 July at column 164.

Strategic Defence Initiative

49. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make an estimate of the value of strategic defence initiative orders so far won by British companies and the number of jobs they have produced.

Mr. Sainsbury: The value of United States funded SDI work so far awarded to the United Kingdom is $45 million. This figure includes SDI contracts placed with British academic institutions and through the Ministry of Defence. Information regarding the number of jobs produced as a result of this work is not maintained by the Government.

Stand-Off Weapons

50. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the strategic considerations which relate to the possible collaboration between the United Kingdom, France and the five other nations which have signed a memorandum of undertaking to develop and produce air-launched stand-off weapons.

Mr. Sainsbury: Because of the increasing effectiveness of Warsaw pact air defences, there is a clear need in future to equip our aircraft with weapons which can be launched at a distance away from the target area. Proposals for a modular staff-off weapon have been invited which would meet this need by providing a modular family of weapons which can deliver a variety of conventional sub-munitions over a range of distances.

Service Equipment

51. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what field trials are conducted for the testing of service men's personal equipment, uniform, hats, helmets and boots.

Mr. Sainsbury: A series of field trials is normally carried out before any new item is introduced into service, culminating in a major trial of the final prototype by service units in all relevant conditions for periods of up to 12 months.

Mountain Rescue Work

52. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the number of service personnel whose duties include a significant role in mountain rescue work; and what is the estimate of the cost of maintaining this service.

Mr. Freeman: Virtually all of the services' mountain rescue work is undertaken by the Royal Air Force, whose mountain rescue teams comprise 25 full-time personnel and a further 158 unpaid volunteers. In addition, a great deal of such work is carried out by the RAF's search and rescue (SAR) helicopter flights. All this activity is co-ordinated by the RAF's rescue co-ordination centres at Pitreavie and Plymouth. To separate out the MOD's SAR activity attributable to mountain rescue would involve disproportionate cost and effort.

Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve

53. **Mr. Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in the programme to expand the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve.

Mr. Freeman: Phase II of the Territorial Army expansion programme set out in "Defence Open Government Document 84/02" began formally in April 1986. The majority of the planned new units and sub-units have now formed and are recruiting.

Military Bases (Security)

56. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further measures he intends to take to improve security at military bases.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Security at military bases is under constant review and improvements are made as threats or deficiencies are recognised.

Petty Officer John Black

58. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the latest situation regarding the unlawful killing in Spain of Petty Officer John Black, Royal Navy, following the meetings between the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) and the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton about this matter.

Mr. Freeman: Officers from the Metropolitan police force travelled to Spain last month in continuation of their investigation into the death of Petty Officer Black. They have now returned. A report of their visit has not yet been received.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

59. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to attend a meeting of the NATO nuclear planning group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The next meeting of NATO's nuclear planning group will be held in Denmark next spring.

United States Service Men

62. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States service men are currently stationed in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are 32,000 United States service men currently assigned to locations in the United Kingdom.

Monuments and Buildings

63. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what amount of the defence budget in quantity and percentage terms is spent on protecting and safeguarding ancient monuments and historic buildings *(a)* nationally and *(b)* on Salisbury plain.

Mr. Freeman: Total expenditure within the defence budget for the protection and safeguarding of ancient monuments and historic buildings cannot be separately identified from general maintenance expenditure.

However, resulting from the "Salisbury Plain Training Area Archaelogical Working Party Report 1984-1985", expenditure for that area can be identified and during 1987-88 £98,500 has been allowed for and will be spent on protecting archaelogical features. PSA figures produced for 1985-86 works expenditure on the Government historic estate included an MOD element of £24 million, which related to the urban estate only.

Pilots (Transfers)

65. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the number of fast-jet pilots who were transferred to helicopter or fixed-wing operations in the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The total number of RAF fast jet pilots transferred to helicopter or fixed wing/multi-engine operations in the last five years is 263. Details are as follows:

Re-streamed (during training) — 238
(67 to helicopters, 171 to multi-engine)
Re-roled (after qualifying) — 25
(7 to helicopters, 18 to multi-engine)

EH 101 Helicopters

66. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Italian EH 101 helicopter project.

Mr. Sainsbury: The integrated civil/military EH 101 helicopter programme is in its fourth year of full development. The first flight of a prototype aircraft took place successfully at Westland on 9 October, and the unveiling of the second prototype will take place at Augusta on December 14. While some difficulties have been experienced, I am confident that the two variants in prospect for the British armed forces will represent a major enhancement to our capability in their respective fields.

Royal Ordnance Factories

67. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what implications he forecasts for defence procurement of structural changes within the Royal Ordnance factories.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member ot the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) earlier today.

Mine Counter-measures

68. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary to State for defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the modernisation of the United Kingdom's mine counter-measure capabilities.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) on 10 November, at column *348*.

Low-flying Aircraft

69. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints regarding low-flying aircraft he has received in relation to England, Scotland and Wales in the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 January and 31 October 1987 the Ministry of Defence received 3,471 inquiries and complaints about military low flying in relation to England, 563 in relation to Scotland and 760 in relation to Wales.

RAF Molesworth

70. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost to date of construction and security work at Royal Air Force Molesworth; and whether cruise missiles will be deployed there after the signing of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is estimated that the cost to date of construction and associated security works at RAF Molesworth is £74·4 million.

As has been agreed jointly by the NATO allies, deployments of cruise missiles, including those into RAF Molesworth, will be suspended after signature of an INF agreement.

Property Services Agency

72. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of work undertaken for his Department by the Property Services Agency in 1986-87.

Mr. Freeman: Expenditure on defence works services in 1986-87, including PSA administration costs, but excluding MOD accommodation on the civil estate, totalled £1,600 million.

Soviet Union

76. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of military equipment production in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Soviet Union does not publish figures for its production of military equipment. My Department therefore needs to make its own estimates. Such estimates are, of course, extremely difficult to make and are subject to revision as and when new information becomes available.

Preliminary estimates, by major equipment categories, for 1986 include the following:

	Number
Main battle tanks	3,500
Artillery	3,200
Fighter aircraft	700
Bombers	45
Helicopters	625
Transport aircraft	180
Major surface ships	6
Submarines	8

NATO (Aultbea Base)

78. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to change refuelling arrangements at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation depot, Aultbea supply base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I am satisfied with the refuelling arrangements at the NATO depot at Loch Ewe, Aultbea, and plan to make no changes. However, I am aware that refuelling specific classes of vessels can, in certain

circumstances, lead to fuel spillages, such as the incident which occurred at Loch Ewe on 14 August. Modifications to the vessel fuel system are being developed. Meanwhile, affected Her Majesty's ships have been reminded of the need for special care to be taken during refuelling operations.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what precise stage the deployment of cruise missiles has reached at RAF Molesworth; for how long it is intended that the base shall be operational for the missiles after the signing of the intermediate-range nuclear forces agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Only one operational flight of cruise missiles has been deployed to RAF Molesworth. Details of the missile run-down in individual countries are still being discussed within NATO, but it is expected that the missiles at RAF Molesworth will be among the first weapons on the NATO side to be withdrawn following the entry into force of the INF treaty.

Persian Gulf (Naval Deployments)

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the second group of Royal Navy Hunt class mine countermeasure vessels that are to depart for the Gulf in January 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our general practice to give details of the future programmes of Royal Navy ships. However, it will, of course, be necessary to relieve the ships supporting our mine countermeasures activities in the Gulf area in due course.

Weather Radars

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence where the three weather radars planned for installation in Scotland will be sited.

Mr. Sainsbury: No sites for these three weather radars have yet been selected. Proposals are likely to focus on the Hebrides, the highlands north-west of Aberdeen, and somewhere in the vicinity of Edinburgh or Glasgow, taking advantage of high ground to obtain the best results.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what capability the three weather radars planned for installation in Scotland will have to detect electronic emissions.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what capability the three weather radars planned for installation in Scotland will have to detect aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Although aircraft illuminated by the sweep of the rotating beam of the radar will produce echoes, the system was selected for optimum sensitivity to precipitation and has no capability to detect or recognise aircraft.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many nuclear-powered fleet submarines are currently based in the Clyde; and what plans there are to increase this number.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our general practice to give details of the disposition of Royal Navy surface ships and submarines.

NATO Base, Fairlie

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the agreement governing United States use of the NATO mooring and support base, Fairlie.

Mr. Ian Stewart: An arrangement exists allowing the United States to deliver supplies for United States forces based in the United Kingdom through the mooring and support depot at Fairlie. The details of the arrangement are confidential.

QED Design and Development (Contract)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contracts have been given to QED by his Department for supply of defence equipment to the middle east.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to give details of contracts placed with individual companies as this information is commercial in confidence. Nor do we give details of sales to individual countries.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what contracts his Department has *(a)* negotiated and *(b)* entered into with QED Design and Development Ltd. since 1980;

(2) how many Browning pistols were the subject of the contract negotiated between his Department and QED Design and Development Ltd.; and what was the value of that contract.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to give details of contracts placed with individual companies as this information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any contracts between his Department and QED Design and Development have required end user certification.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to give details of contracts placed with individual companies as this information is commercially confidential. End user certificates are, where appropriate, part of the export licence process and would not normally arise in a contract between the Ministry and a United Kingdom company.

Mr. Frank Turner

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Mr. Frank Turner of Gravesend has been employed by his Department at any time since 1970.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no record of Frank Turner of Gravesend having been employed by the Ministry of Defence at any time since 1970.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the clarification of the contract requirements on his Department as delivered to Mr. Frank Turner by Colonel Hardy, acting on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our practice to give details of contracts placed with individual companies as this information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Gordon Harrold

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Mr. Gordon Harrold, of Fairborn, Harrietsham, Kent has been employed by his Department since 1970.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no record of Gordon Harrold of Fairborn, Harrietsham, Kent having been employed by the Ministry of Defence at any time since 1970.

Sales Contracts

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish explanatory details of all instances of public expenditure incurred by his Department as a result of settlement of a sales contract due to a change of policy since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Only one case has fallen above the limit that has required individual notation in the appropriation Account: £450,000 in the account for 1982-83. This was in respect of a contract for the sale of surplus pistols to QED (Design and Development) Ltd. It would require disproportionate effort to identify any cases that may have occurred below the limit.

International Military Services

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has plans to alter the current arrangements for his supervision of International Military Services.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Over-the-horizon Radar

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with siting an over-the-horizon radar system in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: As I said in my letter of 18 September to the hon. Member and as stated by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), on 8 December 1986, at column *87*, the United Kingdom and the United States are collaborating in a joint programme of studies aimed at testing the feasibility of operating an over-the-horizon radar system in the United Kingdom. These studies are still continuing.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 9 December 1987

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hill and Upland Areas

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if Her Majesty's Government have completed their review of the economic conditions in the hill and upland areas; and if he will make a statement on the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances and associated scheme conditions for 1988.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friends and I have now completed the annual review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands.

Even allowing for recent bad weather, the economic prospects for farmers in the less-favoured areas are currently looking significantly better than at this time last year. Most LFA livestock producers have benefited from a 35 per cent. rise in suckler cow premium and the green pound devaluations, which have provided increased support through the sheep annual premium and beef variable premium. The Government have decided that the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances should be maintained at their present levels for 1988. The associated conditions will also remain unchanged, apart from some minor amendments to the scheme rules. We shall be laying a statutory instrument shortly to give effect to these changes, which will be explained to claimants when the application forms are dispatched.

The Government continue to recognise the importance of the hill and upland areas in the United Kingdom and their reliance on the compensatory allowances for the economic well-being of livestock production. A healthy livestock sector in the hills and uplands makes a major contribution to agriculture, the rural economy and the environment. The Government are committed to providing appropriate support to meet the special needs of livestock producers in those areas. This commitment is demonstrated by the fact that total HLCA payments next year are expected to be over £110 million, virtually double the 1979 levels.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. MacGregor: Information on the five grade 2 posts, which include deputy secretary appointments, in my department and the number of staff reporting to them on 1 October 1987 is as follows:

Post	*No. of Staff*
Deputy Secretary (Agricultural Commodities)	222·0
Deputy Secretary (Land and Resources)	781·5
Deputy Secretary (Fisheries and Food)	1065·5
Legal Adviser and Solicitor	68·0
Director General of ADAS and Regional Organisation	6585.5

Details of their responsibilities prior to 1 October 1987 are set out in the "Civil Service Year Book 1987", which is available in the Library of the House. From 1 October the Director General of ADAS took over responsibility for the regional organisation, although the Deputy Secretary (Land and Resources) retains responsibility for liaison on policy issues with that command.

There are about 200 grades in my Department and a breakdown of staff in each grade by each of the grade 2 commands is not readily available. There are 24 grade 3 posts. For grades 4 in the open structure and below, the numbers by grade are given in Her Majesty's Treasury publication "Staff in Post: Civil Service: Departmental Totals by Sex: Non-Industrial Staff: Grade by Department Analysis on 1 April 1987", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Similar details are not available for industrial staff, of which there were 573·5 on 1 October 1987, mainly in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service.

The figures exclude staff in establishments, finance and management services groups, the secretariat and vacant posts.

Butter

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the average retail price of (i) Welsh, (ii) English, (iii) Danish and (iv) New Zealand butter.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information collected for the purposes of the retail prices index indicates that, in October 1987, the average prices of butter were as follows:

	pence per gramme
Home produced	52p per 250g
Danish	56p per 250g
New Zealand	50p per 250g

No separate information is collected on prices for Welsh or English butter.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 30 November, what has been the cost to the United Kingdom Treasury to date of the cost of disposing of the 97,190 tons of butter released between 1 December 1986 and 31 October 1987; and if this full amount will fall to be repaid by the Community after 1989 under the arrangements agreed in March 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 7 December 1987]*: Disposal of this butter has saved money for the Exchequer from reduced storage charges. Without the special scheme the butter would have remained in store and, as I explained in my previous reply, no reimbursements for loss on sale would have been received from the Community. Under the scheme these reimbursements will be paid, but delayed to the four years from 1989. Therefore, the Exchequer is no worse off in this respect. 97,190 tonnes occupy a considerable volume of cold storage, which would have cost about £7·5 million per year to provide.

Poultry Farming

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received over the past five years regarding the adverse environmental impact of the establishment of intensive poultry farming in England.

Mr. Gummer: Information is readily available only for the period from 1 January 1985 to date, during which my Department received 11 representations about environmental concerns in relation to poultry units.

Tree Disease

Mr. Warren: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the dangers of disease spreading from trees uprooted in the recent hurricane to other healthy trees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: There is no immediate danger of disease spreading from windblown trees, because the insects and fungi active in the rotting of wood are dormant during the winter months. The Forestry Commission will, however, be keeping a watch on the situation.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many environmentally sensitive areas have been or are being designated in Devon.

Mr. Gummer: *[Holding answer 7 December 1987]*: No environmentally sensitive areas have been or are about to be designated in Devon. The areas which have been chosen for designation now include all those in England shortlisted by the Countryside Commission and Nature Conservancy Council.

Tomato Imports

Mr. Jack: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what system he has to ensure that on occasions when it is known that growing conditions in the Canary Islands are going to give rise to exports of tomatoes of poor intrinsic condition, the Horticultural Inspectorate is deployed to ensure that no out-of-grade fruit leaves the dockside in the United Kingdom or is admitted in roll on-roll off vehicles from the continent.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* When problems with quality of horticultural imports arise or are expected, it is the practice to redeploy horticultural marketing inspectors, so as to intensify quality control at main points of entry. Produce failing to meet minimum standards is outgraded. Although such intensive action has not so far been needed for the Canary Islands tomatoes, we would not hesitate to take action if necessary.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give details of expenditure in 1986-87 and 1987-88 by the agricultural departments on agricultural grants and subsidies, excluding market regulation, under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: Details are given in the table of the outturn for 1986-87 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1987-88.

(£ million)

	Outturn 1986-87	*Latest forecast of outturn 1987-88*
Price Guarantees		
Wool	8·1	2·5
Potatoes	—	—
	8·1	2·5
Support for capital and other improvements		
Environmentally sensitive areas	—	3·6
Agriculture and Horticulture development scheme	45·3	43·1
Guidance premiums	3·2	2·0
Farm accounts	0·7	0·7
Farm structure	0·3	0·2
Northern Ireland agricultural development programme	4·0	2·2
Agriculture and Horticulture grant scheme	25·6	1·9
Agriculture improvement scheme (EC)	7·5	29·8
Agriculture improvement scheme (National)	8·9	8·6
Others	0·2	0·5
	95·7	92·6
Support for agriculture in special areas		
Hill livestock compensatory allowances	121·7	114·8
Additional benefit to farmers in special areas under AHDS, NIADP, AHGS, AIS(EC) and AIS(nat)	29·9	25·3
Others	4·9	3·8
	156·5	143·9
Other payments		
Milk outgoers scheme	9·5	10·9
Weather aid 1985	—	—
Sheep compensation scheme	4·3	1·0
Cooperation grants	2·7	2·5
Producer organisation	1·0	0·8
Forage groups	0·4	0·4
	17·9	15·6
Grand total	278·2	254·6

Some of this expenditure attracts contributions from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. These are mainly received in the following year. In 1987-88, £36·7 million is expected to be received from the fund, compared with £41·5 million in 1986-87.

The individual figures may not add up to the totals shown due to roundings.

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide details of expenditure in 1986-87 and 1987-88 by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce and the agricultural departments on market regulation under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: Details of the outturn for 1986-87 and the latest forecast of outturn for 1987-88 are as follows:

(£ million)

	Outturn 1986-87	Latest forecast of outturn 1987-88
(i) Expenditure by the intervention board for agricultural produce		
Cereals	114·5	191·1
Beef and Veal	229·7	243·0
Pigmeat	−2·4	−1·7
Sugar	114·9	136·8
Processed Goods	41·6	45·5
Milk Products	299·6	282·1
Oil Seeds	118·4	195·9
Sheepmeat	102·3	124·7
Others	18·1	28·8
	1,036·7	1,246·2
(ii) Expenditure by the agricultural departments		
Payments to milk producers giving up milk production	—	51·0
Milk Non-Marketing Premiums	—	—
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	26·9	37·0
Annual premium on ewes	101·7	143·8
Small cereals producers	—	3·4
Grand Total	128·6	235·2

Expenditure includes the beef and sheepmeat variable premium schemes (net of clawback for sheepmeat and charges on beef exported and sold into intervention), the premium schemes for the non-marketing of milk and the conversion of dairy herds, suckler cow premium scheme, annual premium on ewes, payments to producers giving up milk production, scheme to aid small cereal producers, refunds on imports and exports (net of levies), the school milk subsidy, and the net cost of buying commodities into intervention less proceeds from sales. It also takes account of certain receipts treated as negative expenditure, namely monetary compensatory amounts levied on intra-Community trade and the co-responsibility levies on cereals and milk producers and supplementary levy on milk producers. Of the estimated outturn for 1987-88 £1,333·1 million is expected to be financed from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund (EAGGF), the balance being financed from Exchequer funds. In 1986-87, £1,439·3 million was financed from EAGGF. Some of the expenditure shown above benefits consumers and trade interests rather than United Kingdom producers.

PRIME MINISTER

Japan (British Investment)

Mr. Michael Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister what information she has received regarding the Japanese Government's undertaking to license a second KDD international telecommunications consortium, including British investment through Cable and Wireless plc; and whether in the light of previous representations made by herself, other Ministers and parliamentarians of all parties, Her Majesty's Government will take a continuing interest in the progress of further negotiations.

The Prime Minister: I understand that Mr. Nakayama, the Japanese Minister for Posts and Telecommunications, has now awarded a licence to the International Digital Communications consortium, of which Cable and Wireless is a member. I very much welcome this decision.

The Government have expressed consistent support for Cable and Wireless's involvement in the IDC consortium and I raised the issue personally with Mr. Nakasone earlier this year.

We shall continue to follow with close interest the progress of this project.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Soviet Studies

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much is being spent in the current academic year on Soviet studies in universities and polytechnics; and what proposals he has to increase such allocations.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Student Grants

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many full-time students in higher education receive no maintenance grant from public funds.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 20 November 1987]:* In 1985-86, some 89,000 students in receipt of mandatory or full-value discretionary awards received fee payments, but no maintenance, because of high parental or other income. In 1983-84, some 20,000 students in full-time higher education were estimated to be receiving neither maintenance nor fees from public funds. More recent estimates are unavailable.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Funerals

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what evidence he has of variations in prices for funerals, and of regional differences; and how many complaints have been received by his Department on this matter in the last five years.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has received around 70 representations concerning funeral prices in the last five years. In the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the acquisition by the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. of the Scottish funerals business of House of Fraser plc, there is some discussion of regional differences in costs. I am not aware of other evidence of price variations.

Belgian Carpet Imports

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide information, on a quarterly basis, showing total imports into the United Kingdom of Belgian carpets for 1985, 1986 and for the first three quarters of 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is as follows:

United Kingdom imports of carpets from Belgium-Luxembourg
Value: £000's

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1985	20,610	23,473	25,335	30,240
1986	24,402	24,083	29,354	34,346
1987	26,283	30,537	32,280	—

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.
Notes:
1. Carpets defined as Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2, Sub-group 659 less items 659.1, 63 and 7.
2. Imports Country Whence Consigned; cif basis.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he intends to take in relation to low-cost Belgian carpets being imported into the United Kingdom; what representations he has made concerning Belgian state aid to their textile and carpet industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government have made a number of representations in support of action by the European Commission against Belgian subsidies to their textile and carpet industry. Further representations will be made as appropriate in consultation with the United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from within the United Kingdom concerning unfair competition resulting from the importing into the United Kingdom of low-cost Belgian carpets, and what share of the United Kingdom carpet market Belgian carpet suppliers now take.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have received various representations from time to time concerning the provision of aid to the Belgian carpet industry but none recently relating specifically to low-cost imports into the United Kingdom. Belgian carpets accounted for 13 per cent. by value of the United Kingdom carpet market in 1986.

Council of Industry Ministers

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a report on the outcome of the Council of Industry Ministers' meeting on 8 December.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I attended a meeting of the Council of Industry Ministers in Brussels on 8 December and took part in a discussion on the future of the steel market after the present quota arrangements end on 31 December 1987. I pressed for the earliest practicable return to a quota-free market in all categories of steel products and for progress with the further restructuring of the European industry that is necessary for the return to free market conditions to be orderly. I argued the case for steel users in British industry to be able to purchase steel at competitive and not artificial prices. I also underlined the point that the British Steel Corporation has carried out very extensive restructuring of its plants, has raised its performance and productivity, and is now inhibited by the present quota regime from taking full advantage of its competitive position. So far as the British position on further restructuring is concerned, I adhered to the position I outlined to the House in my statement on 3 December.

The Council and the Commission are agreed on the need to restructure the European industry and to end the quota system at the earliest suitable moment. Considerable discussion took place, however, on the pace of change and on the details, on which a wide range of views emerged. No final decisions could be reached, but the following conclusions were agreed unanimously as the basis for further discussion at another meeting of the Council on 22 December:

(a) The Council will take a decision on the basis of a Commission proposal on 22 December 1987 on whether the quota system should be continued beyond 31 December 1987. It will take its decision in the light of the efforts that each member state concerned has undertaken to make in the meantime concerning reduction of excess capacity in each of the categories Ia and Ib, II and III. To that end the Commission will arrange for appropriate consultations of member states before 22 December 1987, with a view to producing clear and credible indications by 22 December 1987 of the willingness of Governments, after consultation with their industries, to undertake a sufficient reduction of capacity in both state and private sector undertakings by means of closures.

(b) On 22 December the Council and the Commission will consider whether the result of the efforts referred to in *(a)* is satisfactory. Before 22 December 1987, the Commission will consider the situation of category I in the light of the comments of Ministers. If the results have been satisfactory the Council will consider the Commission's proposals for the extension of the quota system for categories I, II and III until 30 June 1988.

(c) Before 10 June 1988, all member states concerned should produce specific and binding undertakings by Government and industries as to the share of their state-owned and private sector industries in the reduction of the surplus.

(d) The reference of the quota system should be updated and simplified in the context of the decision to be taken before the end of June on the extension of the quota system.

The extension covering categories II and III should run until 31 December 1990, provided the necessary undertakings on reduction of production capacity mentioned under *(c)* is achieved. As regards category I, the Commission will make proposals in the light of the situation in this category and of the undertakings of the industry concerning closures and in the perspective of parallel treatment of this category with categories II and III.

(e) Should the above-mentioned procedure fail to produce the undertakings mentioned under *(c)*, the quota system expires automatically by the end of June 1988.

The Commission also made the following declaration to clarify the effect of point *(a)* of these conclusions, in terms accepted by the Council:

"With regard to point *(a)* of the conclusions of the Council, the Commission confirms that 'sufficient reduction' means capacity reductions of the scale indicated by the Three Wise Men in their final report, and by the Commission in the communication to the Council."

In my opinion, the progress of these negotiations so far poses no problem at all for the preparations for privatisation of the British Steel Corporation which I announced last week.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will examine the possibility of reclassifying as a child tax relief that part of child benefit received by families who pay more in income tax than they receive in child benefit.

Mr. Major: No. Payments made by the Government are usually treated as public expenditure rather than negative taxation unless the payments are an integral part of the tax system. The definition of public expenditure used in the public expenditure White Paper follows in the main national accounting conventions which in turn follow international guidelines.

Distribution of Income

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the figures on the distribution of income in the United Kingdom for 1984-85 will be published.

Mr. Major: The estimates for the distribution of income in the United Kingdom for 1984-85 are to appear in the November issue of *Economic Trends*, which is expected to be published on Friday 18 December.

Overseas Assets

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the sterling value of British-owned assets held abroad *(a)* in the United States of America and *(b)* elsewhere, as at 16 October 1987, and on 7 December 1987.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* I regret that the information is not available.

Job Creation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *293*, how many of the jobs created between 1983 and 1986 were *(a)* in manufacturing industry and *(b)* in the services sector.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* For Great Britain, the figures of net changes in employment are as follows:

Great Britain employment (including self-employed): thousands, seasonally adjusted (changes on a year earlier in brackets)

	Manufacturing	*Services*	*Total (Manufacturing, services and other)*
June 1983	5,580	14,485	22,716
June 1984	5,496 (−84)	15,007 (+552)	23,166 (+450)
June 1985	5,478 (−18)	15,445 (+438)	23,553 (+387)
June 1986	5,360 (−118)	15,748 (+303)	23,666 (+113)
Change between June 1983 and June 1986	−220	+1,263	+950

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police (Manpower Wastage)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to take any measures to reduce wastage of manpower from the Metropolitan police force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the Commissioner's efforts to reduce wastage and to improve recruitment. Currently, about half the retirements from the Metropolitan police are voluntary resignations or transfers to other forces.

The reasons for leaving the force are monitored, but most, such as domestic ties and the quality of life, are outside the control of the Commissioner. None the less, counselling and advice is given by divisional managers to officers seeking to leave the force early to see if their difficulties may be overcome and their decisions reversed. We hope, too, that the pay review which will be undertaken soon by the Police Negotiating Board will consider whether the remuneration package for officers in London needs revision to meet the problem of wastage.

A special effort to recruit Londoners, who may be less likely to move away, is part of the current programme of recruitment, which is running at an all-time high, as is the strength of the force.

Upholstery

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to amend the standard required for Home Office contract upholstery from BS5852 part 2 crib 5 to crib 7; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Home Department's draft guide to fire precautions in existing residential care premises advises that upholstered seating should satisfy as a minimum standard the cigarette and match ignitability tests to BS5852 part 1 and crib ignition source 5 of BS5852 part 2. There is no present intention to amend this to crib 7. The draft guide to fire precautions in places of entertainment (which is currently the subject of consultation) proposes that in temporary structures, tents, marquees etc. upholstery should satisfy ignition source 5 but that where there is a higher than normal risk to life in these premises, it may be necessary to require upholstery to satisfy ignition source 7.

British Nationality Act 1981

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the extension of the time limit for registration under the British Nationality Act 1981.

Mr. Renton: We have received six letters from hon. Members and two from organisations.

Prisons

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were *(a)* the categories and *(b)* the numbers of individual doses of drugs administered to inmates at (i) Her Majesty's prison Pentonville, (ii) Risley remand centre and (iii) Appleton Thorn youth custody centre in the latest available year.

Mr. John Patten: The following table provides the information requested in respect of Her Majesty's prison Pentonville and Her Majesty's remand centre, Risley.

The larger part of the medical services at Her Majesty's youth custody centre Thorn Cross (Appleton Thorn) are provided by one doctor. It is a long established policy not to publish information about the prescribing practice of individual doctors.

Number of doses of medicine administered to inmates
(Year ended 31 March 1987)

Establishment	*Prescription only medicines*				
	(1) Medicines available without prescription in the community	*(2) Psychotropic drugs*[1]	*(3) Hypnotic drugs*	*(4) Drugs acting on the central nervous system*[2]	*(5) Other drugs and medicines*
(i) HMP Pentonville	112,801	20,863	1,504	20,185	90,583
(ii) HMRC Risley	162,100	24,814	9,223	22,667	68,345

[1] ie antidepressants, sedatives and tranquillisers.
[2] Other than those shown in columns (2) and (3).

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects Lord Colville's review of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Lord Colville's report of his review of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 is published today. We are very grateful to Lord Colville for his wide-ranging and detailed study. My right hon. Friend informed the House on 23 July at column 338 that he had decided that it would not be wise to discontinue the powers in sections 4, 5 and 6 of the Act. The Government have considered the recommendations made by Lord Colville on the use of these powers, and have concluded that the decision announced on 23 July should be confirmed. In considering their response to the report's other recommendations, the Government will wish to take full account of views which may be expressed in Parliament and elsewhere. Lord Colville's scrutiny of the operation of the Act in 1987 will be published in advance of the debates on the renewal of the Act.

Nationality Registration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those journals in which he has recently advertised details of how to apply for British nationality by registration; if information that such an option will cease on 31 December 1987 was included; and what steps he took to ascertain the level of readership by different ethnic minority groups of such journals.

Mr. Renton: Details of how to apply for British nationality by registration were advertised in 55 local newspapers and 11 ethnic minority papers in March of this year. A further advertisement was placed in 29 local papers and 10 ethnic papers in September of this year. Lists of the newspapers are as follows.

The local advertising was placed in newspapers which cover areas with high concentrations of ethnic minorities, as indentified from data provided by the Office of Population Censuses and Survey.

The local and the ethnic minority press serving these areas were identified in consultation with a specialist ethnic minority advertising agency.

The advertisements drew attention to those options to apply for British nationality by registration which will cease on 31 December 1987.

Advertisements in March 1987 appeared in:—

Barnet Independent
Birmingham Daily News
Birmingham Evening Mail
Blackburn Citizen
Bradford Star
Bradford Telegraph & Argos
Brent Leader
Cardiff Post
Coventry Citizen
Coventry Weekly News
Croydon Post
Croydon Comet
Derby Trader
Ealing Leader
Ealing Recorder
Enfield Advertiser
Greenwich Mercury
Hackney Echo
Hackney Gazette
(Hammersmith) West London Leader
Haringey Advertiser
Haringey Independent
Harrow Leader
Hillingdon Leader
Hounslow Informer
Hounslow Chronicle Extra
Ilford Independent
Islington Gazette
(Kirkless) Huddersfield Daily Examiner
(Kirkless) Huddersfield Weekly News
Lambeth Streatham Guardian
Lewisham & Sydenham Comet
Lewisham & Catford Mercury
Leeds Weekly News
Leicester Mail
Leicester Trader
Manchester Advertiser
Manchester A.M.
Merton and Wimbledon Informer
Newham Recorder
Nottingham Trader
Preston Citizen
Reading Standard
Sandwell Trader
Sheffield Weekly Gazette
Slough Express Midweek
Southwark Sparrow
Stratford and Newham Express
Streatham and Lambeth Comet
Waltham Forest Extra
Waltham Fellow Advertiser
Wandsworth and Putney Guardian
Harrow and Wembley Recorder
Ilford Yellow Advertiser
Barnet Borough Times
Voice
Gleaner
Caribbean Times
Asian Times
New Life
Surma Bengali News
Daily Jang
Guvari Gujarati
Punjabi Times
Amar Deep
African Times

Advertisements on 10 September 1987 appeared in:
Birmingham Daily News
Glasgow Evening Times
Daily Jang
African Times
Bristol Observer
Barnet Independent
Blackburn Citizen
Bradford Star
Cardiff Post
Coventry Citizen
Croydon Advertiser & Post
Derby Trader
Ealing Leader
Edinburgh Advertiser
Hackney Gazette
Haringey Advertiser
Harrow Leader
Hounslow Informer
Huddersfield News
Leeds Weekly News
Lewisham & Catford Mercury
Leicester Mail
Manchester Advertiser—West
Nottingham Trader
Putney & Wandsworth Guardian
Slough Observer Midweek
South London Press
Stratford & Newham Express News
Waltham Forest Extra
Brent Leader
Amar Deep
Caribbean Times
Garavi Gujarati
Ravi Asian Newspaper
Surma Bengali News Weekly
Weekly Gleaner
Des Pardes
Stardust

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the deadline of 31 December registration of British nationality in the event of interruption to the postal service.

Mr. Renton: We have no power to extend the deadline. There is, however, limited power to consider late applications on their individual merits.

Immigration

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of dependants of men and women settled in the United Kingdom after 1973 who were refused entry clearance, under the immigration rule change, HC503, on the grounds that they would have recourse to public funds, in that they required provision of temporary accommodation by a local authority;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of dependants of men and women settled in the United Kingdom after 1973 who will be refused entry clearance, if section 1.5 of the Immigration Act 1971 is repealed, on the grounds that they would have recourse to public funds, in that they would require the provision of temporary accommodation by a local authority.

Mr. Renton: In the period 26 August 1985 to 30 June 1987, 10 wives and children in the Indian subcontinent were initially refused entry clearance to the United Kingdom under the 1985 immigration rules (HC 503) solely because there was no adequate accommodation without recourse to public funds, and 40 were refused partly for this reason. These wives and children were not covered by section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971—ie their sponsor was not a man who had been a Commonwealth citizen settled in the United Kingdom on 1 January 1973. Corresponding information for other countries is not available centrally. Information is not available on which to estimate how many will fail to satisfy the accommodation requirement if section 1(5) is repealed.

Prescriptions (Fraud)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from the chief constables of the west midlands, Northumberland and west Yorkshire on the progress of police inquiries into the alleged offences involving fraudulent use of prescriptions, referred to in the questions from the hon. Member for Workington answered on 3 December by the Attorney-General.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constables of the West Midlands police, the Northumbria police and the West Yorkshire police that inquiries into the allegations referred to are now being made.

British Shooting Sports Council

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he did not consult the British Shooting Sports Council between 20 August and 22 September, the date on which he announced his initial proposals on firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Following the tragic shootings at Hungerford and the level of public concern, it was right for the Government to make an early, considered response. In doing so, we took into account the well-known views of the various interests concerned, including those of the shooting community. We have since consulted widely on our proposals to improve firearms controls and this process is continuing.

Firearms

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the implications for the cost of a firearms certificate and a shotgun certificate, respectively, of implementing the proposals announced in the White Paper Cm. 261.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The proposals announced in the White Paper Cm. 261 will have no implications for the cost of a firearms certificate since the procedures for issue and renewal will remain as at present. The fee for the issue of a shotgun certificate will need to reflect the increased time and work involved in processing issues and renewals, but the level has not yet been determined.

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional police man hours he estimates will be required if his proposals in White Paper Cm. 261 are implemented.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible at this stage to calculate precisely the additional police man hours, because the exact number of weapons which will require certification under a new category is not known. However, the cost of additional manpower will be offset by increased fee revenue.

Asylum

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of persons claiming asylum in Europe over the last three years and their nationalities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The information readily available is:

Numbers of asylum seekers from 1984-86 by country of application

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*Total 1984-86*
Austria	7,200	6,700	8,650	22,550
Belgium	3,650	5,300	7,650	16,600
Denmark	4,300	8,700	9,300	22,300
France	15,900	25,800	23,400	65,100
Germany Federal Republic	35,300	73,850	99,650	208,800
Netherlands	3,600	5,650	5,850	14,100
Norway	300	850	2,700	3,850
Sweden	12,000	14,450	14,600	41,050
Switzerland	7,450	9,700	8,550	25,700
United Kingdom	3,850	5,450	3,900	13,200
Total	92,550	156,450	184,250	4,332,350

Numbers of asylum seekers from 1984 to 1986 in Europe[1] by country of origin

Country of origin	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Total 1984-86*
Afghanistan	1,550	3,100	3,450	8,100
Bangladesh	700	2,250	3,400	6,350
Chile	1,800	2,800	3,450	8,050
Czechoslovakia	5,350	4,800	4,750	14,900
Ethiopia	3,450	4,300	4,300	12,050
Ghana	5,250	8,600	10,600	24,950
Hungary	2,250	3,150	4,100	9,500
India	1,750	5,650	8,050	15,450
Iran	13,550	23,500	41,800	78,850
Iraq	2,450	2,950	2,300	7,700
Lebanon	3,450	8,750	12,350	24,550
Pakistan	3,250	4,800	5,000	13,050
Poland	11,200	14,250	20,700	46,150
Romania	3,650	4,500	7,050	15,200
Sri Lanka	13,650	29,600	10,250	53,500
Turkey	10,900	16,600	19,750	47,250
Yugoslavia	1,000	2,050	2,750	5,800
Zaire	2,400	3,600	4,250	10,250
Others	16,150	24,850	36,000	77,000
TOTAL	103,750	170,100	204,300	478,150

[1] Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Yugoslavia.

TRANSPORT

Breath Tests

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the numbers of casualties in road accidents in which at least one driver or rider failed a roadside screening breath-test in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* Scotland, during the years 1975, 1978 and 1981, broken down between fatal and non-fatal injuries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

Casualties in accidents in which at least one driver or rider failed the roadside screening breath test: England and Wales, Scotland: 1975, 1978, 1981.

	England and Wales	*Scotland*	*Total*
1975			
Fatal	476	38	514
Non-fatal	19,882	1,260	21,142
Total	20,358	1,298	21,656
1978			
Fatal	432	76	508
Non-fatal	17,775	2,036	19,811
Total	18,207	2,112	20,319
1981			
Fatal	413	48	461
Non-fatal	16,961	2,096	19,057
Total	17,374	2,144	19,518

Driving Tests

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to reduce the time of waiting for driving tests.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have been recruiting examiners — the number has increased by 100 (7 per cent.) since September 1985, when waiting times peaked at a national average of 17 weeks—and we are continuing to do so as quickly as we can.

The recently published review of driver testing has recommended additional measures for more rapid improvement in waiting times. These are being considered urgently and where appropriate will be put into effect as soon as possible in the new year.

M1 Road Works

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) for how long road works will continue on the southbound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 3 and 4; and what is the average length of time taken for vehicles to pass through these road works during peak traffic times;

(2) how many accidents have occurred on the southbound carriageway of the M1 between junctions 3 and 4 during the period of road works on this section; what assessment he has made of the road safety implications of these works; and what steps have been taken to improve safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These works should be completed by 18 December, but may be completed earlier if conditions permit. During peak traffic times, vehicles take 15 minutes on average to pass through the works. There have been no reported personal injury accidents on the M1 southbound carriageway between junctions 4 and 3 during the period of the roadworks. One damage-only accident has been recorded, but its cause was unrelated to the works. There is no evidence that our standard safety measures are other than satisfactory here, with the advance warning signs provided.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review the regulations concerning the safety of heavy goods vehicles and their enforcement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We do have plans for improving the safety of heavy goods vehicles. I announced last month that we will be introducing requirements for heavy articulated vehicles to be fitted with anti-lock braking systems. Other improvements to lorry design and to enforcement will come from current work at the Transport and Road Research Laboratory and in the vehicle inspectorate.

Rail Network

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of British Rail's total network will be continuous welded track in the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. David Mitchell: The proportion of railway track operated by British Rail that will be continuous welded track in the years listed is as follows:

	Per cent.
1988-89	61
1989-90	63
1990-91	64
1991-92	65

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the £1,020 million planned to be spent by British Rail on infrastructure improvement in the period 1987-88 to 1991-92, as set out in its current five-year corporate plan, he expects to authorise to be spent on replacing existing track and new track.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that British Rail plans to spend about £700 million on track renewal and replacement in the period 1987-88 to 1991-92.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his reply of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *485*, whether British Rail Engineering Ltd. has been allowed to submit a tender for the new class 60 locomotives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Railways Board issued invitations to tender to a number of British and overseas companies, but the only three tenders it has received are all from British firms. I understand that the Board did not invite BREL to tender as a lead contractor, but that BREL is involved with at least one of the tenders.

ENVIRONMENT

Deputy Secretaries

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Ridley: The responsibilities and staff of the deputy secretaries in my Department (other than in the Property Services Agency) are as follows:

Deputy Secretary, Planning, Inner Cities, Regional Development, Land and Property

Planning, inner cities, regional development, land and property questions; and responsibility for the Department's regional organisation.

At Headquarters, two Under Secretaries (Grade 3), two Grade 4s, 9½ grade 5s and 244 other grades. In the Regional Organisation, nine Under Secretaries, one Grade 4, 19½ Grade 5s and 897½ other grades.

Of the Regional Directors eight (seven Grade 3s, and one Grade 4) are common servants of both DOE(C) and the Department of Transport.

Deputy Secretary, Finance and Local Government

Principal finance officer: and responsibility for policy on local government matters, including local government finance. Three Under Secretaries (Grade 3), one Grade 4, 15 Grade 5s and 403½ other grades.

Deputy Secretary, Environment Protection (also Chief Scientist)

Policy questions on environmental protection as a whole; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution; air, noise and wastes; water supply and water privatisation; rural afffairs, countryside and wildlife conservation. As Chief Scientist, overview of science and research policy, and service as Head of Profession for scientific staff.

Five Under Secretaries (Grade 3), one Deputy Chief Inspector of Factories, 19 Grade 5s and 492½ other grades.

Deputy Secretary, Housing, Construction and the Built Heritage

Housing policy and public expenditure; housing subsidy for local housing authorities; housing associations; house renovation; private rented sector; housing monitoring and analysis; new towns; building regulations; relations with the construction industry; ancient monuments and historic buildings; sport and recreation. Management responsibility for the Building Research Establishment.

Seven Under Secretaries (Grade 3), one Grade 4, 28 Grade 5s and 2,186 other grades.

Deputy Secretary, Solicitor and Legal Adviser

Legal advice to the Department.

Two Under Secretaries, 11 Grade 5s and 54 other grades including 25 non-professional staff, nine of whom also discharge some functions for the Department of Transport.

Director General of Organisation and Establishments

The Director General of Organisation and Establishments is the Department's Principal Establishments Officer who with his staff provides a common service to both the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment (Central). Management responsibility for the Planning Inspectorate.

Four Under Secretaries, three Grade 4s, 16 Grade 5s and 1,971½ other grades. Many of the staff of this command are common servants of both DOE(C) and the Department of Transport.

Chief Architectural Adviser on the Built Environment

Chief Architectural Adviser to the Department. (The Chief Architectural Adviser also serves as the Director General of Design Services in the Property Services Agency.)

In his capacity as Chief Architectural Adviser, supported by staff who also serve in the Housing command. As Director General of Design Services, supported by PSA staff.

In the figures shown above, part time officers are shown as half posts. A further 158 departmental staff are not attached to any of the commands shown above.

Water and Sewerage

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to announce a decision on the proposal in the consultation paper on water and sewerage law, that responsibility for unadopted sewers, except those connected to a private sewage works, should be transferred to the water authorities.

Mr. Moynihan: Final decisions are still to be taken on the various proposals in the consultation paper. An announcement will be made shortly.

Rating Reform

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether self-employed persons living on their own business premises will be liable for *(a)* community charge and *(b)* the unified business rate.

Mr. Howard: Self-employed people will be liable to the community charge in the normal way. Rates will be charged only on buildings and parts of buildings in non-domestic use. Thus, for example, a shopkeeper who lives over his shop will be liable for rates only on the shop, not on both parts as at present.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, using the latest statistical information available, he will publish in the *Official Report* the constituencies of England and Wales ranked accordingly to the percentage of *(a)* losers and *(b)* gainers under the community charge proposals showing these percentages alongside that ranking.

Mr. Howard: As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 26 October at column *38*, it is not possible to produce estimates of gainers and losers by parliamentary constituency.

Homes in Multiple Occupation

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the proposal put forward in its newsletter on homes in multiple occupation by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, to provide a local homes in multiple occupation sample survey service to local authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: It is for local authorities to decide whether they wish to use the proposed sample survey service. Any improved means of locating houses in multiple occupation is welcome if it provides a firm basis for policy making.

No-Fines Properties

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his question on no-fines properties due for answer on 25 November.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have answered these questions today.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice is to be given by his Department to the tenants of the Wimpey no-fines properties in Walsall, in the light of his Department's recognition of the unsatisfactory state of these properties, as to what action they should take during the winter months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 25 November]:* The Department has already issued general guidance to householders on remedies for condensation, damp and mould growth. Any tenants who have particular difficulties with heating should discuss these with Walsall metropolitan borough council, who have, I understand been able to help tenants of no-fines houses to apply to the Department of Health and Social Security for assistance.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if further consultations have taken place between his Department and Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding the financial aspects of bringing up to an acceptable standard the Wimpey no-fines properties in the borough; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what further consultations have now taken place between his Department and Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding the technical matters relating to bringing the Wimpey no-fines properties up to satisfactory standard;

(3) if extra funding will now be given to Walsall metropolitan borough council in order that the Wimpey no-fines properties in the borough can be brought up to satisfactory standards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 25 November 1987]:* HIP allocations for 1988-89 will be announced shortly. These will take account of all the information provided by local authorities on technical and financial factors. Both aspects of the repair and improvement of Wimpey no-fines houses in Walsall were raised during the recent HIP round, and there has been no further consultation with Walsall metropolitan borough council since then.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if a Minister from his Department is now willing to receive a deputation from the tenants of the Wimpey no-fines properties in Walsall borough; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if a Minister from his Department now intends to visit the Wimpey no-fines properties in Walsall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer Wednesday 25 November]:* Officials have provided Ministers with a full report of the earlier meeting with tenants. There would therefore be little purpose in receiving a further deputation at this stage, and there are no plans for Ministers to visit these properties.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to privatise the Crown Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am considering various possibilities for the future of the Crown Suppliers, following two reports by consultants, one of which concerned the feasibility of privatisation. I have recently received detailed and comprehensive comments from representatives of the staff of the Crown Suppliers, and I do not propose to announce a decision until these have been fully considered.

Nitrite Levels (Derogations)

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of derogations currently in force, issued by his Department, in respect of nitrate and nitrite levels above 50mg/1; and if he will list those areas, geographically and by water authority area, for which these derogations are in force.

Mr. Moynihan: Derogations have been given for 47 public water supplies where nitrate levels exceed 50mg/1, and for three supplies where nitrite levels exceed 0·1 mg/1. The Chief Medical Officer has advised that there is no danger to public health from these supplies. The water authority areas, water undertakers and geographical areas served by the supplies are given in the following table.

Nitrate Derogations

WATER AUTHORITY AREA AND AREA OF SUPPLY

Anglian

Cambridge Water Company
- Parts of Huntingdon and South Cambridgeshire Districts

Anglian Water Authority
- Dersingham and Snettisham
- Docking
- Heacham and Hunstanton
- Moulton and Kennet
- Wisbech
- Habough—part of Lincolnshire
- Aswarby—Saltersford—part of Lincolnshire
- Scunthorpe
- Binbrook—part of Lincolnshire
- Bully Hill—Barnoldby—part of Lincolnshire
- Bully Hill—Otby—part of Lincolnshire
- Clay Hill—Drove Lane, Sleaford
- Sleaford
- Potterhanworth—part of Lincolnshire
- Saltersford
- Waneham Bridge—Saltersford
- Bucklesham—part of Ipswich
- Ely and Littleport
- Habrough—Covenham, part of Cleethorpes
- Bowthorpe, part of Norwich
- Heigham—Thorpe part of Norwich
- Otby
- Otby—Waddingham

Severn-Trent

Severn-Trent Water Authority
- Parts of Leamington, Kenilworth, Warwick and Stratford District Council
- Parts of Rutland District Council
- Parts of South Derbyshire District Council
- Parts of Newark and Ashfield District Council
- Part of Stourbridge, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Coalbournbrook Source)
- Part of Wychavon District Council area
- Part of Stourbridge Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (Millmeadow source)
- Parts of Wychavon District Council
- Malvern Hills and Wyre Forest District Council
- Parts of Wrekin District Council (Lilleshall source)
- Parts of Worksop, Bassetlaw District Council
- Parts of Worksop and Mansfield Woodhouse
- Part of South Shropshire District Council
- Part of Wrekin District Council (Puleston Bridge source)
- Parts of Bridgnorth and Wrekin District Council (Shifnal source)
- Bromley Lane area of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Parts of Newark District Council (Farnsfield source)
- Parts of Nottingham City Council area primarily Hucknall

South Staffs Waterworks Company
- Parts of Lichfield District Council Sutton Coldfield area
- North Warwickshire County Council and Walsale Metropolitan area
- Parts of Kingswinford, Pensnett and Brierley Hill Dudley Metropolitan area
- Parts of Lichfield and Whittington, Lichfield District Council

Thames

Lee Valley Water Company
- Part of Luton

Yorkshire
- Area north east of Ripon North Yorkshire

Nitrite Derogations

WATER AUTHORITY AREA AND AREA OF SUPPLY

Anglian

Essex Water Company
- Part of London Borough of Redbridge (Seven Kings Well)
- Part of London Borough of Redbridge (Roding Well)

Severn-Trent

South Staffs Waterworks Company
- Parts of North Warwickshire District Council, Lichfield District Council, South Derbyshire District Council and East Staffordshire District Council

Selective Rate Limitation

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has reached decisions on any applications by authorities subject to selective rate limitation in 1988-89 for their expenditure level to be redetermined at a higher amount; and if he will announce the proposed rate limits for all the selected authorities.

Mr. Ridley: Two of the 17 authorities designated for selective rate limitation in 1988-89 applied for a redetermination of their expenditure level. These were the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Southwark. After careful consideration of those applications and of other relevant matters, I have decided to redetermine the EL for Tower Hamlets at £126·033 million, an increase of £2 million on the original figure: associated with this increase is a requirement that the authority reports to me at intervals about the steps it is taking to improve its efficiency. In the case of Southwark I have decided to confirm the EL at the original figure of £134·193 million.

I am also today sending notification to each of the 17 designated authorities of the proposed rate limit which I have determined for 1988-89. The figures are as follows:

	Pence
Camden	115·41
Greenwich	125·72
Hackney	123·80
Lambeth	92·32
Lewisham	131·76
Southwark	98·02
Tower Hamlets	123·21
Haringey	214·69
Newcastle upon Tyne	270·01
Basildon	49·68
Middlesbrough	32·16
Thamesdown	51·10
Ealing	125·06
Waltham Forest	199·14
Manchester	285·63
Liverpool	268·17
Kingston upon Hull	47·51

WALES

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contingency plans his Department has in the case of an AIDS epidemic amongst heterosexuals in Cardiff in the next five years.

Mr. Grist: In December 1985, the Welsh Office asked all district health authorities to establish AIDS co-ordinating teams to ensure that there was proper management of the response to AIDS in their areas. Earlier this year, district health authorities were asked to prepare district operational plans on AIDS. Planning guidelines were published to assist them in this task. The Welsh Office will be responding shortly to draft plans that have been received from all nine authorities.

Along with efforts centrally to monitor the progress of AIDS and to ensure that the Government have access to the best available advice, these measures provide a firm foundation for dealing with the incidence of the syndrome.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether, in the light of the fact that they do not have a vote in local elections, he intends to exempt all the residents of Caldey Island, Pembrokeshire, from the community charge.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Singleton and Velindre Hospitals

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will detail the steps he has taken to implement the recommendations of the Welsh review of radiotherapy and oncology services in south Wales, with particular reference to (i) Singleton and Velindre hospitals, providing data on the same basis, (ii) the provision of scanning facilities at both radiotherapy centres, and (iii) the appointment of a fourth consultant radiotherapist and additional radiographers at Singleton hospital.

Mr. Grist: A report of the review has been made available to health authorities in South Wales and their views invited. These have been received and considered and an announcement on the implementation of the review's recommendations will be made as soon as possible. In advance of that, arrangements have been made for the early provision of computerised tomography scanning facilities at both hospitals.

Maternity Services

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve maternity services in the rural areas of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office issued a circular to all Welsh health authorities and family practitioner committees in December 1986 which commended to them the recommendations of the perinatal mortality initiative report for improvements in maternity and neonatal services in all areas of the Principality. Progress in implementing the recommendations is being monitored by the Welsh Office.

Farmers (Sites of Historical Interest)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether CADW is considering adopting measures similar to English Heritage's plans to offer more money to farmers to preserve archaeological and other sites of historical interest.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Yes. My right hon. Friend is considering the introduction of a carefully targeted scheme of management agreements involving payments to the owners of scheduled ancient monuments, including farmers.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date the last appointment was made to the Gwynedd health authority; and at what date he will next be required to make such appointments.

Mr. Grist: The last appointment was made by the Gwynedd county council in July 1987; during 1988, those appointments which are due to expire on 31 July will be considered.

Flooding

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he is giving local authorities in Wales on the acceptability for financial assistance from his Department of schemes to alleviate flood dangers which not only reinstate the status quo prior to the October flood emergency, but go further in taking steps to avoid or limit flood incidents of this sort suffered last October.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House on 21 October in column 745. The Department's letter of 23 October, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House, detailed the provisions of the Bellwin scheme.

Health Authorities (Members)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the basis of reimbursement of incurred expenses, or the payment of fees or salaries to *(a)* chairpersons, *(b)* vice-chairpersons and *(c)* members of health authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: District health authority chairmen in Wales are paid a flat rate taxable honorarium of £11,259 per annum based on a notional three days a week commitment, together with travel and subsistence allowances. Vice-chairmen and members of health authorities do not receive an honorarium, but are entitled to travel and subsistence allowances and loss of earnings payments as appropriate.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of reference laid down by him for each of the chairpersons of health authorities in Wales; and on what date a change was last made to these terms of reference.

Mr. Grist: It is not the Department's practice to provide terms of reference as such for chairpersons of health authorities.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the human rights record of Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have seen the interim report by Dr. Ermacora, special rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, and we are also in regular contact with organisations providing relief to Afghan refugees. We supported a further resolution in the UNGA this year which condemned by an overwhelming majority the widespread violation of human rights in Afghanistan by the Kabul regime and Soviet troops.

East-West Relations

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about East-West relations following the visit of Secretary Gorbachev.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We welcome the results of the United States/Soviet summit in Washington and hope that the agreement on intermediate range nuclear forces will lead to progress on further measures of arms control. The opportunity is there to establish a healthier and safer relationship between East and West. But this requires lasting confidence which needs much greater Soviet respect for human rights and greater co-operation over the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, including in particular the early withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

African National Congress

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the Government's policy towards meeting the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received a variety of representations from overseas, from hon. Members and from the public, some in favour of and some against the policy of the Government towards meeting the African National Congress.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet representatives from *(a)* the African National Congress of South Africa or *(b)* the South-West Africa People's Organisation of Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

The Gulf

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: There has unfortunately been little change since the answer given to my hon. Friend on 18 November. Attacks in the Gulf by both Iran and Iraq continue at a high level, including the two recent attacks by Iran on Danish and Singapore-registered tankers, with the loss of one life and the destruction of one ship, and a further missile attack on Kuwait which hit a decoy barge. We continue to press both sides to implement Security Council resolution 598 without further delay, and thus reduce the dangerous level of tension in the Gulf.

Fiji

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what standing vis-a-vis the Commonwealth is afforded to Fiji by Her Majesty's Government; and what are the status and composition of the British mission there.

Mr. Eggar: We and other Commonwealth members acknowledged at Vancouver that Fiji's membership of the Commonwealth had lapsed. No Commonwealth Government have so far changed the designation of their diplomatic mission accredited in Suva. The British mission has seven United Kingdom-based officers in post.

EMPLOYMENT

JTS (London)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which managing agents have been given contracts by the Manpower Services Commission to provide new job training scheme places in Greater London; how many contracted places each has been given; and in which London boroughs they are providing places.

Mr. Cope: The following table shows the managing agents contracted by the Manpower Services Commission to provide the new job training scheme in Greater London and the number of starts each agent has contracted to provide. It is not possible to say in which boroughs places will be provided.

	Contracted starts
ADM	650
Barking Skillcentre	1,200
Bexley Training Services	500
Chelmer Training Association	250
Cranbrook Training Centre	800
Delta	480
Deptford Skillcentre	1,200
Enterprise Training	250
Focus	400
Forest Project	250
Future Framework	1,000
GWS Technical Training	400
Hotel and Catering ITB	900
J and J Consultants	250
JJP	200
Key Training Consortium	750
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry	1,200
LEC	156
Microtech Training Ltd	750
Merton Training Consortium	400
Microtech (and Cable Training)	1,400
David Morgan Training Association	200
Open Learning	250
Park Royal Enterprise Trust	100
PCL Training Services	400
Personnel Consultancy Services	500
Personnel Development Association	400
Pitmans	250
Sight and Sound	1,000
SE Adult Training	900
Southern Training Services	1,000

	Contracted starts
STC	50
Sumlock Calculating Services	850
Supreme Hairdesign	200
TEAM	1,000
Training for Jobs Ltd	1,000
Training International	100
VGA	250

JTS (Statistics)

Ms. Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what are the industry and occupational categories of new job training scheme trainees who have entered work placements.

Mr. Cope: The information is not available. New JTS provides training. Trainees may undertake a variety of practical experience during training placements with employers.

YTS

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of YTS schemes correctly in operation in each London borough and the number of individuals *(a)* male and *(b)* female currently registered for each.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The following table gives the number of YTS schemes based in each London borough and the numbers of male and female trainees on such schemes as at 31 October 1987.

Schemes may draw trainees living in other boroughs.

London Borough	Number of local YTS schemes	Number in training—October 1987	
		Male	Female
Harrow	6	189	103
Brent	10	315	85
Enfield	5	506	308
Barnet	3	18	53
Haringey	15	274	253
Newham	7	302	179
Barking	8	384	225
Havering	8	366	300
Redbridge	11	333	533
Waltham Forest	3	242	140
Kensington & Chelsea	15	38	70
Hammersmith	35	220	108
Camden	24	289	731
Westminster	55	260	161
City of London	17	459	139
Islington	20	389	352
Hackney	12	146	108
Tower Hamlets	11	411	163
Bromley	9	272	233
Bexley	7	307	284
Croydon	11	436	149
Sutton	38	154	488
Merton	21	234	114
Lambeth	62	264	232
Southwark	18	256	258
Lewisham	27	290	212
Greenwich	34	232	109
Wandsworth	44	272	200
Hillingdon	36	355	214
Ealing	34	262	123
Hounslow	37	405	251
Richmond-upon-Thames	13	52	56
Kingston-upon-Thames	22	296	123

In addition there are 3,518 male and 1,384 female trainees in London in schemes negotiated with the Manpower Services Commission's large companies unit; information on the numbers in each borough is not readily available.

Special Employment Measures

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the most recently available tables to show the total number of community programme projects and places by type of project and type of sponsor.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 December]:* The total number of community programme projects and authorised places, by project and sponsor type, are as follows. Table 1 gives information about projects, and table 2 places as at 14 October 1987.

Table 1

	Total	Environmental	Building and landscaping	Home insulation	Research and surveys	Library	Youth work	Voluntary activities	Other social services	Cultural
Local authority	4,183	3	0	81	161	264	1	2	1	100
Local education authority	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary organisation	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nationalised industry	44	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Private sector	233	0	0	25	9	7	0	0	0	8
Health authority	98	0	0	1	8	10	0	0	0	1
Government department	44	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Other	18	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Education institution	151	0	0	0	18	35	0	0	0	24
Ex-offenders organisations	627	1	0	65	18	8	0	0	0	4
Churches	481	0	0	11	9	8	0	0	0	10
Youth organisations	249	0	1	1	4	1	0	0	0	3
Old people's groups	66	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Disability groups	209	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	2
Ethnic groups	86	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	21
Environmental and conservation groups	467	0	0	11	25	20	1	0	0	5
Other voluntary organisations	2,283	0	0	114	76	116	0	0	0	79
Quasi-commercial body	665	0	0	21	22	19	0	0	2	13
Total	9,963	4	1	335	365	497	2	2	3	280

	Workshop	Community programme agent management	Environmental and landscaping	Building and construction	Archaeological digs	Children's services	Young peoples services	Services for the elderly	Services for the disabled	Centres for the unemployed
Local authority	147	281	1,263	453	53	174	319	504	312	63
Local education authority	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Voluntary organisations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Nationalised industry	1	5	7	5	0	1	2	13	7	0
Private sector	10	34	53	39	0	2	10	29	7	0
Health authority										
Government department	0	3	10	2	0	0	17	2	0	0
Other	0	2	5	2	0	0	2	4	2	0
Education institution	1	6	4	2	8	6	29	6	11	1
Ex-offenders' organisations	48	84	135	88	2	21	30	91	30	1
Churches	45	41	44	68	1	30	43	124	46	1
Youth organisations	7	16	12	18	0	20	113	45	8	0
Old people's groups	0	4	0	4	0	0	1	54	2	0
Disability groups	9	13	11	8	0	2	5	10	144	0
Ethnic groups	4	6	2	3	0	3	12	25	3	2
Environmental and conservation groups	9	39	260	41	10	17	13	10	6	0
Other voluntary organisations	115	168	273	206	8	141	253	489	234	11
Quasi-commercial body	35	44	139	67	3	18	37	190	52	3
Total	434	759	2,234	1,020	85	442	900	1,620	894	84

Table 2

	Total	Environmental	Building and Landscape	Home insulation	Research and surveys	Library	Youth work	Voluntary acts	Other social services	Cultural
Authorised places										
Local Authority	96,508	33	—	1,471	1,628	2,950	13	26	3	1,478
Local education authority	48	—	—	48	—	—	—	—	—	—
Voluntary organisation	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nationalised industry	1,083	—	—	39	17	—	—	—	—	—
Private sector	5,428	—	—	490	99	74	—	—	—	140
Health authority	1,953	—	—	4	136	144	—	—	—	67
Government department	745	—	—	—	—	78	—	—	—	114
Other	405	—	—	—	19	—	—	—	—	—
Education institution	2,288	—	—	—	218	539	—	—	—	365
Ex-offenders' organisation	14,484	17	—	1,374	204	73	—	—	—	96
Churches	11,745	—	—	190	77	82	—	—	—	125
Youth organisations	4,871	—	13	11	54	5	—	—	—	98
Old people's groups	1,892	—	—	77	—	—	—	—	—	—
Disability groups	4,040	—	—	—	90	11	—	—	—	52
Ethnic groups	2,248	—	—	—	115	40	—	—	—	423
Environmental and conservation groups	9,101	—	—	254	354	185	10	—	—	113
Other voluntary organisations	49,474	—	—	2,344	860	1,202	—	—	—	1,384
Quasi-commercial body	18,081	—	—	430	215	219	—	—	35	198
Total	225,514	50	13	6,732	4,132	5,614	23	26	38	4,688

	Workshop	Community programme agent management	Environmental and landscaping	Building and construction	Archaeological digs	Children's services	Young people's services	Services for the elderly	Services for the disabled	Centres for the unemployed
Authorised places										
Local authority	2,779	5,528	37,815	13,859	1,179	2,069	4,929	14,231	5,785	682
Local education authority	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Voluntary organisation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—
Nationalised industry	27	112	230	124	—	6	21	379	128	—
Private sector	257	656	1,082	1,493	—	35	161	831	110	—
Health authority	58	147	63	346	—	80	124	361	423	—
Government department	—	38	233	40	—	—	219	23	—	—
Other	—	51	134	57	—	—	25	78	41	—
Education institution	13	95	119	22	207	94	375	101	119	21
Ex-offenders' organisations	1,465	1,699	3,693	2,302	23	338	380	2,127	671	11
Churches	1,395	818	1,359	2,669	38	430	717	2,868	956	21
Youth organisations	188	263	246	408	—	414	2,102	912	157	—
Old people's groups	—	61	—	148	—	—	6	1,585	15	—
Disability groups	235	182	316	320	—	12	64	170	2,582	—
Ethnic groups	163	190	53	133	—	42	382	634	45	22
Environmental and conservation groups	238	490	5,343	1,132	212	218	253	193	106	—
Other voluntary organisations	3,303	3,154	7,347	5,466	145	2,187	4,201	12,732	4,852	297
Quasi-commercial body	1,040	1,093	4,382	2,497	119	414	510	5,746	1,146	37
Total	11,190	14,619	62,818	31,274	1,923	6,366	14,559	43,084	17,189	1,115

Job Training Schemes

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what at the latest available date is *(a)* the cumulative entrants total, *(b)* the cumulative leavers total, *(c)* the cumulative total of those who have completed their course, and *(d)* the numbers who have entered work placements, for each new job training scheme managing agent contracted in (i) Scotland, (ii) Greater London and (iii) Great Britain as a whole.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* The information requested for each of the 314 new job training scheme managing agents contracted in Great Britain including Scotland and Greater London could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

ENERGY

Coal Industry (Private Investment)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to create opportunities for private investment in coal mines at present in National Coal Board ownership.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None at present.

National Coal Board (Management Accounting)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any representations concerning National Coal Board management accounting criteria.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received no such representations.

Bradwell Power Station

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what part the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate played in the selection of two firms of nuclear engineers selected by the Central Electricity Generating Board to examine the decommissioning of Bradwell nuclear power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate played no part in the selection of the four firms recently awarded contracts to carry out studies into various aspects of the decommissioning of Bradwell and Berkeley nuclear power stations.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the deadlines set by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate in respect of safety at Bradwell power station; to what those deadlines related; whether those deadlines due to be met in the last two months have been met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The key requirements and completion dates for issues arising from the long-term safety review of the Bradwell nuclear power station are listed in the table in the Health and Safety Executive's report "The findings of NII's assessment of the CEGB's long term safety review" which was published in July 1987. Information required to date has been received and is being assessed by the Health and Safety Executive. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Central Electricity Generating Board (Insurance)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the total insurance cover held by the Central Electricity Generating Board for *(a)* nuclear power stations and *(b)* other power stations in respect of (i) damage to property owned by the board, (ii) potential claims by employees of the board and (iii) potential claims by third parties; and what is the cost of this insurance cover in each case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 (as amended) nuclear power station operators must provide financial security of £20 million, by insurance or otherwise, to meet claims for injury or damage arising from a nuclear accident. The costs of this insurance cover and the extent and cost of insurance against other risks are matters for the Central Electricity Generating Board.

CEGB (Decommissioning)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the financial provision made by the Central Electricity Generating Board to cover the decommissioning of all its nuclear power stations; and in what years this expenditure is anticipated to occur.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The annual report and accounts of the Central Electricity Generating Board show that at 31 March 1987 the board had made financial provisions of £462·9 million for the decommissioning of its nuclear power stations. The decommissioning of power stations is, however, a matter for the industry and I have asked the chairman of the CEGB to reply to the hon. Member about the years in which the expenditure is anticipated to occur.

Electricity Boards (Advertising)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the amount spent by *(a)* the Central Electricity Generating Board and *(b)* each of the 12 area electricity boards on advertising in each year from 1983-84 to 1986-87 and projected spend in 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing in each case the sums spent on (i) television, (ii) newspapers, (iii) hoardings and billboards and (iv) others.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The amount spent by the electricity industry on advertising is a commercial matter for the industry. I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

Electricity Boards (Borrowing)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what rate of return he expects to receive from each of the 12 area electricity boards on the outstanding borrowing from him over the next 10 years;

(2) what rate of return he expects to receive from the Central Electricity Generating Board on the outstanding borrowing from him over the next 10 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The funding requirements of the area electricity boards and the CEGB are met by the Electricity Council. The rates of interest payable on United Kingdom loans to the Electricity Council outstanding at 31 March 1987 vary between 5 per cent. and 16·75 per cent. Further details are set out on page 52 of the Electricity "Council Annual Report and Accounts 1986/87."

Renewable Energy

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any proposals to seek powers to compel the electricity industry to investigate the use of renewable energy powers before embarking on investment in nuclear, coal or oil-fired power stations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have no plans to seek such powers. In co-operation with industry, the Government are supporting research into renewable energy sources with the object of ensuring that so far as possible they are developed to the stage where they can compete fairly with traditional energy sources.

Electricity Boards (Profits)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what the profits were for *(a)* the Central Electricity

Generating Board and *(b)* each of the 12 area electricity boards for each of the last eight years; and what are the projected profits for the next two years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The current cost profit after interest and taxation for the Central Electricity Generating Board and each of the 12 area electricity boards, for each of the last eight years, is given in the table.

I announced financial targets for the industry for the next two years in my statement of 3 November 1987 in the House of Commons. It will be for the boards to earn sufficient profits to ensure that the targets are met.

£ million

Area Board	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
London	(−)29·2	(−)0·1	17·0	22·6	41·2	(−)41·1	42·5	32·9
South Eastern	(−)18·0	(−)7·4	(−)0·9	2·7	15·7	(−)45·5	21·7	24·7
Southern	(−)21·1	(−)5·8	2·2	10·6	30·2	(−)68·9	26·8	33·4
South Western	(−)13·3	(−)0·2	8·7	9·2	15·4	(−)41·0	23·9	16·1
Eastern	(−)20·1	21·1	12·9	20·5	40·0	(−)79·4	43·2	36·8
East Midlands	(−)9·2	13·0	9·8	(−)5·6	19·3	(−)73·1	14·0	28·1
Midlands	(−)24·7	0·2	−2·0	(−)3·5	25·0	(−)77·6	28·8	26·3
South Wales	(−)11·7	(−)1·9	7·1	12·4	9·9	(−)33·2	8·7	11·4
Merseyside and North Wales	(−)12·0	(−)1·6	(−)1·4	(−)6·4	2·4	(−)39·1	4·4	8·6
Yorkshire	(−)21·6	(−)5·5	11·4	14·6	16·0	(−)86·7	17·4	17·5
North Eastern	(−)15·7	(−)0·1	8·7	8·3	13·9	(−)47·9	21·7	14·0
North Western	(−)15·2	(−)2·6	8·3	14·1	16·2	(−)78·9	20·3	19·4
CEGB	(−)287·6	(−)281·3	(−)167·4	232·1	219·1	(−)1,945·0	141·0	317·8

Note: In 1984-85, the figures for area boards include their share of a contribution of £933·7 million towards the additional costs of £2,020 million incurred by the CEGB as a result of the miners' strike. The CEGB's loss is before this contribution.

Home Insulation

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many homes occupied by *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* other high-risk groups have been given financial grants for insulation of their homes by year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available in the precise form requested.

Financial assistance for insulation is provided through the homes insulation scheme (HIS), which provides a general grant at 66 per cent. and a means-tested grant at 90 per cent.: and the community insulation projects, which provide a free or low-cost basic insulation service for low-income households. The 90 per cent. grant under the HIS has been available to the elderly and severely disabled on supplementary benefit or housing benefit, and will be extended to all householders on those benefits. Separate figures are not available for the take-up of HIS grants by pensioner households. It is estimated that pensioner households account for some 60 per cent. of the homes insulated by the community insulation projects, but, again, firm figures are not available.

The following data therefore relate to the vulnerable low-income groups assisted through the HIS 90 per cent. grant and the community insulation projects.

Government assistance for low income households in Great Britain

	(a) Number of 90 per cent. HIS grants paid[1][2]	*(b) Number of households insulated by community insulation projects*[1][3]
1979	—[2]	[4]10,000
1980	26,000	
1981	94,000	[5]5,000
1982	110,000	[5]10,000
1983	94,000	[5]20,000
1984	72,000	44,000
1985	78,000	83,000
1986	68,000	120,000
Total	[6]542,000	[6]292,000

[1] Rounded.
[2] Homes insulation scheme statistics for England are compiled on a calendar year basis; for Scotland and Wales, on a financial year basis.
[3] Financial year basis.
[4] Estimate: very few projects were operating and statistics were not collected at the time.
[5] Estimates: statistics were only collected on a sampling basis.
[6] In addition to their draught-proofing work, some community insulation projects also do loft insulation using HIS grants claimed on behalf of their clients. For this reason simple addition of columns *(a)* and *(b)* would involve a limited degree of double counting.

Licensed Coal Mining

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what grants have been made by British Coal Enterprise for licensed coal mining.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Loans made by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. are a matter for the company and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

SCOTLAND

Devolution

2. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the financial effects of implementing proposals for devolution to Scotland involving an assembly with tax-raising powers.

Mr. Rifkind: Since the election I have received 62 letters on the subject of devolution. Those correspondents who referred specifically to the financial effects of the creation of an assembly with tax-raising powers were almost unanimously opposed to the idea.

Industrial and Tourist Developments

20. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the major new industrial and tourist developments announced for Scotland in the current year; and if he will estimate the number of new jobs created.

Mr. Rifkind: So far in 1987 total unemployment in Scotland has fallen by 55,000. This clearly shows the favourable effects of our policies in Scotland's economy. I am arranging for a table of the most important industrial and tourist developments to be placed in the Library.

Roadworks (Tenders)

21. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on his proposals to reduce the threshold at which roadworks must be put out to tender; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has made known its opposition to increased competition for roads work undertaken by roads authorities' direct labour organisations. The Government's intentions will be announced once the second survey of the performance of Scottish roads authorities has been analysed.

Rating Reform

22. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has had from organisations concerned with mental health regarding the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: We have received a number of responses to our consultation document of 22 October on the procedure for identifying severely mentally handicapped people to be exempted from liability to pay the community charge. All the representations will be fully considered.

23. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed the poll tax with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities last Friday to discuss local government finance. At that meeting we announced the provision of additional resources to cover capital expenditure on the implementation of the community charge, both this year and next. My officials are in regular contact with the convention about the implementation of our proposals.

60. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the increase in student grants in the first year of operation of the poll tax will be for their poll tax contribution, and how much for the normal yearly increase.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 provides that students undertaking a full-time course of education will be liable to pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge. That liability will not arise until 1989-90 and the detailed arrangements for students' grants in that year have not yet been determined.

School Boards

24. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on his proposals for election and co-option to school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have received a number of comments on these proposals and will announce our conclusions on them in due course.

Housing

25. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a list of organisations whom he intends to consult on the Government's White Paper on Scottish housing; and whether he intends to attend joint public meetings with critics of the Government's proposals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The White Paper, "Housing, the Government's Proposals for Scotland", is a statement of our intent in regard to future housing policy. We have issued and will continue to issue consultation papers on particular aspects of that policy to a variety of interested bodies. The bodies consulted vary according to the subjects of the individual consultation papers. My right hon. and learned Friend and I will speak publicly about the proposals on a variety of appropriate occasions, including the debates which will take place in the House on the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

31. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has so far received regarding his consultation paper on Scottish Homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We received 247 responses to the consultation paper, "Scottish Homes—A New Agency for Housing in Scotland". In addition, a number of letters referring wholly or partly to Scottish Homes were received, but these have not generally offered any comment on the substance of the proposals contained in the consultation document.

42. **Mr. Millan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the White Paper on housing in Scotland (Cm 242).

Mr. Rifkind: We continue to receive a number of letters from individuals and organisations referring wholly or partly to the Government's housing proposals. The comments made on the White Paper cannot be identified separately from those made on the consultation papers issued about various of the proposals contained in the White Paper or those which are based on reports of the Government's proposals, rather than the proposals themselves.

47. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many local authorities, housing associations and federations and charities have so far made representations on his consultation paper on housing, "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Comments have been received from 42 local authorities, 59 registered housing associations, (some of which have charitable status) and 72 voluntary groups and representative organisations.

Enterprise Culture

26. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the effect in Scotland of implementing Her Majesty's Government's policy for the fostering of an enterprise culture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The growing spirit of enterprise which now exists in Scotland is already producing tangible results. For example, some 45,000 more people are now in self-employment than in 1979. Again VAT records show that there was a net increase of nearly 10,000 Scottish businesses between 1980 and 1985. As the enterprise culture takes deeper root in Scotland, so prosperity will grow further.

Coal-burning Power Stations

27. **Mr. O'Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next be meeting the Scottish director of British Coal to discuss the coal-burning Scottish power stations.

Mr. Lang: I have no plans at present to do so. However, my officials are in regular contact with officials of British Coal and as recently as 2 December they met the Scottish director to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Industrial Disputes

28. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the most recent figures for the number of working days lost in industrial disputes in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In 1986, 312,000 working days were lost in Scotland as a result of industrial stoppages. Apart from 1983, this is the lowest figure for 20 years.

"The Way Forward"

29. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the Nirex discussion document "The Way Forward".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No representations have been received on this document.

School Management

30. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the timetable for the implementation of the school management proposals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We hope to announce our conclusions following the consultation period before the end of the year and to introduce a Bill in the new year. Assuming enactment by October 1988, the first board constitutions would be issued for consultation in March 1989 and the boards would begin to operate at the commencement of the 1989-90 school year.

32. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has now received on his proposed reforms for the management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

33. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he has received to his discussion document on Scottish education; and if he will make a statement.

58. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has how received on the proposals contained in his paper "School Management and the Role of Parents"; and if he will make a statement.

53. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of Friday 20 November on the consultative paper "School Management and the Role of Parents", if he will specify under what headings and categories he has catalogued the responses received to date, with specific reference to those submissions commenting on the ceiling proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responses have been divided into two categories; those requesting confidentiality and those available for public inspection. Copies of the latter are being placed on open file in the library of St. Andrew's house. I have arranged for further copies to be available in the House Library.

54. **Mr. Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the responses so far to the school management consultation paper.

Mr. Rifkind: We have received some 7,600 responses. We are considering these carefully and hope to announce our conclusions shortly.

57. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his consideration of the representations he has received on the consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents", and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope to announce my conclusions before the turn of the year.

New Towns

34. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the future of Scotland's new towns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The new towns continue to make a significant contribution to economic growth and employment opportunities in Scotland. The Government adhere to the decision, announced in 1984, that no Scottish new town development corporation should begin the wind-up process before 1 April 1990. It also remains our intention to reassess before that date the probable timing of wind-up of the five development corporations, taking account of developments since 1984 and the circumstances and prospects of each town.

Regional Aid

35. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to investigate alleged abuses in regional aid.

Mr. Rifkind: All projects in receipt of grant under regional aid schemes are closely monitored where abuse of the schemes is suspected. Cases are investigated thoroughly and reported to the appropriate authorities for consideration of prosecution.

Industrial Investment

36. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the current level of investment in industry in Scotland and its impact on the Scottish community, in particular in the Inverclyde area.

Mr. Lang: Recent CBI and Scottish business surveys report an improvement in investment intentions in Scottish manufacturing, and higher investment will enhance the competitiveness of Scottish industry. This can only benefit the Scottish community.

As regards Inverclyde district, regional selective assistance offers of £3·4 million were made over the period 1 January 1985 to 31 October 1987. These were associated with project costs of £183·7 million and some 960 new or safeguarded jobs.

Royal College of Nursing

37. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet representatives of the Royal College of Nursing (Scotland).

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I met representatives of the Scottish board of the Royal College of Nursing on 15 October last.

Public Sector House Sales

38. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures he has available on the sale of public sector houses in Scotland since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Over the period 1980 to June 1987 some 106,000 public sector sales have taken place; this includes sales of local authority, new town and Scottish Special Housing Association houses, both to sitting tenants and others. The yearly figures of sales are contained in the table:

	Number
1980	6,482
1981	11,170
[1]1982	15,106
1983	18,315
1984	17,239
1985	15,630
[1]1986	14,152
[1,2]1987	7,848

[1] These figures are based on incomplete returns.
[2] These figures relate to the period January-June.

Job Vacancies

39. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many job vacancies are registered at Scottish jobcentres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The number of vacancies notified and remaining unfilled on 2 October 1987 in Scottish jobcentres was 25,446 (including 3,421 community programme vacancies). It is estimated that only around one third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres.

The continuing upward trend in the level of unfilled vacancies is encouraging. The latest figures show an increase of 4,000 over the corresponding figure last year.

Disabled People

40. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to meet the Glasgow Forum on disability to consider the full implementation of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 in Scotland and its input into joint planning in terms of the National Health Service (Amendment Act) 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no plans at present to meet the Glasgow Forum on disability. As indicated to the hon. Member in my reply of 10 November, the timing of implementation of provisions in the Act not already commenced or, as in the case of section 13, proposed for commencement will depend on the availability of resources. Consultations on this will be held at the appropriate stage with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

On joint planning, I refer to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 24 July 1987. Any involvement by the forum in joint planning in the Glasgow area would be a matter for local determination.

Denmark (Ministerial Visit)

41. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Denmark by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth).

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I visited Denmark between 23 and 25 November to study the system of school management and arrangements for parental involvement in education. I am most grateful to the Danish Government and to the authorities, organisations and schools which I visited and with whom I had discussions.

Parents in Denmark are extensively involved in all aspects of the running of the school system at municipality and school level. In particular, every publicly managed school providing education for children undergoing compulsory education is supervised by a school board whose members are elected by and from the parents and guardians of children involved in the schools; the school principal and representatives of the teachers, pupils and the municipality attend meetings of the school board and participate in discussion but cannot vote. The school board can discuss, make proposals and comment on all matters relating to the school. In many areas they are substantially involved in staffing appointments and have delegated powers to decide on the use of a substantial share of the budget allocated to the school. The statutory powers of school boards include drawing up school rolls and approving the distribution of work among teachers, the weekly timetable and the educational materials which the school intends to use.

The overriding purpose of the school board system is to further co-operation between the school and the homes of the pupils. The work of the boards appears to contribute substantially to securing a successful and responsive education service. Relationships between professional educators and parents appear to be greatly enhanced by the existence of formal mechanisms for involving parents closely with their schools.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

43. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board to discuss privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Lang: I met the chairman of the South of Scotland Electricity Board on 17 November to discuss electricity privatisation and other related matters. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to have full discussions with the chairmen of the South of Scotland Electricity Board and the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board before taking decisions on the structure of a privatised industry in Scotland.

Business Relocation

44. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many businesses have relocated from England to Scotland since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available. Decisions to relocate are best determined within the constraints of companies' own commercial judgment.

Scottish Parliament

45. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations calling for the establishment of a Scottish Parliament he has received from *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland since 11 June.

Mr. Rifkind: In that period, I have received 40 letters in favour of some form of devolution, of which 38 were from Scotland and two from England.

Small Firms

46. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what figures he has available for the number of small firms operating in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Comprehensive information on small firms is not available. Information for the period 1980-85 for Scotland and the other regions of the United Kingdom on the stock of firms registered for value added tax was published in "British Business" on 31 July 1987, and information for the period 1980-83 on changes in the stock by size of turnover was published in "British Business" on 2 November 1984. Copies of these publications have been placed in the Library.

The Government have introduced a succession of measures to stimulate small business development, and these have gone a long way both towards lifting many of the administrative burdens faced by small companies and towards helping small companies to become more flexible and responsive to market pressures. In this context the small firms sector in Scotland has made an increasing contribution in recent years to employment and economic development.

Local Government

48. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the total administrative costs, including wages and salaries, of local government in Scotland in 1986-87.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The best available estimate of the costs classified by Scottish local authorities as central administrative costs, including wages and salaries, in respect of relevant current expenditure in 1986-87 is £141·3 million.

Psychogeriatric Unit, Rutherglen

49. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the time scale for the provision of the proposed psychogeriatric unit at Rutherglen.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Provision of the proposed psychogeriatric unit will depend on the outcome of two strategic reviews which the Greater Glasgow health board is presently conducting on services for the elderly, and on psychiatric services (about which a consultative document has recently been issued).

Financial Services

50. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current level of employment in the financial sector in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The number of employees in employment in Scotland in division 8 of the standard industrial classification—which covers banking, finance, insurance, business services and leasing—totalled 165,000 in June 1987. This represents an increase of around 47,000 or 40 per cent. since 1977.

Current employment estimates for the financial services sector alone are not available from official sources. The 1984 census of employment, which is the latest available, indicates that there were around 72,000 employees employed in financial services in Scotland in September of that year.

The financial services sector makes a vital contribution to the Scottish economy both directly and indirectly, and it has been amongst the fastest growing employment sectors in recent years.

Educational Facilities (Strathclyde)

51. **Mr. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will be meeting officials of Strathclyde regional council to discuss educational facilities.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Midlothian (Surgical Waiting Lists)

52. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what communication he has received from Lothian health board regarding waiting times of patients requiring surgery who reside in the parliamentary constituency of Midlothian.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Industrial Regeneration (Renfrew)

55. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of the announcement of 500 redundancies at FKI (Halifax), formerly Babcocks, at its Renfrew plant, he has any plans to visit Renfrew and meet the local council to discuss industrial regeneration in the area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Renfrew to meet Renfrew district council.

I am confident that the proposed enterprise initiative for Renfrew, to which the district council and Strathclyde regional council will both be contributing, will help to create new and invigorated economic activity in the area, and improve the environment for those who live and work there.

Primary Health Care

56. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the White Paper on primary health care in the National Health Service, as it relates to Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received 13 written representations since the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" was published on 25 November.

Forestry Grants

59. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the direct cost to his Department of forestry grants for 1986-87.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total amounts of grants paid to private woodland owners by the Forestry Commission in 1986-87, for new planting and restocking, were as follows:

	£
Scotland	4,592,469
England	2,232,757
Wales	386,459

Glasgow District

61. **Mr. McTaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the value of the capital allocation to Glasgow district in *(a)* 1978 and *(b)* 1987; and if he will express these figures as a percentage in real terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Capital allocations for housing are issued on two blocks, to cover expenditure on local authority stock and on the private sector. Glasgow district council's capital allocations in 1978-79 totalled £66·924 million. For 1987-88, the council has received allocations totalling £137·65 million, which represents 101·2 per cent. of the 1978-79 figure in real terms.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to whether the Data Protection Registrar has used his powers under section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act to report on how the use of personal data collected for the community charge affects his functions of supervising the workings of the Data Protection Act.

Mr. Lang: In his third annual report to Parliament in July 1987, made in accordance with section 36(5) of the Data Protection Act 1984, the Data Protection Registrar commented at page 4 on community charge registers.

Childhood Cancers

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce case-control studies of childhood cancers in the areas around the Holy Loch, Hunterston and Chapelcross/Wigton Bay and Dounreay.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The study carried out by the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service into the incidence of leukaemia in under 25 year olds throughout Scotland has been passed to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment for its expert advice on how best to proceed. I shall be considering further investigations, such as case-control studies, on the basis of their advice.

South of Scotland Electricity Board (Borrowing)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what rate of return he expects to receive from the South of Scotland Electricity Board on the outstanding borrowing from him over the next 10 years.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that at 30 November 1987 the average rate of interest on its outstanding borrowing was 11·8 per cent. The board's borrowings are expected to be repaid by instalments over periods ranging from one year to 21 years.

South of Scotland Electricity Board (Advertising)

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the amount spent by the South of Scotland Electricity Board on advertising in each year from 1983-84 to 1986-87 and projected spend in 1987-88 and 1988-89, showing in each case the sums spent on *(a)* television, *(b)* newspapers, *(c)* hoardings and billboards and *(d)* others.

Mr. Lang: This is a commercial matter for the board and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Salmonid Farming

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the range and type of resources directed by his Department to the research into anti-predator devices and measures in the marine salmonid farming industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Part of the time of four scientists at the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory is currently allocated to this work. Three years ago these resources were estimated to amount to three quarters of a man year and at present the effort is in the region of one man year.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the resources devoted by his Department to research programmes which examine the effects of predators on the transmission of diseases at marine salmonid farming sites.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is not at present undertaking any such research projects.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is in a position to estimate the financial loss incurred by the marine salmonid in each of the past five years farming due to bird and seal predation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The most recent estimate of damage by seals showed that in the 12 month period to July 1985 damage amounting to some £170,000 to £250,000 was caused. The estimate was prepared on the basis of returns made to a questionnaire issued in 1985 to the salmon industry. No corresponding estimate of financial loss due to bird predation is available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline departmental responsibility, within his Department, for the provision of advice and research into the effects of predators in marine salmonid farms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The marine laboratory of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland is charged with the responsibility for providing advice on and research into the effects of predators in marine salmonid farms.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences under section 10(1)*(c)*(i) of the Conservation of Seals Act 1970 were granted to marine salmonid farmers in each of the past four years; and how many common and grey seals were killed under these licences for each of the past four years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	Licences granted	*Number reported killed under licence*
1984		
Common seals	2	4
Grey seals	—	—
1985		
Common seals	10	3
Grey seals	14	3
1986		
Common seals	8	10
Grey seals	7	3
1987		
Common seals	17	3
Grey seals	[1]19	[2]—

[1] To date.
[2] Figures not yet available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how large the salmon farming industry in Scotland *(a)* was three years ago and *(b)* is at present.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The industry has increased from 129 sites in 1984 (comprising 46 freshwater sites and 83 saltwater sites) with a total production of 3,912 tonnes, to 307 sites at present (comprising 108 freshwater sites and 199 seawater sites). The forecast production for 1987 is around 16,000 tonnes. Manpower in the industry was 515 full-time (128 part-time) in 1984 and 733 full-time (206 part-time) in 1986. Figures for 1987 are not yet available.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources his Department *(a)* provided three years ago and *(b)* provides at present by way of advice and training to those engaged in the salmon farming industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland's marine laboratory has in hand a programme of research aimed at the development of acoustic devices to scare seals from marine salmon farms. It is understood that the fish farming industry is undertaking on-site evaluation of the effectiveness of several prototype devices.

Common Seals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the approximate number of common seals on the west coast of Scotland and around the Western Isles.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland obtains advice from the Natural Environment Research Council as to estimates of seal populations.

The most recent estimates obtained from the council in respect of common seal populations in the Outer Hebrides and the Inner Hebrides and the west coast of Scotland were provided by surveys carried out by the Sea Mammal Research Institute in 1974 and 1980 respectively. These showed a minimum total population in these regions of some 5,800 animals comprising some 1,300 animals in the Outer Hebrides and some 4,500 animals in the Inner Hebrides and the west coast.

Children (Alleged Abduction)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why no criminal charges have been brought against the three men alleged to have abducted three children, Craig Park, Mark Lane and John Love, from their home in Bornbrae street, Larkhill on 17 September.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Solicitor-General for Scotland has already written to the hon. Member about this case, and has explained that the Crown's reasons for declining to prosecutre are confidential. The hon. Member may however be assured that the matter was carefully considered, and that the Solicitor-General for Scotland fully agreed with the procurator fiscal's decision against prosecution.

Forestry Commission (Regional Advisory Committee)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the names of all the Forestry Commission's regional advisory committee members, together with details of the relevant background experience of each.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Conservancy: North England

Professor G. R. Dickson—Chairman. Farmer. Member of the Northumberland National Park Committee.
J. Brown-Swinburne—Estate owner with forestry, farming and sawmilling interests.
T. R. Fetherstonhaugh—Estate owner, with local authority experience.
Professor B. Hackett—Professor of Landscape Architecture (retired). Chartered town planner. Chartered architect.
T. N. Hammond—Trade Unionist.
Lady Elizabeth Kirk—Countryside Commissioner 1979 to date. President of the Countryside Holidays Association. Member of various other recreational committees.
W. W. Metcalf—Member of the RICS. Member of the North York Moors National Park Committee and Yorkshire Naturalists Trust.
R. E. Shapland—Forest Manager, North West Water Authority.
P. Townson—Wide forestry experience.

Conservancy: East England

W. E. Lane—Chairman, Planner. Involved in the work of NCC, National Trust, CPRE and other bodies.
G. K. Agnew—Landowner with forestry, farming and local Government interests.
T. Cook—Farmer.

P. H. Peck—Trade unionist.
J. K. Royston — Agent to Duke of Buccleuch Boughton Estate.
C. Stratton—Landscape Architect.
J. Todd — President of the British Timber Merchants Association.
L. Woodham—Governor of Plumpton Agriculture College.
Councillor Mrs. M. P. Wright — Member of East Sussex County Council; Chairman of the Conservation and Countryside Committee.

Conservancy: West England
I. Mercer—Chairman, Dartmoor National Park Officer.
Major D. J. C. Davenport—Woodland Owner and Farmer.
C. A. Eade—Chartered Surveyor and Land Agent.
A. East—Managing Director of a timber processing firm. Member of the British Institute of Management, Institute of Wood Science.
A. Fooks—Trade Union official.
D. W. Hildred—Retired Bank Manager. Field Naturalist.
W. A. Isaac—Former County Chairman of the NFU. Vice-Chairman Wiltshire Farming, Forestry and Wildlife Advisory Group. Member of the CLA Executive Committee.
R. Jarman — Adviser on Nature Conservation, National Trust. Member of a number of conservation bodies.
J. M. B. Workman — Woodland Owner, National Trust Adviser. Forestry Consultant.

Conservancy: Wales
M. A. McLaggan—Chairman, Lawyer. Woodland owner.
J. Lloyd Jones — Vice-Chairman County Branch NFU, Chairman Gwynned Farming, Forestry and Wildlife Advisory Group. Member Council for the Protection of Rural Wales.
D. M. Raikes OBE, JP—Countryside Commissioner, Vice-Chairman Countryside Commission's Committee for Wales.
S. K. Neale—Trade Unionist.
Col. P. C. Ormrod — Past Chairman of TGUK (North Wales). Forestry and Land Use Consultant. Past Chairman of Flintshire Woodlands Ltd.
Mrs. R. Rooney—Estate owner with woodland interests.
D. W. Rowlands — Member of the Institute of Chartered Foresters, Royal Forestry Society, British Institute of Agricultural Consultants.
J. W. Sutton — Purchasing Manager, Shotton Paper Co. Ltd.
W. R. Williams JP—Estate owner with woodland interests.

Conservancy: North Scotland
Sheriff S. Scott Robinson — Chairman. Former Sheriff of Inverness. Former Vice-President Law Society of Scotland.
E. J. Brodie — Estate owner. Farming/Forestry and Sporting interests.
B. E. Crabtree—Trade Union official.
J. Evans—Forestry Consultant.
A. D. M. Farquharson—Land Agent. Manages a forestry estate.
Professor C. Gimingham — Professor of Plant Science, Aberdeen University. Countryside Commissioner for Scotland.
N. J. O. Graham—Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee — Highland Regional Council. Ex-Chairman of the RSPB Scottish Committee.
W. W. MacAskill—Director of firm of timber merchants, and various commercial companies.
M. Pottinger — Family livestock business. Part-time journalist. Former President of the local NFU.

Conservancy: Mid Scotland
Dr. Jean Balfour — Chairman — Ex-Chairman of the Countryside Commission for Scotland.
B. S. Brookes — Former Warden; Scottish Field Studies Association. Member of the Scottish Wildlife Trust.
P. Fairweather—Forestry Manager Argyll Estate.
J. W. Hutchison — Landowner with extensive forestry interests.
C. R. Langton—Wide forestry experience.
J. McNaughton—Hill farmer. Member of the British Wool Marketing Board, the Panel of Agricultural Arbiters, and the Red Deer Commission.
G. Morton—Union official.
P. S. Murray — Director of sawmilling company. Ex-President of Home Timber Merchants Association of Scotland.
Cllr. T. Rae — Member of Strathclyde Regional Council. Served in fields of Education, Planning, Manpower Services.

Conservancy: South Scotland
H. A. Waterston — Chairman. Retired Deputy Principal West of Scotland College of Agriculture. Involved in Red Deer Societies.
W. S. Brack—Trade Unionist.
D. B. Crawford OBE—Forestry Consultant.
T. Croft—Head of Policy Research Department, National Trust for Scotland.
D. Hewitt—Director of a firm of Timber Merchants.
D. I. Liddell-Grainger — Deputy Chairman TGUK (Scotland).
R. A. McClymont — Member of NFUS and Wool Marketing Board. Interest in Hill Farming.
D. R. Robinson — Chairman Wigtown District Council. Member of Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council. Director of an agricultural business.
The Earl of Rosebery — Estate owner, with woodland interests.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Child Welfare

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will take steps to seek to increase the minimum and maximum sentences available for those found guilty of sexually interfering with handicapped children while entrusted with their care.

Mr. Stanley: There are no mandatory minimum penalties for sexual offences against children in any part of the United Kingdom and there are no plans to introduce such penalties in Northern Ireland.

The maximum penalty for certain homosexual offences against children is life; for indecent assault it is 10 years, and for rape, it is life. It is proposed to increase the maximum sentence for attempted rape of a child and for indecent assault of a girl in a forthcoming Order in Council.

The penalties for other sexual offences which may involve children are being kept under close review.

Fair Employment

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he is to publish his White Paper outlining the Government's response to the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights report on fair employment.

Mr. Viggers: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 12 November at column *308*.

Anthony Hughes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when and where a post mortem was held on Anthony Hughes, who died at Loughall police station in County Armagh; and what was the result of the post mortem.

The Attorney-General *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* I have been asked to reply as the Lord Chancellor is responsible for the work of coroners in Northern Ireland.

A post mortem was held in Craigavon area hospital on 9 May 1987 and a full autopsy report will be available for the purposes of an inquest which is to be held in due course.

Under-fives

The Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to promote provision for under-fives throughout Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* In the personal social services field, services for the under-fives including social work support for families, childminders and day nurseries, are an integral part of the Government's overall preventive strategy on child care, whose development was identified as a specific objective for the next five years in the regional strategy published by the Department of Health and Social Services in August this year. A copy of this document is available in the Library.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Severe Weather Payments

62. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of arrangements for the payment of severe and cold weather payments to pensioners in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 27 October at columns *468-9*. The relevant regulations were laid before the House on 26 November.

Eye Tests

Mr Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the National League of the Blind and Disabled regarding abolition of free eye tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what reply he is sending to the representations made to him by the general secretary of the National League of the Blind and Disabled in regard to his proposal to abolish free eye tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the league has writen to my right hon. Friend, but its letter has not yet been received.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what contingency plans his Department has in the case of an AIDS epidemic among heterosexuals in the United Kingdom within the next five years.

Mr. Newton: The low rates of HIV infection currently found amongst heterosexuals in the United Kingdom suggest that it is very unlikely that there will be epidemic spread of heterosexually acquired HIV in the next five years. The public education programme on AIDS prevention is designed to ensure this situation is maintained. All health authorities in England have prepared plans for dealing with HIV infection and AIDS, and the costs of providing AIDS-related services are kept under close review in the light of the latest information available about the spread of HIV infection.

Mrs. Susan Halligan

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when Mrs. Susan Halligan of 29 Worcester road, Birkenhead will receive the invalid care allowance for which she applied in September 1986.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the processing of Mrs. Halligan's claim has taken much longer than is usual. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Multiple Births

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the outcome of pregnancy following infertility treatment and in-vitro fertilisation, and on the extent to which these treatments may have contributed to the rise in the rates of multiple births.

Mr. Newton: The Department does not collect data on the outcome of pregnancy in relation to different infertility treatments. However, studies are being carried out at the national perinatal epidemiology unit, which is funded by the Department, and at the Medical Research Council which should shed light on the incidence of multiple pregnancies linked to these treatments. We expect both studies to be completed in about a year's time.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail for each year since 1979 the numbers of *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* other claimants who have drawn supplementary benefit for five or more years.

Mr. Portillo: The information is as follows:

	Supplementary pension claimants (thousands)	*Supplementary allowance claimants (thousands)*
November 1979	1,053	234
December 1980	1,054	251
December 1981	1,087	281
December 1982	1,090	308
December 1983	1,057	348
December 1984	1,041	409
February 1986	1,026	535

Source: Annual statistical inquiries.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people, shown by age and marital status, are in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit for the latest date and for equivalent dates in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information that he requests. Such information as can be provided will not be available until the new year. I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply then.

Unemployed Benefit Recipients

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many previously unemployed benefit recipients are not required to be available for work at the latest date and for equivalent dates in each of the past 10 years; and how many previously unemployed men aged 60 and over are in receipt of the long-term rate of supplementary benefit at the latest date and for equivalent dates over the same period.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However the following table shows the number of men aged 60-64 who receive supplementary benefit. These are the latest available figures.

	Number
December 1981	19,000
December 1982	40,000
December 1982	114,000
December 1984	131,000
February 1986	136,000

Since May 1983 the long-term scale rate has been allowed in all cases of men over 60. Before that date it was used only for men not required to be available for work who had received benefit for over 12 months, or were over pension age.

Men over pension age have been excluded from the table.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the industrial injuries advisory council's reports on halogenated aliphatic hydrocarbons and non-ionising radiation are to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Both reports were published yesterday. The report on non-ionising radiation recommends that no changes be made to the existing legislation. The report on halogenated aliphatic hydrocarbons and n-hexane recommends that the following conditions be added to the schedule of prescribed industrial diseases:

(i) Damage to the liver or kidneys due to exposure to carbon tetrachloride.
(ii) Damage to the liver or kidneys due to exposure to trichloromethane (chloroform).
(iii) Central nervous system dysfunction and associated gastrointestinal disorders due to exposure to chloromethane (methyl chloride).
(iv) Peripheral neuropathy due to exposure to n-hexane or methyl n-butyl ketone.

The Government accept the council's recommendations and regulations will be laid on 11 December to bring them into operation on 4 January 1988.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the current cost of answering *(a)* written and *(b)* an oral parliamentary question; and if he will list the total annual cost of answering parliamentary questions.

Mr. Wakeham: The cost of replying to parliamentary questions varies considerably, but the current average cost is estimated at £45 for written answers and £75 for oral answers. Records of the total annual cost of answering parliamentary questions are not kept.

DEFENCE

British Military and Naval Presence

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list every country and dependency where there is a permanent British military or naval presence, the annual costs to public funds of each such presence, and the proportion that represents in each case of the total cost of such a presence.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Countries and dependencies (outside the NATO area except Gibraltar) where there is a permanent British military or naval presence, and the annual cost to United Kingdom public funds of those forces, together with the proportion of the total cost of the presence in each case which this cost represents, are as follows:

	Estimated Cost (1987-88) £ million	*Proportion of Total Cost per cent.*
Hong Kong	55	25
British Indian Ocean Territory (Diego Garcia)	1	100
Falkland Islands (including South Georgia)	141	100
Gibraltar	79	100
Cyprus (includes SBA and UNFICYP forces)	112	81
Belize	38	100
Brunei	—	0

We do not maintain forces exclusively for operations in dependencies other than those listed, and costs are not separately identified. These details exclude loan service personnel stationed in a number of countries and dependencies throughout the world. All the costs shown include directly attributable expenditure on capital works and equipment and are running costs for materiel and manpower. The costs of operational headquarters, bases and general operational support have been attributed pro rata.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department takes to implement its equal opportunities employment policy; how many persons of ethnic minority origins are employed in his Department; what proportion that is of the total; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: An action plan has been developed to promote equal opportunities within the Ministry of Defence. Examples of actions taken or in hand are a trial to determine the demand for job-sharing and part-time working; women-only training courses; a survey of the ethnic origins of staff and applicants for employment; the placing of recruitment advertisements in the ethnic press; and initiatives to help people with disabilities. The voluntary survey of the ethnic origins of staff has not yet been completed. To date, of the 43,603 non-industrial staff who have so far responded, 834 or 2 per cent. were from ethnic minorities.

Courts Martial

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the offences for which British soldiers have been convicted by courts martial in each of the last two years, and the sentences that were imposed.

Mr. Freeman: Full details of the offences for which Army service men and service women have been convicted by courts martial are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The available statistics, which are shown below for 1985 and 1986, group offences into eight categories. When an individual was convicted of offences from more than one category, he or she has been counted against the most serious category, the order of severity being that shown in the tables. Punishments awarded are also shown in order of severity, decreasing from left to right. When multiple punishments were awarded, the most serious has been counted.

Convictions by Courts Martial of Army Servicemen and Servicewomen during 1985
Punishment Awarded

Type of Offence	*Number Convicted*	*Imprison-ment*	*Dismissal*	*Detention*	*Reduction in Rank*	*Fine*	*Reprimand*	*Others*
Total	807	53	284	335	52	81	2	—
Offences against person (excluding sexual)	95	13	21	50	6	5	—	—
Sex Offences	19	6	11	2	—	—	—	—
Drug Offences	51	7	27	17	—	—	—	—
Offences against property	179	13	52	76	20	18	—	—
Desertion and AWOL	268	9	107	141	7	3	1	—
Drunkenness	18	—	5	5	1	7	—	—
Other offences against discipline	147	5	59	43	17	22	1	—
Other Offences	30	—	2	1	1	26	—	—

Convictions by Courts Martial of Army Servicemen and Servicewomen during 1986
Punishment Awarded

Type of Offence	*Number Convicted*	*Imprison-ment*	*Dismissal*	*Detention*	*Reduction in Rank*	*Fine*	*Reprimand*	*Other*
Total	608	20	223	264	52	46	2	1
Offences against person (excluding sexual)	93	8	20	52	8	4	—	1
Sex Offences	13	7	4	2	—	—	—	—
Drug Offences	18	—	16	2	—	—	—	—
Offences against property	158	3	61	67	16	11	—	—
Desertion and AWOL	220	2	93	114	11	—	—	—
Drunkenness	4	—	1	1	1	1	—	—
Other offences against discipline	83	—	26	24	14	19	—	—
Other Offences	19	—	2	2	2	11	2	—

Bullying

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serious individual cases of bullying have been referred to his Department in the last year; and what is the total number of such cases which have been centrally recorded in the last 10 years.

Mr. Freeman: 13 serious individual cases of bullying which have resulted in court martial action have been referred to my Department in the past year. 11 of these have been in the Army and two in the Royal Marines.

A number of other cases are still under investigation. The relative seriousness of these, and the disciplinary action appropriate, cannot be judged until such investigations are completed. It is not possible to give details of such cases over the past 10 years, as records of these cases have been held centrally only since January 1986.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the last year complaints involving bullying have been so numerous or so recurrent in a unit that the matter has been referred to his Department.

Mr. Freeman: During the last year, against the background of allegations in late 1986 about initiation ceremonies in 3 Royal Green Jackets—later proved to be largely baseless—all cases of alleged bullying in the Army have been referred to my Department. To date there have been some 89 cases in all, some of them relating to alleged incidents before this period. Their being reported to MOD is not a function of any marked increase in such incidents, but rather a reflection of how seriously this whole question is being treated.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1984 no disciplinary action has been taken against soldiers who went absent without leave when on their return it was established that the absence was because of bullying.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the right hon. Member to my letter of 3 December. I regret that the information the right hon. Member seeks is not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many courts martial there have been in each of the last five years; in how many of these the charge was related to some form of bullying; and in how many there was a guilty verdict.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of courts martial held in the period 1982-1986 are as follows:

	Royal Navy	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*	*Total*
1982	49	1,148	239	1,436
1983	65	844	237	1,146
1984	73	853	190	1,116
1985	65	845	217	1,127
1986	60	644	144	848

Details are not recorded in a way which would permit the ready identification of those cases in which the charges related to some form of bullying since no offence under the service discipline Acts is defined as such. It is, however, an offence under section 36A of the Naval Discipline Act 1957 and sections 65 of the Army and Air Force Acts 1955 for an officer, warrant officer of non-commissioned officer to strike or otherwise ill-treat a person of inferior rank; and the numbers of courts martial convictions for offences under these sections in the period 1982-1986 are as follows:

	Royal Navy	*Army*	*Royal Air Force*	*Total*
1982	Nil	3	1	4
1983	Nil	17	1	18
1984	5	8	2	15
1985	Nil	15	3	18
1986	Nil	4	4	8

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library details of those allegations of bullying given to newspapers which he reports in his letter of 2 December to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South to have been found to be baseless; and what investigations were carried out to lead his Department to this conclusion.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. I shall do so shortly.

Lieutenant Colonel Macmillan

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will investigate allegations made in a letter passed to him by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South that men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Macmillan have been fined excessively for trivial offences; and how many applications to leave his unit have been made in recent months.

Mr. Freeman: The anonymous letter passed to me by the right hon. Member relates to summary disciplinary action taken by Lieutenant Colonel Macmillan as commanding officer of 4th Armoured Division Field Ambulance. In dealing summarily with disciplinary cases, a commanding officer has the widest possible evidence available to him, and it has long been our practice to regard matters of this sort as confidential between the CO and the individual soldiers concerned.

The punishments awarded in each of the cases mentioned in the letter were well within the commanding officer's powers and were correctly entered into unit disciplinary records — which are subject to regular inspection by higher military authority. None of the three cases of alleged excessive fining noted in the letter is as simple as the right hon. Member's correspondent has suggested. In the case of the fine imposed for "an untidy room", the NCO concerned was charged as a result of his room being found, on a six-monthly accommodation check, in an indescribably filthy and unhygenic condition: the fine imposed was the equivalent of 18 days' pay. In another of the cases cited, the charge was not only that the NCO concerned failed to stop on a bicycle when ordered, but that he was riding at night without lights, and behaving in a disorderly manner in front of foreign visitors to the unit: the soldier concerned was fined the equivalent of 19 days' pay. In the third case cited, the NCO concerned was a persistent offender in the late settlement of mess bills, and had been specifically reminded of the due date of the bill in question: he was fined the equivalent of six days' pay. Each of the soldiers concerned had the option of electing to be tried by court martial on the same charges, and none of them has made any complaint or appeal about the summary punishment awarded.

The letter alleges that there has been an undue number of NCOs or soldiers seeking premature transfer from the unit. This is simply not the case. Since the CO took command in January this year, two officers and 10 soldiers have applied for early release or premature posting, for a variety of reasons ranging from family circumstances, to offers of civilian employment, to their volunteering for the airborne or commando forces. The applications for PVR represent some 3·4 per cent. of the unit establishment. Some 70 other soldiers who were eligible to transfer under a trickle posting system have chosen to remain within the unit.

Queen's Dragoon Guards

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will investigate allegations made to him in a letter passed to him by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South that initiation ceremonies in the Queen's Dragoon Guards for new junior officers involve nakedness and drinking cocktails including urine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As the allegations made in the anonymous letter passed to me by the right hon. Gentleman give no specific dates of the alleged incidents or the names of those supposedly involved, it has not been possible to initiate a Special Investigation Branch inquiry, as would normally be the case.

Nevertheless, the allegations have caused considerable disquiet, both in my Department and in the regiment and its higher command chain. Very careful inquiries have been carried out within the regiment, under the supervision of the brigade commander, into all aspects of the behaviour alleged in the letter. All available officers of the regiment have been interviewed as part of this process, and I can state that no evidence whatsoever has been found which supports the allegations that newly joined officers of the Queen's Dragoon Guards are initiated by their soldiers in revolting and unseemly drinking rituals.

I have explained to the right hon. Member on previous occasions the difficulty of pursuing conclusively allegations that are unsupported by specific details. Our inquiries have established no accurate basis for the very harmful allegations in this particular letter, against a most distinguished regiment. However, if additional details were forthcoming I would of course be prepared to look further into the matter.

Ministry Police

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list his precise responsibilities in relation to the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Sainsbury: As set out in the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has overall responsibility for the force and, therefore, has to determine policy for its roles, management and administration — including provision of the money, manpower and equipment necessary for it to operate efficiently.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the procedure for lodging complaints against the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Ministry of Defence police are required to follow the same complaints procedures as other United Kingdom civilian police forces. A leaflet explaining the complaints procedure entitled "Complaints against the Police" is available from any police station. A complainant may either write to the chief constable MOD police, or a local police force chief constable, or visit any police station where details will be taken. Alternatively an aggrieved person may authorise someone else to complain on his behalf.

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence police as to the circumstances in which a young woman outside Greenham Common air base had her fingers deliberately trapped and crushed by an American service man; why no charges were brought against the service man; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: No. I assume that the hon. Member is referring to an incident that occurred in the early hours of 13 November 1987. The individual concerned has lodged a complaint against the police in accordance with the usual procedure. The matter was immediately referred by the chief constable of the MOD police to the Police Complaints Authority in accordance with section 87 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, as the nature of the injuries fall within the category for mandatory supervision.

An investigating officer, approved by the Police Complaints Authority, has been appointed and when the results of his investigation are known appropriate action will be taken. This may include further investigation in conjunction with the USAF authorities.

AWACS

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of the seventh AWACS aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The cost of the seventh AWACS aircraft cannot be disclosed for reasons of commercial confidentiality. However, the favourable movement of the sterling-dollar exchange rate since March has meant that the price is lower than that agreed for each of the first six.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of contracts that must be placed by Boeing before 18 December 1994 now that seven AWACS aircraft have been ordered.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The total value of contracts is expected to be in excess of 1·5 billion dollars.

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the cost penalties if Boeing fail to honour the agreed AWACS 130 per cent. offset arrangements by 18 December 1994.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The offset agreement with Boeing is an integral part of the contract for the purchase of the AWACS system. Any breach of the agreement would therefore constitute a breach of the contract and, although there are no express damages identified in the contract, the Government would have recourse to English law in respect of perceived damages.

Howitzers

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many 155 mm self-propelled howitzers are required by the Army.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 1 December, at column *569*, on howitzer quantities.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 10 December 1987

WALES

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his Department will collate figures for housing waiting lists in Wales.

Mr. Grist: No. Waiting lists are not compiled by local authorities on any uniform basis. There would be no merit in collating the figures centrally, since this would not provide meaningful information.

Intensive Poultry Farming

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received over the past five years on the adverse environmental impact of the establishment of intensive poultry farming in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: No comprehensive records are kept, but since 1984 approximately 14 representations have been received about the environmental impact of poultry farming.

Welsh Language

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of teaching of the Welsh language in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Encouraging progress has been made. Our proposals for including Welsh in the national curriculum are a further significant step forward.

Mr. Raffan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has completed his consideration of the responses to the consultation exercises conducted by his Department on the question of Welsh language legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: After studying the responses I have concluded that both I and the Minister of State need to take further soundings on this sensitive issue. I propose early in the new year to meet representatives of several organisations to discuss the matter further. Additionally, I am setting up a working group with a membership spanning a very broad spectrum of Welsh life to be chaired by the Minister of State. This group will consider the more substantive comments submitted as part of the consultation exercise, seek any further views it feels necessary and advise me on the most constructive and appropriate action that I might take to foster the Welsh language.

NHS (Consultants)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provision exists in his Department's budget for the current financial year for the employment of outside consultants in relation to his Department's responsibility for the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: At the start of the financial year, £0·282 million was earmarked with hospital and community health services provision for consultancies for which there was an outstanding commitment to provide central funding. Since then a further £0·200 million has been made available for consultancies in respect of Gwynedd and Mid Glamorgan health authorities from funds released through slippage in the take-up (by authorities) of funds originally allocated for centrally financed service developments.

Integration Operations

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in the European Commission with regard to the integration operations proposals put forward by Gwynedd, Dyfed and Powys county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Commission has not yet reached a decision on the integrated operations programme for Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys. I have fully endorsed the submission and I am pressing for an early decision.

Community Hospital (Gwynedd)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether staff of his Department have had discussions during the past three months with members or staff of Gwynedd health authority about the practicability of scheduling at an early date, the construction of a new community hospital to serve Dwyfor and north Meirionnydd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No discussions have taken place.

Ysbym Madog

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date his Department received an inquiry from the Gwynedd health authority concerning the legal status of Ysbym Madog, Porthmadog; and on what date his Department replied to such an inquiry.

Mr. Grist: No inquiry has been received.

Health Authorities (Sale of Land)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued in relation to the sale of land or buildings by health authorities in Wales; and whether health authorities are allowed to retain the cash proceeds from such sales and to use them at their unfettered discretion.

Mr. Grist: Health authorities are required to conduct land transactions within the procedures set out in the National Health Service "Land Transactions Handbook" and the relevant Welsh health circulars. They are entitled to receive the proceeds from the sale of land or buildings no longer needed by the health service except in those cases where the property has become surplus because of a closure following a centrally funded scheme. In such cases the sale proceeds will not be kept by the district health authority, but will benefit the all-Wales provision. Health authorities may use the proceeds of sale for the provision of hospital and community health services for which they are responsible.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those hospitals in Wales for which closure proposals have been submitted to him for decision, after the appropriate local consultation procedures, during the past four years; and if he will indicate for each one whether closure was approved or rejected or whether a decision is still pending.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Welded Rail

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of continuous welded rail he expects to authorise, as envisaged in British Rail's corporate plan, in the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail's expenditure on continuous welded rail is a management matter for which they do not require ministerial consent. The mileage of track on which British Rail expects to complete work in each year is as follows:

	Mileage
1988-89	268
1989-90	249
1990-91	241
1991-92	228

Railway Crossing, Criccieth

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what direct representations he has received from residents of the Criccieth area concerning the danger of the railway crossing at Criccieth; whether he has replied to these representations; if he has agreed to meet the county councils for the area to discuss this problem; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Representations have been received from the Criccieth Maes Railways Crossing Action Group that the existing Automatic Open Crossing should be programmed for immediate conversion to an Automatic Half-Barrier installation. The Department have replied to the effect that British Railways have primary responsibility for deciding what alterations should be made and when the works should take place. We have had no request to meet the county councils for the area.

Motor Cycle Noise

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress with the implementation of the Motor Cycle Noise Act.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are preparing two sets of regulations on motor cycle noise. The first, under the Motor Cycle Noise Act, will introduce controls on the sale of motor cycle silencers and exhausts. The second, an amendment to the Construction and Use Regulations, will bring into effect the provisions of directive 87/56/EEC, which sets tighter noise limits for motorcycles first used on or after 1 October 1990.

We expect to circulate both sets of regulations for comment early in the new year.

A43 (Accidents)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many personal injury accidents have occurred at the junction of the A43 trunk road with the unclassified road from Charlton to Evenley since the dual carriageway was opened on 20 August; and what action he proposes to take to improve visibility and reduce further accident risks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been two personal injury accidents. The junction is of a type common throughout the country. It is well signed and has good visibility. Our agents, Northamptonshire county council, have been instructed to monitor the situation and examine whether there is any scope for improvement.

Traffic (Lowestoft)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make public the findings of the Maunsell report into Lowestoft's traffic problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering the Maunsell report following the consultant's study of traffic movement on A12 in Lowestoft. I shall make an announcement about the findings and our response as soon as possible.

Special Types General Order

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends further to amend the Special Types General Order.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. I have signed an amending order to modify the new rules set out in Statutory Instrument 1987 No. 1327. This extends the time for changing existing vehicles used for carrying abnormal indivisible loads. These will now be permitted until 1 October 1989 to operate with their existing axle arrangements. For those weighing up to 80 tonnes gross weight the maximum axle weight will be reduced to 13·5 tonnes. From 1 October 1989 the maximum axle weight for these vehicles will be further reduced to 12·5 tonnes and the new rules on axle arrangements will apply.

Railways Inspectorate (Chief Inspecting Officer Post)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the recently advertised post of chief inspecting officer at the Railways Inspectorate has been set at one grade lower than that of the current holder of the post.

Mr. David Mitchell: When unified grading was introduced into the enlarged open structure of the Civil Service, the post of Chief Inspector of Railways was assigned to grade 4. Grade 4 posts are, however, usually responsible for the management of grade 5 officers. There are no such posts in the chief inspector's command. The present chief inspector retires next year and this represented an opportunity to consider the grading of his post. Since it does not involve the management of other senior staff, it was decided that it should formally be grade 5.

There is no intention, implied or otherwise, to diminish the post of the chief inspecting officer or the statutory responsibilities of the post. I am fully conscious of the need to appoint a candidate of the highest quality to carry out these important duties. The advertisement makes it clear, therefore, that a higher salary will be considered for a candidate with exceptional qualifications or experience.

PRIME MINISTER

Hillmorton

Q71. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Hillmorton in Rugby.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Holy Loch

Q137. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to Holy Loch.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Council House Sales

Mr. Butler: To ask the Prime Minister how many council houses and flats have been sold to their tenants since May 1979 in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: More than 1 million tenants have bought their own homes since May 1979.

Engagements

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 10 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Land Registry

Mr. Butler: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 30 November, what specific plans there are to cut the length of time it takes to process new titles in the Land Registry; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In his response to the Adjournment debate on 30 November 1987, at columns 741-44 my hon. and learned Friend, the Solicitor-General, set out specific plans to meet the Land Registry's commitments and to contain, and eventually reduce, the backlog of outstanding casework, including new titles.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Attorney-General who is to be the successor to Mr. Roderic Bowen QC as Welsh Social Security Commissioner; and if he will be capable of chairing hearings undertaken in the Welsh language.

The Attorney-General: Oral hearings continue to be held in Cardiff on a regular basis to deal with appeals which arise in Wales. A commissioner, based in the London office, is available to conduct oral hearings in the Welsh language should the need arise. The Lord Chancellor has no plans at present to appoint a further social security commissioner to be based in Wales.

Family Law Reform Act 1987

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) 23 July, *Official Report*, column *291*, how the Government have derived the figure of £3·5 million a year as the cost of implementing part II of the Family Law Reform Act 1987, and if he will give a breakdown of this figure.

The Attorney-General: The figure of £3·5 million is derived from the impact on the county courts and on the legal aid fund of the increased rights given to both unmarried parents by part II of the Act. The breakdown of costs is as follows:

	£ million
Court services and judiciary	0·4
Services of probation officers	0·6
Legal aid	2·5

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Books and Equipment

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what system he has for ensuring that the provision made by him in grants to local education authorities for books and equipment in schools is being allocated by schools and local education authorities for those purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Education support grant is allocated to authorities for specific purposes, including the provision of books and equipment for GCSE. Grant may be claimed only on expenditure which an authority's auditors are satisfied has been made for that purpose. However, it is for individual authorities and schools to decide on the priority to be given to books and equipment within expenditure supported by block grant.

Overseas Students

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the numbers of students registered at universities in the United Kingdom from countries outside the EEC, defined by country of origin, in each of the years since 1978.

Mr. Jackson: The required information for 1986 for countries with more than 250 students is shown in the table. Information for all countries could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In addition, there were 7,000

students from other non-EC countries. Information for earlier years has been published in "Statistics of Students from abroad in the United Kingdom", by the British Council, a copy of which is in the Library.

Students from abroad in United Kingdom universities

	1986
Hong Kong	4,729
United States	4,202
Malaysia	3,788
Singapore	1,606
Nigeria	1,493
Norway	1,104
Iraq	1,061
Algeria	1,059
Iran	1,044
Canada	952
Cyprus	719
China	716
Kenya	688
India	650
Pakistan	634
Saudi Arabia	575
Japan	444
Brazil	419
Egypt	419
Zambia	392
Australia	363
Jordan	356
Cameroon	336
Lebanon	330
Sri Lanka	324
South Africa	316
Indonesia	286
Bangladesh	280
Tanzania	261
Total	29,546

Adult Literacy

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has available to him regarding the standards of adult literacy in England and Wales.

Mr. Jackson: Few adults are unable to read or write at all, but there are a large number who have problems with reading, writing and spelling. In a report recently published by the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, it is reported that 13 per cent. of 23-year-olds who were interviewed in the National Child Development Study survey in 1981, said they had some problems with reading, writing or numeracy. If this were typical of all adults, an estimated 5·5 million people in England and Wales could have difficulties with literacy and numeracy. The Government provide help through the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit which acts as a central focus to assist LEAs and voluntary organisations to establish new basic skills provision and develop existing provision. The grant to the unit for the current year is £2,170,000.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning adult literacy.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not received any such representations during the present Session.

CERN

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the review of CERN has yet been completed; if a decision has yet been reached on the United Kingdom membership of CERN; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the CERN review group, chaired by Professor Abragam, has completed its work and that its report will be available before the CERN council meeting on 17 December. The report's recommendations will be taken into account in reaching any decision.

School Meals

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek to provide information as to how many children living in Lancashire are in receipt of free school meals; and what percentage of Lancashire school children this represents.

Mr. Dunn: The total number of free school meals taken in Lancashire on the day of the annual school meals census in October 1986 was 44,017, or 21 per cent. of full-time equivalent pupils registered at maintained schools.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in primary schools in Cleveland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Dunn: The number of pupils on roll and the pupil-teacher ratio in maintained primary schools in Cleveland each year since 1979 were as follows:

January each year	*Pupils*[1]	*Pupil-teacher ratio*
1979	65,386	23·4
1980	62,770	23·1
1981	60,446	23·1
1982	57,321	22·4
1983	54,395	21·8
1984	53,505	22·1
1985	53,106	22·2
1986	53,270	22·3
1987	53,755	22·1

[1] Full-time equivalent pupils. Part-time pupils counted as 0·5.

"Educational Reform"

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many copies of the booklet "Educational Reform" have been printed; to whom they are to be distributed; and what is the total cost of the publication itemised by costs of *(a)* printing, *(b)* preparation at all stages, *(c)* distribution, including postage, and *(d)* other costs.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: 500,000 copies of the booklet have been printed. Individual copies have been sent to all headteachers and clerks of governing bodies in England; to all right hon. and hon. Members and to some noble Lords; to local education authorities, chief education officers, examining bodies, teacher unions, examining groups, employers' groups and others known to have an interest and who requested copies of the consultation documents. Further copies are available on request from my Department.

The cost is as follows:

	£
(a) Printing	46,450
(b) Design	4,250
(c) Postage	45,560
(d) Other costs	Nil
Total	[1]96,260

[1] Unit cost 19·25p.

DEFENCE

Foreign Service Allowance

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations took place with the Retired Officers Association over the replacement of foreign service allowance from 1 January 1988 with a cost of living allowance.

Mr. Sainsbury: Cost of living addition was agreed after extensive negotiations between the official and trade union sides of the national Whitley Council in 1985 and 1986. It was announced within my Department in a Defence Council instruction on 2 May 1986 and is being introduced progressively worldwide. Transitional arrangements were included in the agreement for staff whose allowances were reduced.

The Retired Officers Association is not a member of the Council of Civil Service Unions and does not have independent negotiating rights. However, like all civil servants, including non-union members, members of the ROA are subject to such nationally negotiated agreements. The new rates for staff in Germany result from a recent Treasury inspection. They were agreed following negotiations with local trade union and staff representatives. The local representative of the ROA was given the opportunity to present the association's views to the inspector.

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of how much retired officers filling service appointments as re-employed officers will on average lose in a year as a result of the replacement of tax-free foreign service allowance with cost of living allowance.

Mr. Sainsbury: Under Inland Revenue rules, overseas allowances can only be regarded as tax-free if they compensate for necessary and actual additional expenditure. One of the major features of the cost of living addition (COLA) provisions is to pay child provision only to officers with eligible dependent children whereas foreign service allowance included an element for a child in the basic rate, whether or not the officer had dependent children.

This change will result in any civil servant without children, including retired officers, receiving the basic rate of COLA without child provision. In Germany the new rate of COLA for this category of staff in the grade equivalent to RO3 is approximately £760 per annum less than the old FSA rate, due mainly to this change.

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average annual payment of foreign service allowance to *(a)* a young married officer with young children and *(b)* retired officers filling service appointments as re-employed officers who no longer have dependent children; and what will be the average annual payments of cost of living allowance for these examples after 1 January 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: The old and new rates in Germany payable to a married civilian officer with two children compared to that for a married officer with no children, for the grade RO3 in which the majority of retired officers fall, are:

	Old £	*New* £
Band 4 Civilian Officers without dependent children	2,630	1,869
Band 4 Civilian Officers with 2 dependent children at post	3,014	4,212

Retired Officers (Re-employment)

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to preserve the pay and conditions of retired officers filling service appointments as re-employed officers, after the introduction of cost of living allowance on 1 January 1988.

Mr. Sainsbury: Foreign service allowance is being replaced by the cost of living addition (COLA) which came into effect on 9 January 1986. COLA is being introduced progressively worldwide as individual countries are inspected under the allowances procedure. The COLA agreement applies to all UK-based civilians serving overseas and it is not within the power of my Department to exempt any of our staff from the terms of this agreement.

Low-level Flying

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has anything to add to his replies to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 10 November, *Official Report*, column *157*, and the hon. Member for Workington on 16 November, *Official Report*, column *451*, on the number of RAF fast jets lost in low-level accidents in the United Kingdom and surrounding waters in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The information given in my answer to the hon. Member on 16 November is correct. The answer on 10 November to a question from the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) about the number of aircraft and airmen lost during Royal Air Force fast jet operations involving low-flying training in the United Kingdom and surrounding waters in 1985-87 omitted to mention one aircraft loss which occured in 1986, but had not at the time of the answer been identified in records as occurring during a low-flying excerise over the sea. No fatalities were involved.

TR-1 Reconnaissance Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with the Lockheed company concerning the possible purchase of the TR-1 reconnaissance aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Holy Loch (Servicing)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has received any request or notification from the United States authorities relating to the replenishment or servicing of United States Navy Tomahawk cruise-missile armed submarines at Holy Loch.

Mr. Sainsbury: Any discussions of this nature would be confidential between the two Governments.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the European fighter aircraft is expected to be procured as a one-for-one replacement for Royal Air Force Jaguar and Phantom aircraft: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) on 8 December at column *149*.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to respond to the report by the National Audit Office on the loss of public money involved in the sale of Royal Ordnance factories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I understand that the Committee of Public Accounts examined the accounting officer on 9 December on the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the costs and benefits of the sale of Royal Ordnance plc. Once the Committee has reported to the House on its conclusions, the Government's response to those conclusions will be given, in the customary manner, by means of a Treasury minute.

Radioactive Contaminants

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many armed forces exercises involving radioactive contamination have taken place at Buchan since 1981;

(2) if he will make a statement about armed forces exercises involving radioactive contamination at Buchan.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our policy to discuss the locations where exercises involving the use of radioactive contaminants are held.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT (United States Forces)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated loss to the Exchequer of exempting maintenance and equipment contracts for United States forces in Britain from value added tax; under what authority this is done; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The information on revenue forgone is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Relief from the United Kingdom duties and taxes is afforded to United States visiting forces under the authority of an exchange of notes between the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States of America which was made in 1952 and which supplements earlier agreements including the mutual defence assistance agreement of 1950.

Friendly Societies (Political Donations)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and which organisations lodging accounts with the Director of Friendly Societies show political donations.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that an answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he does not include defence procurement expenditure in tables showing identifiable public expenditure by function in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland.

Mr. Major: Defence procurement expenditure is deemed to have been incurred on behalf of the United Kingdom as a whole and it is, therefore, not appropriate to allocate it to an individual country in tables showing identifiable public expenditure by function and territory.

Television (Public Service Messages)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *543*, what information the Central Office of Information has as to the number of viewers reached by public service messages on BBC and independent television, respectively; what specific steps he is taking to achieve greater audience penetration amongst those who watch predominantly BBC channels; if any fee is payable to the BBC for this service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Central Office of Information receives regular reports from the BBC and independent television companies detailing the times at which public service messages were transmitted and the channels or companies which broadcast the material. However, this information does not include audience figures and it would need a disproportionate use of resources in the Central Office of Information to research individual audience figures for each public service message. In the 12 months to the end of September 1987, the independent television companies and the BBC reported details of more than 16,000 transmissions of Government-sponsored public service messages.

Monthly guidance is given to encourage the greater use of topical public service messages, but transmission must be at the discretion of the broadcasting organisations. No fee is payable to the BBC or ITV companies for the transmission of public service messages.

Housing Bill

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of reissuing the Housing Bill, excluding printing; and of that how much was the postage cost for distribution.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of re-issuing the Housing Bill (excluding printing) cannot be determined exactly without incurring disproportionate cost, but it is estimated to have been around £300, of which some £175 would have been for postage and carriage.

EC (Budget Council)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Community Budget Council meeting on 9 December.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 9 December. I represented the United Kingdom.

The Council held further discussions on the establishment of a 1988 draft budget. I again made clear that any draft budget must respect the own resources ceiling. The Council adjourned without reaching agreement.

Job Creation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *293*, how many jobs in manufacturing industry in Scotland were created for each year since 1975.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Estimates of employees in employment in Scottish manufacturing industries, along with comparable estimates for the service sector and total employees in Scotland, are as follows:

Employees in employment in Scotland: thousands, mid-year
(Changes on a year earlier in brackets)

	Manufacturing	*Services*	*Total*
1975	645 (−38)	1,158 (+30)	2,076 (−8)
1976	615 (−30)	1,182 (+24)	2,071 (−5)
1977	622 (+7)	1,182 (—)	2,071 (—)
1978	611 (−11)	1,190 (+8)	2,067 (−4)
1979	604 (−7)	1,224 (+34)	2,102 (+35)
1980	564 (−40)	1,244 (+20)	2,082 (−20)
1981	510 (−54)	1,233 (−11)	2,002 (−80)
1982	477 (−33)	1,228 (−5)	1,950 (−52)
1983	444 (−33)	1,216 (−12)	1,899 (−51)
1984	434 (−10)	1,231 (+15)	1,901 (+2)
1985	430 (−4)	1,244 (+13)	1,904 (+3)
1986	410 (−20)	1,260 (+16)	1,888 (−16)
1987	398 (−12)	1,278 (+18)	1,890 (+2)
Changes between			
1975-87	−247	+120	−186
1979-87	−206	+54	−212
1983-87	−46	+62	−9

Some of the decrease in the figures for manufacturing will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services and road haulage previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by sub-contractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment. Employees in employmment in the service sector in Scotland increased between 1976 and 1987.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from voluntary and conservation bodies concerning proposals for the reform of eligibility criteria for the community programme.

Mr. Lee: I have received a number of representations from voluntary and conservation bodies about the community programme eligibility criteria.

Benefit Adjudication Officers

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many additional support staff for unemployment benefit adjudication officers have been appointed, following recommendations of the chief adjudication officer's annual report.

Mr. Lee: The chief adjudiction officer first recommended an increase in support staff for adjudication officers in his annual report for 1984-85. Since the period covered by that report, my Department has conducted an internal survey into the organisation of the adjudication service. In the two years since that survey some 90 additional clerical and secretarial staff have been introduced to support the work of adjudication officers.

Passive Smoking

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will introduce legislation to protect employees in their places of work against the consequences of passive smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government are awaiting the fourth report of the independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health, which is expected about the end of the year. I understand that the report will cover the health risks associated with passive smoking, on which the committee made an interim statement earlier this year. We shall then be able to consider any further action that may be needed on smoking in the workplace. We are continuing to encourage employers to limit the exposure of non-smokers to tobacco smoke at work on a voluntary basis, for example by workplace agreements to limit smoking to particular areas or to segregate smokers and non-smokers.

National Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of people employed in national dock labour scheme ports; and what information he has as to what proportion this constitutes of the total number employed in all ports.

Mr. Nicholls: The forthcoming report on manpower in the United Kingdom ports industry, soon to be published jointly by the British Ports Association and the National Association of Port Employers, will show that, of around 40,000 people employed in United Kingdom ports on 20 March 1987, about 28,000 (70 per cent.) worked in scheme ports.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has concerning section 51 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Mr. Fowler: A consultation document has been published today. It explains the changes required in relation to section 51, sets out in detail the other legislation under consideration and seeks, by 29 February, views on the extent to and manner in which the legislation should be amended. Copies of the document have been placed in the Library.

Restart Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish up-to-date figures showing the number of unemployed people who have been issued with invitations to attend restart interviews since the beginning of the scheme, the total number of interviews conducted during the same period and a breakdown of the difference between these two totals, estimating *(a)* those who ceased to be unemployed prior to receiving the invitation, *(b)* those who left the register between the receipt of the invitation and the interview date and *(c)*

other reasons for non-attendance; and if he will also provide an estimate of how many of these people would be likely to leave the register if the normal outflow from the unemployment register continued at pre-restart levels.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Since the start of the restart programme, 3,286,000 people have been invited and 2,558,000 have attended an interview. It is not possible to break down the difference between these two totals in the manner requested. However, among those people invited for interview who do not in the event attend for interview are:

(a) people who cease to be unemployed shortly before or after receiving their invitation;
(b) people who are about to start work;
(c) people who cease claiming unemployment benefits for other reasons.

We do not know how many people ultimately find work or other opportunities as a result of a restart interview.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish up-to-date figures showing *(a)* the average duration of unemployment of those who have attended restart interviews and *(b)* the proportion of restart interviewees who remain on the unemployment register (i) one month, (ii) two months, (iii) three months and (iv) six months after a restart interview.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Most of those interviewed under the restart programme are invited to interview after six, 12 or 18 months unemployment. The information requested on the length of time spent unemployed after a restart interview is not available.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish up-to-date figures, showing the outcome of interviews conducted under the restart scheme, covering the period from the introduction of the scheme, in the same format used in the reply given on 6 November 1986, *Official Report*, columns *523-24*, together with a breakdown of these figures to show outcomes for each three-month or similar time period.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The number of people interviewed under the restart programme and the numbers referred to the various menu items, broken down into three-month periods since the national inception of restart, are shown in the table.

We do not know how many of those selected for interview are ultimately placed in a job or in a training scheme or programme.

	1 June 1986 to 9 October 1986	*10 October 1986 to 8 January 1987*	*9 January 1987 to 9 April 1987*	*10 April 1987 to 26 June 1987*	*29 June 1987 to 25 September 1987*
People counselled under restart	366,451	412,600	506,046	409,436	612,264
Referals					
Job	37,930	34,906	38,669	38,128	52,181
Community Programme	56,883	48,195	43,247	30,102	45,040
Jobclubs	17,278	23,358	36,054	39,520	59,057
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	16,800	17,493	20,087	16,047	22,732
Restart Courses	63,149	68,095	57,801	19,655	25,316
Training	45,327	51,349	59,267	74,305	101,022
Voluntary Projects Programme	9,628	11,357	14,786	7,149	11,198
Voluntary Work					
Employment rehabilitation Centres	2,883	132	1,726	934	1,229

Jobstart Scheme

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish up-to-date figures showing the total number of payments made under the jobstart scheme, together with a breakdown of the wages of jobs covered by the scheme in the same format used in the reply given on 18 April 1986, *Official Report*, columns *527-28*; and if he will show the average duration of jobstart payments.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 7 November 1987]:* Since the introduction of jobstart, 18,107 people have been accepted on to the allowance. The total sum paid out under jobstart up to 27 November 1987 amounts to £6·8 million. The most recent figures available as to the breakdown of wages of jobs covered by the scheme are as follows:

1 July 1986 to 25 September 1987

Wages (£ a week)	*Number*
0 to 39	642
40 to 49	1,101
50 to 59	2,521
60 to 69	4,104
70 to 79	7,543
Total	15,911

Information on the average duration of jobstart payments is not available.

YTS (Statistics)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons have had a benefit penalty applied to them by an adjudication officer for refusing to enter a YTS course or for leaving a YTS course early, for each month since December 1983.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

The numbers of people who have had their supplementary benefit reduced for refusing a youth training scheme place, or for leaving courses early, in each month since December 1983, are as follows.

For 4 Weeks ending:	*Refusal of Place*	*Early Leavers*
1983		
20 December	168	789

For 4 Weeks ending:	Refusal of Place	Early Leavers
1984		
17 January	191	733
14 February	265	1,362
13 March	165	1,229
10 April	88	1,093
8 May	63	895
5 June	47	853
3 July	53	806
31 July	36	627
28 August	27	462
25 September	25	502
23 October	40	649
20 November	42	716
18 December	32	579
1985		
15 January	35	357
12 February	56	766
12 March	50	607
9 April	34	469
7 May	36	429
4 June	22	405
2 July	17	401
30 July	18	318
27 August	10	267
24 September	12	371
22 October	48	426
19 November	29	496
17 December	22	405
1986		
14 January	9	217
11 February	25	475
11 March	28	526
8 April	20	375
6 May	n/a	555
3 June	17	322
1 July	20	318
29 July	17	282
26 August	6	234
23 September	16	346
21 October	16	507
18 November	25	428
16 December	25	392
1987		
13 January	25	219
10 February	22	350
10 March	17	403
7 April	10	306
5 May	3	106
2 June	6	80
30 June	9	65
28 July	4	65
25 August	3	80
22 September	2	64
20 October	1	81

HOME DEPARTMENT

Recidivism

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current rate of recidivism among former prisoners; and what was the rate for each of the previous four years.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information relates to sentenced prisoners reconvicted within two years of discharge from a prison department establishment and is published annually in "Prison Statistics England and Wales" copies of which are in the Library. Table 8(a) of the latest issue (Cm. 210) gives information about those discharged in 1983 and earlier years.

Sheltered Housing (Fires)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many fatal fires there were in local authority homes for the elderly or sheltered housing in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information readily available is given in the table. Fire statistics for 1986 will be available shortly.

Fires, and deaths in fires, attended by local authority fire brigades in certain locations[1]

United Kingdom — *Number*

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Elderly persons' homes[1]			
Fire deaths[2]	3	7	5
Fires resulting in these deaths	3	4	5
of which, in local authority premises[3]	2	1	2
Sheltered housing[1]			
Fire deaths	5	4	6
Fires resulting in these deaths	5	4	5
of which, in local authority premises[3]	1	1	—

[1] Information on location is based on brigades' descriptions of the premises involved. Figures for "sheltered housing" exclude premises described by brigades as old peoples' dwellings (flats, bungalows, etc) but not specifically as sheltered housing.
[2] Figures published annually in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom" (Table 32 of the volume for 1985).
[3] Fires readily identifiable from fire reports as occurring in local authority premises. It is possible that some of the other fatal fires above were also in local authority premises.

Home Defence Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the role of local authorities in the major home defence exercises planned for September-October 1988.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have indicated to local authorities our belief that participation should be limited to the provision of guidance by county emergency planning officers on any local authority matters which may arise.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints were lodged against police officers yearly, since 1979; and of them *(a)* how many complaints were withdrawn, *(b)* how many complaints were upheld, *(c)* how many complaints were rejected and *(d)* how many prosecutions were brought against police officers as a result of a complaint.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information about complaints made against the police and their outcome is contained in the annual reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis. Further informaton can be found in the annual reports of the Police Complaints Board or, since 1985, the Police Complaints Authority. These reports are available in the Library.

Firearms

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* how many firearms, of what calibres and types *(a)* civilian held, *(b)* police owned, and *(c)* armed forces owned, which have been (i) stolen and (ii) recovered in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on the number of burglaries and thefts recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been stolen, by principal weapon type and location of incident, is published in tables 3.12 and 3.13 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1986" (Cm 233) copies of which are in the Library. Information is not collected centrally on the numbers of weapons stolen in these incidents, on their ownership or on the number subsequently recovered. The information included for thefts and for burglaries from military establishments is thought to be incomplete because such offences are not necessarily reported to and recorded by the police. Comprehensive figures for thefts from the armed forces are not readily available.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has made any estimate of the number of lives which will be saved annually as a result of his recently announced measures for firearms control, and how many would arise *(a)* from the reduced use of firearms by the legal holders of such weapons and *(b)* from the reduced use of firearms in the commission of other criminal acts which end in murder or manslaughter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to estimate how many lives might be saved by the Government's proposals for new firearms controls. The Government believe, however, that the new measures will reduce the risk of firearms misuse, which the Hungerford shootings and other recent incidents have shown to be unacceptably high.

Murder and Manslaughter (Firearms)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons have been the victims of murder and manslaughter in cases where a firearm was used which was not known to have been legally held in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) how many persons have been the victims of manslaughter or murder by persons legally holding firearms, in each of the last 10 years for which records are available; how many of these murders were committed by persons related to the victim; and if he will provide a breakdown of the type of firearms used in each year;

(3) how many persons have been the victims of manslaughter or murder by legally held firearms stolen from their owners in each of the last 10 years for which figures were available; in how many of these cases such deaths occurred when other crimes were being attempted or carried out; and what information he has as to the type of weapons used in each year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on offences of homicide by shooting and on the type of firearm involved is published annually in tables 4.3 and 3.6 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" copies of which are in the Library; the latest issue (Cm. 233) gives figures for 1976-86. The available information on the relationship between victim and suspect for all homicides by shooting and on homicides by shooting in furtherance of theft or gain is given in the tables. Information on whether the firearms involved were legally held, illegally held or stolen is not available centrally; corresponding information for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1

Offences currently[1] recorded as homicide where the victim was related to the principal suspect by type of firearm

Number of offences

Year	*Total*	*Type of firearm*				
		Long-barrelled shotgun	*Sawn-off shotgun*	*Pistol*	*Rifle*	*Other*
1982	12	9	1	—	2	—
1983	22	14	2	5	1	—
1984	19	19	1	9	—	—
1985	29	10	2	2	5	—
1986	23	15	5	3	—	—

[1] As at 1 June 1987.

Table 2

Offences currently[1] recorded as homicide in the furtherance of theft or gain by type of firearm

Number of offences

Year	*Total*	*Type of firearm*				
		Long-barrelled shotgun	*Sawn-of shotgun*	*Pistol*	*Rifle*	*Other*
1982	3	1	1	1	—	—
1983	3	1	1	1	—	—
1984	6	3	2	—	1	—
1985	6	1	2	3	—	—
1986	2	1	—	1	—	—

[1] As at 1 June 1987.

Mrs. Fatima Mohamed Gulaid

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the organisations and hon. Members who have made representations to his Department concerning the proposed deportation of Mrs. Fatima Mohamed Gulaid.

Mr. Renton: No representations from organisations have been received about the proposal to remove Mrs. Fatima Mohamed Gulaid following refusal of leave to enter. Representations have been received from the hon. Member, from the hon. Members for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) and for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields). On 11 November an early-day motion was tabled and signed by eight hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside. We expect to reach a decision on the case shortly.

Winson Green Prison

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many female prison officers have been allocated to the male prisoners' wings at Winson Green prison under the fresh start programme;

(2) if the duties of the female prison officers at Winson Green prison, Birmingham, include supervision of slopping out by male prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Six additional female prison officers were allocated to Birmingham prison last month. Part of their duties involves working with male officers in male prisoners' wings, for example to lock and unlock prisoners. The arrangements take account of the need to preserve privacy and decency.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Stock Exchange (Deregulation)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has of the effects of deregulation upon the turnover of foreign investment on the stock exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Such figures as are available about foreign investment on the stock exchange are contained in the autumn edition of its publication "Quality of Markets Quarterly".

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has of the effects of deregulation on the average commission rate on share dealings on the stock exchange; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The stock exchange, in the autumn 1987 edition of its report "Quality of Markets Quarterly", has given its most recent estimate about the trends in commissions since big bang, namely 27 October 1986.

Departmental Establishment (Wales)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was and is the total establishment number of the Department of Trade and Industry in Wales for each year since 1970.

Mr. Atkins: Staff-in-post figures for the Department of Trade and Industry in Wales for each year since 1976 were as follows:

	Number
1 April 1976	1,608
1 April 1977	2,262
1 April 1978	2,262
1 April 1979	2,395
1 April 1980	2,270
1 April 1981	2,194
1 April 1982	2,060
1 April 1983	1,979
1 April 1984	1,788
1 April 1985	1,770
1 April 1986	1,769
1 April 1987	1,727

Figures prior to 1976 are not available. The figures in the table do not represent a comparative series because of machinery of Government changes.

Estate Agents

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce legislation to make the description of homes for sale given by estate agents in their publicity material subject to the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act.

Mr. Maude: I have at present no plans to do so.

Textiles (Turkey)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the results of the European Community's recent negotiations with Turkey for renewal of a voluntary restraint arrangement for textiles; if he will publish the agreed import limits in the *Official Report;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Auditors

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals he has for implementing the European Commission eighth company law directive on the regulation of auditors.

Mr. Maude: I have today placed in the Library of the House a note setting out the basis on which the Government intend to implement this directive. This follows detailed consultation. Legislation will be included in the next Companies Bill.

The main points are as follows: the directive governs the supervision of auditors engaged on the audit of the annual accounts of companies where such audit is required by company law. Our intention is that the overall responsibility for this supervision should be exercised by the Secretary of State, but the detailed implementation will be entrusted to recognised professional bodies. However, the legislation will be designed to enable him to transfer these responsibilities to a general auditing council or some other supervisory body, if, in due course, he considers it appropriate to do so. Under the proposed system, the ability to practise as an auditor will depend on the fulfilment of appropriate education and training requirements to be administered by recognised professional bodies according to standards approved by the Secretary of State, or on individual approval by the Secretary of State. In addition, practising auditors, including those individually approved by the Secretary of State, should be designated "registered auditors" and subject to detailed supervision by a body approved for that purpose by the Secretary of State. Any body seeking approval as a monitoring body should have to demonstrate the adequacy of its rules and procedures against broad criteria set out in the legislation.

We propose to keep statutory provisions on the edcuation and training requirements for the recognition of professional qualifications to the minimum necessary for compliance with the Directive. This will give the recognised bodies the maximum flexibility to develop new courses and make other adjustments in the light of changing circumstances.

In fulfilling the directive's requirement to safeguard the independence of auditors, we believe that the emphasis should be on strengthening professional guidance rather than statutory requirements. However, the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that the guidance is adequate before approving a monitoring body. We also intend that companies other than small companies should have to disclose fees paid to their auditors for non-audit services.

We also propose to remove the existing statutory prohibition on corporate auditors.The basis on which incorporation should be allowed poses some questions and I welcome the recent announcement that representatives of the accounting profession are setting up a joint working

party to consider them. We shall want to take account of their conclusions before putting forward detailed proposals. I do not believe, however, that the need to safeguard independence necessarily rules out outside ownership of shares. I hope, therefore, that the working group will be able to reach agreement on ways of safeguarding independence while allowing an appropriate degree of flexibility in the way incorporation is permitted.

Patent Office

Mr. Madden: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will undertake a feasibility study into relocating the Patent Office to Yorkshire and Humberside.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will make it his policy to transfer the Patent Office in London to Yorkshire and give consideration to finding a site in Harrogate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My officials together with officials from the Welsh Office and the PSA are currently examining the feasibility of relocating the Patent Office to Cardiff or Newport. These locations already house large DTI establishments and locating the Patent Office close to them would yield significant operational and financial benefits. I, therefore, have no plans to look elsewhere at the moment.

Plymouth

Miss Fookes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects the European Commission to give its agreement to the continuation of the intermediate area status of the Plymouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. Atkins: The Commission's agreement to intermediate area status for Plymouth was for a three-year period from November 1984. I am pleased to confirm that, on the basis of a submission by my Department supporting the case made by the local councils, the Commission has no objection to Plymouth's intermediate area status being extended for a further four-year period.

THE ARTS

British Library (Hebrew Collection)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will issue a direction to the British Library Board under section 5 of the British Library Act 1972 to compile and publish a catalogue of its collection of Hebrew printed books.

Mr. Luce: It is for the British Library Board to determine the priorities for its cataloguing programme. The library hopes to publish early next year a second supplement to its original 19th century Hebrew catalogue.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he is satisfied with access for disabled people in wheelchairs to all museums and galleries for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Luce: I am satisfied that the museums and galleries for which I am responsible are fully aware of the needs of disabled people and are doing all they can to meet those needs. This includes improving access in existing buildings and planning for the needs of the disabled in new buildings.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he is satisfied that the extension to the National gallery and the Tate gallery of the north in Liverpool will provide adequate access for disabled people.

Mr. Luce: I am satisfied that the new extension to the National gallery has been designed to provide a full range of facilities, including adequate access, for disabled people, both visitors and staff. Similarly, I am satisfied that the needs of disabled people, including that of adequate access, have been given particular consideration in the planning and refurbishment of the Tate gallery building in Liverpool.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he is satisfied with the access for disabled people to the new Turner gallery at the Tate; and whether he has received any complaints from disabled people or organisations on this issue.

Mr. Luce: The needs of disabled people were taken into account when the Tate gallery drew up the design brief for the Turner gallery. The director and trustees of the Tate recognise, however, that further improvements need to be made, particularly within the building. They are taking steps to rectify the situation. I have not received any representations from disabled people or organisations on this matter.

ENERGY

Coal Mining

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he has any plans to repeal the restriction on deep coal mines which prevents them from employing more than 30 people;

(2) if he intends to abolish the royalty that must be paid to the National Coal Board on every ton of coal mined by private opencast pits;

(3) if he has any plans to remove the restrictions on marketing to which private coal mines are subject;

(4) if he has any plans to seek to reform legislation relating to the licensing of private coal mines;

(5) if he intends to facilitate worker buy-outs of local pits by National Coal Board employees.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under existing legislation the British Coal Corporation is responsible for the issue of licences for private mining operations and is entitled to levy a royalty on coal produced under licence. There are no present plans for changes to that legislation, but the Government are considering the possibility of changing the statutory limits on both deep mined and opencast licensed production. The corporation is considering whether there is scope for increased flexibility and transparency within that legislation. The corporation does not require licensed coal to be delivered to it except by agreement with the licensee. Within existing legislation British Coal is prepared to consider proposals by former employees to establish worker co-operatives.

Power Stations

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether plans by the Central Electricity

Generating Board for new fossil fuel power stations at coastal sites in the United Kingdom include flue gas desulphurisation based on sea water scrubbing.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The sea water scrubbing process is at an early stage of development and there are no present plans to use it at proposed new fossil power stations.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy that the retrofitting of flue gas desulphurisation proposed for three coal-fired power stations and the programme to retrofit low nitrogen oxide burners at the 12 major stations operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board will be retained following the privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government will expect existing commitments entered into by the Central Electricity Generating Board to be fulfilled following privatisation of the industry.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the present preferred method for the transport of civil plutonium from Sellafield to Japan; and what safety tests have been conducted, or are planned, on both emergency planning and container packaging for this transport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that the present preferred option for the proposed transport of reprocessed plutonium to Japan is shipment by air, although this is not expected to take place until 1992 at the earliest.

Emergency arrangements for all types of radioactive materials transport are required by national and international regulations, and are subject to periodic testing by exercises.

Design testing and development of a suitable package is in progress.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Redundancies

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many employees of the Commission or its predecessor have been made redundant on grounds of redundancy or financial exigency in the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: In the last 10 years one employee's appointment has been terminated on grounds of redundancy.

Refreshment Department

Mr. Madden: To ask the Lord Privy Seal what was the total profit made by the House of Commons Refreshment Department in the week preceding the Christmas recess in 1986.

Mr. Wakeham: The Refreshment Department does not produce weekly profit figures.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Agency Nurses

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the present monthly additional cost from employing agency nurses rather than regular nurses in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on 9 November at columns *100-101*. For the reasons explained in that reply it is not possible to provide the information requested.

Doctors' Lists

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) to what size the patient list is going to be increased in order to qualify for full basic practice allowance, as set out in the primary health care White Paper;

(2) on what measure of patient numbers the practice list leading to qualification for full basic practice allowance will be based; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if the proposal to increase the minimum list for qualification for full basic practice allowance applies to rural areas.

Mr. Newton: Changes in the criteria for entitlement to full basic practice allowance proposed in the White Paper "Promoting Better Health" will be the subject of negotiations with the British Medical Association's general medical services committee. We will be consulting the general medical services committee over the scope for introducing measures to assist family doctors who practise in rural areas.

AIDS

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what drugs are available from the National Health Service for those over 65 years of age suffering from HIV contracted through blood products.

Mr. Newton: People whose immune systems become impaired because of infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) may acquire opportunistic infections which are amenable to treatment and for which the full range of appropriate drugs are available through the National Health Service. Zidovudine (Retrovir) inhibits replication of the virus and is available for the management of patients with serious manifestations of HIV infection. The choice of drugs for an individual patient is a matter for the doctor concerned.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals have been closed as temporary closures in each of the last eight years; how many have re-opened subsequently; and how many have been disposed of.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of recipients of

attendance allowance *(a)* at the lower rate and *(b)* at the higher rate at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the table.

Attendance allowance: Numbers of recipients at 31 March 1986

	Number
Higher rate	237,000
Lower rate	348,000

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the estimated net annual cost of providing *(a)* attendance allowance in respect of children below the age of two years who are otherwise eligible but at present are excluded by reason of their age, and *(b)* mobility allowance in respect of children below the age of five years under the same criteria.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 30 November 1987]:* If the proportions of children who would qualify for attendance allowance below age two and for mobility allowance below age five were similar to the proportions of children currently eligible, the costs in a full year would be about £17 million and £8 million, respectively. These figures must, however, be treated with caution because they do not exclude the unquantifiable number of impaired infants who might be ineligible because their need for attention or inability to walk is no greater than that normally to be found in a child of that age.

Rent Taper

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of pensioner households which will lose entitlement to housing benefit as a result of the increase in the rent taper to 65 per cent.

Mr. Portillo: The estimated number of pensioner households losing all entitlement to rent allowances or rent rebates as a result of increasing the rent taper from 60 to 65 per cent. is 25,000. Some of these will retain entitlement to rate rebates. People receiving income support will be unaffected because by definition they continue to receive maximum help with rent.

Notes:

1. The source is the 1985 family expenditure survey, updated to 1988-89.
2. Further information on data sources can be found in the introduction to the revised technical annex, "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", which is in the Library. This does not identify housing benefit separately.

Housing Benefit Regulations

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) in what circumstances accommodation is considered to be particularly suitable for elderly, sick or disabled persons by virtue of (i) size and (ii) heating system for the purposes of schedule 1, paragraph 1*(c)*(ii) to the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987;

(2) in what circumstances accommodation is considered to be not particularly suitable for elderly, sick or disabled persons by virtue of (i) size and (ii) heating system for the purposes of schedule 1, paragraph 1*(c)*(ii) to the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987;

(3) by what criteria other than size or heating system accommodation will be assessed as particularly suitable for elderly, sick or disabled persons for the purposes of schedule 1, paragraph 1*(c)*(ii) to the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987.

Mr. Portillo: The Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 provide that a charge for an alarm system may be met through housing benefit where the system is provided in accommodation which is occupied by and has been specifically designed or adapted for elderly, sick or disabled people or is otherwise particularly suitable for them. In deciding whether accommodation is particularly suitable, the regulations require authorities to consider the size, heating system and the other major features or facilities of the accommodation as a whole.

The question of whether accommodation is particularly suitable is a matter for local authorities to decide. The factors we would expect a local authority to take into account in reaching its decision include the number of bedrooms, the overall amount of floorspace, the number of rooms which are heated as well as the location of the accommodation, its proximity to health and social services facilities and its accessibility.

A one-bedroom ground floor property with heating in the bedroom and living room and which is close to shops, health and social services facilities is likely to be considered suitable for an elderly, sick or disabled person; whereas, for example, a property with several spare bedrooms, heating only in the living room, and which is at a distance from such facilities would be considered unsuitable.

NHS Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses have opted out of the National Health Service superannuation scheme as soon as they have finished their training and made their first job move, since 1983, or over any similar period for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The specific information requested is not available. However, the total number of members who left the National Health Service superannuation scheme with a refund of contributions and therefore less than five years service since 1983 is as follows:

	Number
1983	52,287
1984	52,728
1985	53,933
1986	51,161

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to accord higher pay and status to medical laboratory scientific officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The pay and grading of National Health Service medical laboratory scientific officers is a matter for the professional and technical staffs 'B' Whitley council. I understand that an offer of a 5 per cent. increase in pay and allowances effective from 1 April 1987 was accepted on 16 November. Discussions are expected to begin shortly on proposals for a comprehensive review of the medical laboratory scientific officer grading structure.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider individual representations for

medical laboratory scientific officers when he prepares his response to the forthcoming report of the current Whitley B committee.

Mr. Newton: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the planned discussions between the management and staff sides of the professional and technical staffs 'B' Whitley council on proposals for a revised grading structure for medical laboratory scientific officers. MLSOs will be represented in those discussions by the staff side of the Council, but it is open to individuals to make their views known through management channels.

Cervical Cancer (Dewsbury)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women in the area covered by Dewsbury health authority have died from cervical cancer in the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what is this figure expressed per 1,000 women.

Mrs. Currie: The information is shown in the table.

Numbers of deaths and death rates per 1,000 women for malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri (ICD 180)[1] for usual residents of Dewsbury health authority.[2]

1977-86

Year	*Numbers*	*Rates (per 1,000 women)*
1977	8	0·49
1978	6	0·37
1979	6	0·36
1980	8	0·49
1981	12	0·73
1982	8	0·49
1983	8	0·49
1984	4	0·24
1985	10	0·61
1986	5	0·30

[1] International Classification of Diseases 8th, 9th Revisions.
[2] Dewsbury Health District 1977-81.
Dewsbury District Health Authority 1982-86.

Waiting Lists (Teesside)

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are on hospital waiting lists in *(a)* South Tees health authority and *(b)* North Tees health authority.

Mr. Newton: The latest information available centrally is contained in the booklet "Hospital In-Patient Waiting List—England at 31 March 1987, National, Regional and District Summaries", copies of which have been placed in the Library. For more recent figures the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the district health authorities concerned.

Emergency Alarm Systems

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals to provide assistance through income support with the installation and running costs of emergency alarm systems.

Mr. Portillo: The costs of the installation of emergency alarm systems are not met under the existing supplementary benefit scheme and we do not intend to make specific provision for this under income support or the social fund. Where a person's income support assessment includes an amount towards his housing costs (in particular, mortgage interest) help will be available for the running costs of an emergency alarm system. Help will be given only where the alarm system is provided in accommodation which is occupied by and is particularly suitable for elderly, sick or disabled people and the claimant has no choice but to meet the cost as part of their service charge.

Parliamentary Constituencies (Hampshire)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* each of the parliamentary constituencies in Hampshire in ranking order according to the size of their current electorates, indicating the percentage variation on the average number of electors per constituency in England.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested has been taken from OPCS monitor EL87/1 and is as follows:

1987 electorate

Parliamentary constituency	*Number*	*Percentage difference from English average*[1]
Eastleigh	88,664	+27·4
East Hampshire	87,476	+25·7
Aldershot	81,791	+17·5
Portsmouth, North	81,350	+16·9
Romsey and Waterside	80,179	+15·2
Basingstoke	79,116	+13·7
Fareham	77,910	+12·0
Winchester	77,527	+11·4
Havant	77,412	+11·2
Portsmouth, South	76,814	+10·4
New Forest	75,780	+8·9
Southampton, Test	74,711	+7·4
Southampton, Itchen	73,412	+5·5
North West Hampshire	70,916	+1·9
Gosport	68,891	−1·0

[1] The average number of electors per constituency in England is 69,585.

Short-term Locums

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has made any estimate of the effect of the abatement rules on the availability of recently retired consultants for short-term locums in the summer months, and of the effect this has had on National Health Service waiting lists.

Mr. Newton: It is not possible to make any such estimate. The abatement rules which apply to consultants are those which apply to all National Health Service staff who retire from the service and take retirement benefits. The current abatement provisions in the major public sector occupational schemes are under review.

Medical Practitioners

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has not answered the letter from the Secretary of the British Medical Association of November 1986 requesting a meeting with him on the subject of the superannuability of fees payable to medical practitioners who serve on district management teams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have replied to the British Medical Association today, at the same time expressing my regret about the error which has occurred.

Abortion

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost to public funds of abortions carried out under the National Health Service for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: In 1986-87 the total cost of abortions carried out under the National Heath Service, including those performed under agency arrangements with the private sector, is estimated to be approximately £13 million.

Family Planning

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost to public funds for the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available of supplying under the National Health Service, without charge, contraceptive devices and related substances.

Mr. Newton: The latest information available about the cost of National Health Service family planning services gives expenditure of £76 million in England in 1985-86. This covers the cost of contraceptive substances and appliances prescribed, contraceptive fees paid to general practitioners and appropriate health authority staffing and overheads costs.

Benefit Payments

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide information for each of his Department's offices at Bradford and Keighley on total expenditure on supplementary single payments and number of payments granted for the periods (i) January 1985 to December 1985, (ii) January 1986 to December 1986, (iii) August 1985 to July 1986 and (iv) August 1986 to July 1987.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 2 December 1987]:* Information about single payment expenditure and the number of payments made for each of the Department's offices in Bradford and Keighley is given in the tables.

Table 1

Number of payments

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*[1]1986-87*	*[1]1987-88*
Bradford East	16,818	19,614	14,362	2,090
Bradford South	12,167	14,962	12,249	1,919
Bradford West	12,208	15,644	13,320	2,175
Keighley	5,516	6,271	6,319	1,183

Table 2

Expenditure

	1984-85	*1985-86*	*[1]1986-87*	*[1]1987-88*
Bradford East	1,199,016	1,595,387	1,219,857	181,569
Bradford South	769,691	1,052,278	916,405	147,769
Bradford West	1,215,077	1,358,779	1,149,496	196,967
Keighley	398,713	497,612	461,145	86,541

Notes:

[1] Figures for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are provisional and subject to amendment.

1. Information is given for the year April to April.
2. Figures for 1987-88 are given for the period 8 April 1987 to 28 July 1987.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of households receiving *(a)* certificated and *(b)* standard housing benefit containing non-dependants in respect of whom deductions from housing benefit are made; and if he will estimate the proportion, in each case, who are subject to either the higher or lower rate of non-dependant deduction at the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The estimated number of housing benefit recipients in Great Britain for which a deduction was made in respect of one or more non-dependants in autumn 1986 was as follows:

	Thousands
Certificated cases	340
Standard cases	370
TOTAL	710

The number of non-dependants in each category in certificated housing benefit households was as follows:

	Thousands
Higher rate deduction	210
Lower rate deduction	160
TOTAL	370

This total is higher than the corresponding figure quoted above because there is on average more than one non-dependant per household.

Information on the number of non-dependants in each category in households receiving standard housing benefit is not available.

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* data from the latest labour force survey showing how many residents of the United Kingdom *(a)* were born in the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* are citizens of the Republic; and whether he will include separate figures for the south-east region and Greater London.

Mrs. Currie: It is estimated from the 1986 labour force survey that, in spring 1986, the numbers were as follows:

Area of residence	*Persons born in Republic of Ireland '000*	*Citizens of the Republic of Ireland '000*
United Kingdom	580	560
South East Region of England	290	250
Greater London	180	160

Blind People

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the most recent statistics on annual registrations as partially sighted by people in age ranges *(a)* 16 to 64 years and *(b)* and over 65 years, whose BD8 shows the cause of blindness to be (i) glaucoma, (ii) diabetic retinopathy and (iii) cataracts;

(2) what are the most recent statistics on annual registrations as blind by people in age ranges *(a)* 16 to 64

years and *(b)* and over 65 years, whose BD8 shows the cause of blindness to be (i) glaucoma, (ii) diabetic retinopathy and (iii) cataracts.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The data are given in the table.

Annual registrations as blind and partially sighted by people aged 16 to 64 years and over 65 years: certain causes

	Blind	*Partially sighted*
16-64 years (1985-86)		
Glaucoma	72	68
Diabetic retinopathy	152	128
Cataracts (including congenital)	95	128
Over 65 years (1980-81)		
Glaucoma	1,209	834
Diabetic retinopathy	437	243
Cataracts (including congenital)	1,012	1,054

Note: Registrations arising from more than one of the causes listed have been counted under both, or all three, conditions.

Restart Interviews

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish up-to-date figures showing the total proportion and numbers of benefit disqualifications or reductions that are linked to restart interviews; how many of these were *(a)* because of failure to attend the interview without good cause, together with the number of reinstatements following a later interview, *(b)* on the grounds of non-availability for work and *(c)* because of the refusal of suitable offers of employment; how many of these decisions were subject to appeal; and what was the outcome of such appeals.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

Under long-standing legal rules people can lose benefit if they fail to attend an employment interview without good reason. Up to 28 September the total number of claimants disallowed under these rules for failing to attend restart interviews was 27,991. Information is not available on the number of these people who appealed against these dis-allowances nor on the number who had their benefit reinstated following a later interview.

Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

SCOTLAND

Firearms

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received since 1 July calling for amendment of the law of Scotland relating to the control of firearms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: About 100, the majority commenting on the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 22 September of the Government's main conclusions following the Hungerford tragedy.

Health Boards

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will itemise, for each health board in Scotland, the donations received by the health board from voluntary organisations, patients, relatives or other benefactors for each month of 1987 to date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the pay settlement for National Health staff has cost each health board in Scotland in each year since 1982; and how much extra funding for this was made available by his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* Table 1 shows the full cost of pay settlements for National Health staff for the years 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87. These figures are derived from broad estimates by health boards. I regret that figures for 1982-83 and 1983-84 are not available.

Boards' allocations have been increased year on year to allow for forecast inflation, including the cost of pay settlements. Financial allocations additional to this were made in 1984-85 and 1986-87 and these are shown in table 2. The amounts in table 2 are in addition to the allowances for forecast inflation already included in boards' allocations in those years.

Table 1

Estimated total costs of pay settlements for national health staff

£ thousand

Health Board	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Argyll and Clyde	4,099	3,808	4,542
Ayrshire and Arran	2,870	2,661	3,341
Borders	901	783	965
Dumfries and Galloway	1,599	1,392	1,653
Fife	2,787	2,536	3,174
Forth Valley	2,610	2,394	2,939
Grampian	4,998	4,557	5,590
Greater Glasgow	14,361	13,347	16,186
Highland	2,093	1,921	2,309
Lanarkshire	4,629	3,997	7,360
Lothian	8,933	8,154	9,737
Orkney	164	121	173
Shetland	192	180	209
Tayside	5,381	4,794	5,831
Western Isles	338	250	350
Scotland	55,955	50,895	64,359

Table 2

Additional allocations

£ thousand

Health Board	*1984-85*	*1986-87*
Argyll and Clyde	1,634	411
Ayrshire and Arran	1,139	299
Borders	331	86
Dumfries and Galloway	584	147
Fife	1,083	280
Forth Valley	1,058	268
Grampian	1,983	511
Greater Glasgow	5,931	1,473
Highland	836	211
Lanarkshire	1,844	467
Lothian	3,584	903
Orkney	60	16
Shetland	76	19
Tayside	2,128	530

Health Board	*1984-85*	*1986-87*
Western Isles	114	29
Scotland	22,385	5,650

Agricultural Development

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the failure to resolve EEC budget difficulties, he will indicate the likely date of the commencement of the Scottish islands agricultural development programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Spring 1988.

Mr. James Stobo

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the relevant experience of the newly appointed chairman of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council, Mr. James Stobo, with particular reference to any direct or indirect experience of the production, processing or planting of seed potatoes.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In accordance with the provisions of the Industrial Organisation and Development Act, 1947 the chairman of a development council established in the exercise of powers conferred by that Act is required to be one of the council's independent members, that is, he must have no financial or industrial interest which would be likely to affect him in the discharge of his functions as a member of the council. Mr. James Stobo satisfies this statutory requirement in that he has no financial or industrial interest in seed potato matters. By virtue of his wide-ranging knowledge and experience of agricultural promotion and marketing Mr. Stobo is well qualified for the post of chairman of the Scottish Seed Potato Development Council, the main function of which is to promote the production and marketing of Scottish seed potatoes.

Forestry Commission

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is yet in a position to announce the outcome of the Forestry Commission's review of the composition and procedures of its regional advisory committees.

Mr. Rifkind: The Forestry Commission has now completed its review, and my right hon. Friends and I have agreed a number of changes designed to improve the effectiveness of the regional advisory committees in their role of conciliating over forestry proposals in respect of which there are unresolved objections from statutory authorities consulted by the Commission.

This review stemmed from the undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) on 31 January 1985 in his response to the Countryside Commission's Report "A Better Future for the Uplands" (*Official Report*, columns 282-90), that the Forestry Commission would be seeking ways to achieve greater public accountability for the regional advisory committees' proceedings. The basis on which the Commission approached this task was to look for ways in which the proceedings of the committees might be better publicised when they are exercising their conciliation role in disputed forestry grant and felling applications, so that the public can have an opportunity to voice their opinion. The Commission subsequently extended the review to consider possible improvements to the composition of the committees with a view to achieving a better balance on them between forestry and other countryside interests.

In the course of the review, the Forestry Commission issued a consultation paper setting out its proposals which drew comments from over 50 organisations and individuals with interests in forestry, land use and the environment. The consultation paper, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House, also provided a helpful background summary of the Commission's present consultative procedures for forestry grant and felling permissions and the key role played in these by the regional advisory committees.

The Commission noted the concern which has been expressed by environmental bodies that the planning and environmental members on the committees cannot be expected to be in a position to cover the whole range of environmental interests—such as landscape, recreation and nature conservation—and that the numbers should be increased to accommodate members with expertise in those areas. The farming interest on the committees was also considered to be under-represented. In the past, this problem has to a certain extent been met by the appointment of forestry members with multi-disciplinary backgrounds, but this was clearly not a satisfactory answer in the longer term.

With the growing importance attached to the regional advisory committees' conciliatory role, coupled with the Commission's new environmenal duty introduced under the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, we have some sympathy with the Commission's conclusion, which has received fairly wide support from both forestry and environmental interests, that the membership of the committees should be raised from a maximum of nine to 12, and we are considering this matter further.

In the meantime, the regional advisory committee chairmen will be encouraged to invite to meetings considering disputed grant or felling cases any persons whom they think might be able to assist in achieving an agreed solution, particularly when a case involves an interest not represented on the committee. The Commission will prepare and maintain lists of persons who could be asked to serve in this capacity as the occasion arises.

As regards other aspects of the appointment of committee members, we agree that the Forestry Commissioners should give closer consideration to ensuring that appointees are suited by technical, professional and practical experience and knowledge to speak for the general interests they are appointed to represent. We also endorse the Commission's proposal that the service of Committee members should normally be restricted to two three-year terms, although exceptions might be made in special circumstances to retain the services of a particular member for an extended period. This proposal has merit in allowing a reasonable turnover of members. Further, we endorse the principle that new regional advisory committee chairmen should as far as possible be appointed from backgrounds which are unlikely to cause any real or apparent clash of interests when disputed cases come before their committees. It is also desirable that the chairmen should have a broad range of knowledge on relevant land use matters.

Turning to the main purpose of the review, which was to find ways of achieving greater public accountability in the proceedings of the regional advisory committees, the Forestry Commission proposed in its consultation paper that procedures should be introduced to give the public the opportunity to submit views to the committees when they were considering disputed planting and felling proposals. It was envisaged that this would be done through a system of advertising details of cases to be considered by the committees and inviting those wishing to comment to do so in writing; such comments would then be taken into account by the Committee in its discussions with the parties to the dispute.

The Commission received a wide variety of views on this proposal, ranging from those which felt that it would detract from the regional advisory committees' chances of successfully fulfilling their conciliation role to those which considered that, while it was a small step in the right direction, it did not go far enough. A number of environmental interests wish to see all forestry proposals presented for public comment, not just the small percentage referred to the committees.

We have considered these representations very carefully, but have concluded that the Commission's proposals strike broadly the right balance between wider public involvement and the risk of increased bureaucracy and administrative costs. However, the statutory authorities consulted are already encouraged to consider the views of voluntary bodies and others in commenting on forestry applications, and we have asked the commission to discuss with the local authority associations the effectiveness of those arrangements and any ways in which they might be improved and made more cost-effective.

Again, we have carefully considered calls for the meetings of the committees to discuss disputed cases to be open to the public, and for the record of such meetings, including the intended advice to the Foresty Commissioners, to be published. We accept the commission's view, however, that it would not be practical or conducive to the committees' conciliation role to throw open site discussions with the applicant and the objecting authority or authorities to anyone who wishes to attend. As was stated in the consultation paper, the committee chairmen will nevertheless have discretion to invite any person or non-statutory organisation who has submitted views to attend or be represented at the site meeting, if it is considered that this will assist in the conciliation process.

We also take the view that the publication of a record of committee meetings could inhibit full and frank discussion between the parties and hamper the prospects of a compromise solution being found. It would be the intention, however, to notify those who had submitted comments of the outcome of the case.

The procedure for public particiption proposed by the Commission is necessarily a limited one, but the Government is satisfied that it should broadly meet the need for public views to be taken into account by the regional advisory committees without detracting from their conciliation function. We have therefore asked the commision to introduce it in respect of all future cases.

The Government greatly appreciate the dedicated and constructive contribution that the members of the regional advisory committees make, not only in giving general advice to the forestry commission but in the part they play in the Commission's consultation procedures. We hope that the changes I have announced will assist them in their work and lead to a wider understanding and acceptance of their role.

Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, during the past eight years, Ministers of his Department have held joint meetings with health authorities in Scotland, together with right hon. and hon. Members representing constituencies served by those health authorities; and whether he is currently prepared to consider such three-sided meetings if so requested by health authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been one such formal meeting, although Ministers have from time to time had less formal discussions with constituency MPs when visiting health board facilities. Ministers meet regularly with health board chairmen to discuss a wide range of issues, and health boards in turn hold meetings with constituency MPs.

Bypasses

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current state of progress of the bypasses for *(a)* Auckinleck and Cumnock, *(b)* New Cumnock, *(c)* Maybole and *(d)* Girvan; how this compares with the planned progress; and what are the reasons for any alteration in plans or speed of planning or construction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: These schemes are at various stages of preparation. As with all schemes, progress depends on the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures, the availability of funds and the priority of particular schemes within the context of competing claims from the entire trunk road network in Scotland. I would not expect any of the four schemes mentioned by the hon. Member to commence construction before the early 1990s.

School Management

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which political parties responded to the consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents".

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* We received submissions for the national organisations of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party, the Scottish Labour party, the Liberal alliance, the Scottish National party and the Scottish Green party and from a number of local and constituency associations.

Social Work Services Group

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what innovative proposals, policy guidelines or ideas for dealing with delinquency have been published by the Social Work Services Group;

(2) what innovative proposals, policy guidelines or ideas for dealing with alcohol abuse have been published by the Social Work Services Group;

(3) what innovative proposals, policy guidelines or ideas for dealing with drug problems have been published by the Social Work Services Group;

(4) what has been the published contribution of the Social Work Services Group to policy development for the mentally handicapped;

(5) what has been the published contribution of the Social Work Services Group to policy development of community services for the mentally ill;

(6) what has been the published contribution of the Social Work Services Group to the development of policy initiatives for 16 to 21-year-old offenders;

(7) what has been the published contribution of the Social Work Services Group to the development of policy initiatives for the care of the elderly in the community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[pursuant to his reply, 7 December 1987, c. 41]:* Since 1979 there have been published or widely circulated to social work agencies, some 80 circulars or similar communications to local authorities, 12 practice guidance documents, 32 research reports, four reports of programme planning groups (jointly with the Scottish Home and Health Department), and a number of miscellaneous documents, including reports of seminar proceedings, bearing on topics mentioned by the hon. Member. The group's purpose in issuing material of this kind is to provide information and guidance to local authority social work departments which, since reorganisation in May 1975, have exercised responsibility for developing regional policies and service patterns, and to other social work agencies.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the latest available figures by commodity for the total amounts of food taken into European Economic Community intervention by the United Kingdom Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce; and if he will break these figures down by region.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At 30 September 1987 intervention stocks in the United Kingdom were:

	Cereals Tonnes	*Beef Tonnes*	*Butter Tonnes*	*Skimmed milk powder Tonnes*
England (Regions)				
Northern	146,715	7,009	18,921	280
Midland and Western	221,217	5,230	57,669	2,377
South West	164,300	1,191	42,448	1,988
Eastern	1,096,232	9,807	18,563	—
South East	118,582	1,417	14,145	—
Scotland	451,500	5,949	12,957	101
Wales	—	217	19,240	1,155
Northern Ireland	—	28,875	14,969	1,596
Total	2,198,546	60,695	198,912	7,497

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by commodity, town of location and amount in each store, the stocks currently held in European Economic Community intervention by the United Kingdom Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member of the answer given to the hon. Member for Birmingham Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) on 19 November at column *663*.

Free Food

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the final figures of the amounts of food distributed in the United Kingdom under the free food for the needy scheme, broken down by region and by commodity.

Mr. MacGregor: The information is as follows:

A. Products released from intervention stores; final figures (regional breakdown by location of store)

	Tonnes
Butter	
England and Wales	8,959·2
Scotland	1,571·0
Northern Ireland	3,093·5
Total	13,623·7
Beef	
England and Wales	336·602
Scotland	146·475
Northern Ireland	557·752
Total	1,040·829

B. Milk and milk products on which reimbursements were claimed as at 3 December 1987.
(Regional breakdown by location of charity claiming reimbursement)

	Litres
Whole milk	
England and Wales	2,991,289·28
Scotland	497,444·96
Northern Ireland	1,409,501·07
Total	4,898,235·31
Semi-skimmed milk	
England and Wales	228,154·38
Scotland	551,279·04
Northern Ireland	Nil
Total	779,433·42
Cheese	*Kgs.*
England and Wales	7,397,786·42
Scotland	1,427,402·56
Northern Ireland	1,401,875·77
Total	10,214,529·75
Concentrated butter	
England and Wales	81,777·93

	Litres
Scotland	3,360·00
Northern Ireland	Nil
Total	85,137·93

EC (Fruit and Vegetables)

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amounts, by commodity, of fruit and vegetables have been withdrawn from the market under European Economic Community regulations in the United Kingdom so far in the current year, and each year for the past seven years; what proportion of that amount has been destroyed or left to rot; and what proportion has been put to some use.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The figures requested are given below:

Marketing Year[1]	*Withdrawn (Tonnes)*		
	Used for human or animal food	*Destroyed*	*Total*
Cauliflowers			
1987-88[2]	592	5,479	6,071
1986-87	4,100	20,000	24,100
1985-86	800	4,100	4,900
1984-85	560	7,800	8,360
1983-84	25	575	600
1982-83	110	8,100	8,210
1981-82	Nil	Nil	Nil
1980-81	400	675	1,075
Tomatoes			
1987-88[2]	Nil	Nil	Nil
1986-87	Nil	Nil	Nil
1985-86	1	20	21
1984-85	5	125	130
1983-84	Nil	180	180
1982-83	Nil	54	54
1981-82	Nil	5	5
1980-81	Nil	4	4
Apples			
1987-88[2]	220	232	452
1986-87	3,550	3,560	7,110
1985-86	2,100	8,500	10,600
1984-85	7,800	15,200	23,000
1983-84	2,300	3,600	5,900
1982-83	8,400	13,850	22,250
1981-82	160	300	460
1980-81	5,400	19,000	24,400
Pears			
1987-88[2]	19	Nil	19
1986-87	230	33	263
1985-86	735	142	877
1984-85	600	130	730
1983-84	515	260	775
1982-83	535	30	565
1981-82	Nil	40	40
1980-81	45	140	185

[1] Cauliflower 1 May-30 April; Tomatoes 1 January-31 December; Apples 1 July-30 June; Pears 1 July-30 June.
[2] To date.

EEC Expenditure

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total EEC expenditure on *(a)* cereals, *(b)* dairy products and *(c)* sheepmeat in each of the past three years; and what is the projected outturn for the current financial year.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is set out in the table below.

(mecu)

	1985	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
Cereals	1,650	2,310	3,391	5,023
Milk and milk products	5,442	5,933	5,406	[2]6,298
Sheepmeat	434	502	617	704

Source:
1984—EAGGF financial reports.
1987—Estimate based on EC Commission statistics.
[1] Estimate of total spend, which exceeds the 1987 budget. Expenditure in November and December 1987 will be met by member states who will be reimbursed from the 1988 budget.
[2] Excludes costs of special disposal scheme for butter which will be spread over the budgets for the four years from 1989.

Italy (Lamb and Sheep Exports)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the details of consignments of lambs or sheep from the United Kingdom which were refused entry to Italy between 26 April and 31 December 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: For a period following 3 May 1986 food imports into Italy were temporarily disrupted while the Italian authorities worked out a certification system following the Chernobyl incident. That apart and aside from routine checks on matters such as health and welfare certification — which can occasionally cause temporary delays — I have no evidence to suggest that the Italian authorities have refused entry to our sheep or lambs.

Battery Hens

Mr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what provisions within the Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987 are additional to those required to implement the European directive 86/113/EEC; and for what reason they were included in the regulations;

(2) what scientific research has been undertaken by his Department into the optimum size of battery hen cages to house one, two and three birds, respectively.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Member states are required to implement at least the minimum standards laid down in this directive. The Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987 require more space than the directive's minimum of 450 sq cm per bird when there are only one, two or three birds in a cage. This is because it is recognised from work carried out in this country and abroad that birds in such small colony sizes are less able to share each others' space than when there are four, five or six birds in a cage. Work carried out by my Department suggests that mortality is reduced and egg production increased when small numbers of birds are given more space.

Dead Sheep

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he first issued instructions in 1986 to farmers in the restricted area of Cumbria on how to dispose of dead sheep.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Order 1986 was issued on 20

June 1986. Under it movement of any sheep (either live or dead) off holdings in a designated area was forbidden except under a consent. Advice to farmers on disposal of dead sheep (on or off the holding) was given by my staff on a case-by-case basis.

Chickens

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the amount of *(a)* live chickens and *(b)* frozen chickens imported into the United Kingdom in 1986.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Details of imports are not available in the form requested.

In 1986, 743,820 live chickens (other than day-old chicks) were imported into the United Kingdom. In the same period, a total of 70,418 tonnes of fresh or frozen chickens were imported.

Radiation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the adequacy of the weather charts available to the National Radiological Protection Board for the period immediately after the Chernobyl accident and as to the National Radiological Protection Board's ability to build up a detailed picture of the areas with high rainfall and consequent fallout; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

The National Radiological Protection Board had access to weather data provided by the Meteorological Office, together with information on dose rates and activity concentrations in air, rain, grass, soil and foods supplied by a number of other bodies. This was sufficient to enable a detailed assessment of any potential risks to be completed quickly so that advice on remedial and protection action could be given to Government and the public. Advice about refraining from drinking undiluted, fresh rainwater for prolonged periods was given within a day of the radiation cloud reaching the United Kingdom.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration is given in deciding the allocation of housing investment programme moneys to an individual local authority as to that authority's housing rent arrears.

Mrs. Roe: Housing investment programme allocations to local authorities are based on an assessment of need. We are currently consulting the local authority associations about the details of the methodology for allocations for 1988-89.

Councillors

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of local authorities are not liable to pay rates.

Mr. Chope: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Residuary Bodies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the expenses and emoluments paid to each chair and every member of the residuary bodies for the five former metropolitan counties for the year 1986-87.

Mr. Chope: Information of salaries for the year 1986-87 is as follows:

	Salary on 1 April 1986 £ per annum	*Salary from 1 July 1986 £ per annum*
Chairmen		
Greater Manchester; Merseyside; West Midlands	17,600	18,198
South Yorkshire; Tyne and Wear; West Yorkshire	16,000	16,544
Deputy Chairman		
South Yorkshire	13,200	13,742
Members		
All members	5,600	5,830

Notes:

(i) As a result of increased time commitment to residuary body work the salaries of five members of Merseyside residuary body were doubled, during the period 1 February to 31 July 1986;

(ii) One member of West Yorkshire residuary body received a daily attendance allowance as an alternative to an annual salary. This was increased on 13 May 1986 from £16·to £16·70;

(iii) Remuneration is subject to abatement, if applicable, in respect of public sector pension received.

Information on the total expenses paid to chairmen and members is contained in the residuary body annual reports and accounts for 1986-87 which were laid before Parliament on 25 November.

Estate Action

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the £4 million for Estate Action packages, published by his departmental news release No. 499 of 1 December, is for the expenditure of money provided by him in grant and how much in loan sanctions from existing resources of local councils.

Mrs. Roe: As indicated in the press release of 1 December, £217,624 (5·5 per cent.) of the approved expenditure announced that day will be eligible for estate action urban programme grant; the other HIP extra allocations totalling some £3·7 million (94·5 per cent.) are additional resources being made available by Estate Action to the local authorities.

Rate Support Grant (Bolton)

Mr. Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he will take to rectify the miscalculation in the future education and highways elements of grant-related expenditure in establishing Bolton's rate support grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will correct at the first supplementary report stage the errors so far discovered and acknowledged by his Department and any errors which may subsequently be confirmed in his calculation of the rate support grant settlement for 1988-89 for Bolton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information supplied to the Department by the Department of Education and Science and used in calculating grant-related expenditure assessments for the 1988-89 RSG settlement had not taken into account further education students undertaking courses as part of the MSC technical and vocational education initiative. GREs for all education authorities will be revised in the first supplementary report for 1988-89 to correct this. There has been no miscalculation of the highway maintenance component of Bolton's GRE.

Air Pollution

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the position of Her Majesty's Government with regard to the proposal from Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria, within the framework of the UNECE Geneva convention on long-range transboundary air pollution, to establish a protocol to achieve a 30 per cent. reduction in emissions of nitrogen oxides by 1995.

Mr. Moynihan: In common with the great majority of countries which are parties to the convention the United Kingdom Government do not consider the objective of a 30 per cent. reduction in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions by 1995, on a 1980 base, to be a feasible objective, given, for example, the lead times involved for the introduction of the new emission controls technology.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the discussions held between 16 and 18 November during the meeting of the working group on nitrogen oxides under the auspices of the UNECE Geneva convention on long-range transboundary air pollution, in view of the working group's mandate to draft a protocol which would result in effective reductions in emissions of nitrogen oxides by 1995.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom, together with representatives of 20 other parties to the convention, participated in the meeting to which the hon. Member refers.

The working group agreed on the structure of the draft protocol and on a number of articles, but has yet to reach agreement on the key articles concerning basic obligations and transfer of technology. I expect further progress to be made at the next meeting of the working group, scheduled for 16-19 February 1988.

There is no reference to 1995 in the mandate of the working group.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the anticipated annual emissions of nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons from petrol-engined motor vehicles in the United Kingdom for each of the years up to the end of the century, taking into consideration the limits agreed under the Luxembourg agreement and changes in the vehicle fleet.

Mr. Moynihan: Estimates of future nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbon emissions from petrol-engined vehicles depend on assumptions about growth in vehicle use, vehicle replacement rate and the full emission characteristics of vehicles built to new specifications. Uncertainties attach to each of these factors and estimates are revised as new evidence becomes available. Warren Spring Laboratory has made some initial predictions for the Department through to the year 2010 and these have been published in report LR 612 (AP)M. I shall arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House shortly.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline *(a)* the results yielded by daily measurements of precipitation composition from the primary network of nine rural sites during the most recent week for which figures are available, *(b)* the results yielded by the secondary network of collectors during the most recent week for which figures are available and *(c)* for each network the minimum period of delay between recordings being taken and results being available.

Mr. Moynihan: Results from the first year of operation (1986) of the primary and secondary acid deposition networks were published in September 1987 by Warren Spring Laboratory which undertakes the monitoring on behalf of the Department. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library. The report shows maps of the annual averages of acid deposition. Stringent quality control of the data is carried out in quarterly periods; validated data are generally available within one month of the end of each quarter. I am arranging for data for the most recent available week to be extracted and sent to the hon. Member.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the tonnages of both sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides emitted by each of the coal and oil-fired power stations operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board for each year between 1970 and the present day *(b)* the corresponding percentage sulphur content of the fuel consumed at each of these stations and *(c)* the source of the fuel.

Mr. Moynihan: I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment his Department has made as to the effectiveness of the use of tall chimneys to dilute and disperse emissions of *(a)* sulphur dioxide and *(b)* nitrogen oxides, from fossil fuel power stations.

Mr. Moynihan: Evidence for the effectiveness of tall chimneys in achieving low ground level concentrations of sulphur dioxide is provided by the data published in the Department's annual digests of environmental protection and water statistics. These show that ground level concentrations have fallen in line with emissions from low level domestic, commercial and industrial sources but are much less influenced by power station emissions. The results are consistent with the parameters imposed on power station chimney design intended to give acceptable ground level concentrations of both pollutants.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the current estimates of acid deposition falling over Britain which originates from United Kingdom sources of air pollution; and if he will provide a breakdown of this information into sulphur and nitrogen oxides.

Mr. Moynihan: Sulphur and nitrogen budgets for the United Kingdom were presented by the United Kingdom review group on acid rain in its second report to the Department ("Acid Deposition in the United Kingdom 1981-85", pages 65-66). Copies have been placed in the Library.

Approximately 85 per cent. of sulphur deposition on the United Kingdom is estimated to come from United Kingdom sources, and the figures for nitrogen oxides is very similar.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his written answer, *Official Report*, 8 July, column *161*, to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), whether he is now able to make a statement on the findings of the study by the Fellowship of Engineering into the environmental impact of various flue gas desulphurisation systems for use at coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Moynihan: The report of the Fellowship of Engineering's study on acidic emissions abatement processes will be presented to the Department on 15 December. I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. One of its four volumes is devoted to coal combustion. The environmental impact of the various flue gas desulphurisation processes depends not only on the process but also on the circumstances of the particular power station. The report is a valuable source of part of the information needed to assess the impact of FGD at particular stations but it also has a wider value as a source document for specialists investigating the implications of possible future abatement options.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given to the exploitation of indigenous reserves of low sulphur coal as a means of reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide from coal-fired power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The House of Commons Environment Committee considered this possibility in 1984 but concluded that there was little scope for using indigenous low-sulphur coal to reduce emissions from power stations.

The bulk of the United Kingdom's low-sulphur coal production comes from Scotland and from Wales. The former is almost entirely used already by the south of Scotland Electricity Board, and the latter by specialist markets. I understand that there is no scope for the economic expansion of this production.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment the chief inspector of pollution has made as to whether the prevention of emissions of sulphur dioxide from the chimneys of the major coal-fired power stations not included in the three-station programme of flue gas desulphurisation retrofitting is practicable with current abatement technology.

Mr. Moynihan: The chief inspector has advised that for new coal-fired power stations flue gas desulphurisation is practicable with current abatement technology. On the basis of this advice the Government, in September 1986, in addition to authorising the CEGB to retrofit 6,000 MW of existing generating capacity over the period 1988 to 1997, announced that future coal-fired power stations would be required to be fitted with FGD. There are no plans at present to extend the retrofitting programme to other existing stations, but the possibility is kept under review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Rail Services

7. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the British Railways Board about rail services in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: None.

Urban Development Corporation

10. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to seek to set up mini urban development corporations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I plan to introduce legislation to create a development corporation which would be responsible for developing a series of vacant and underused sites along the banks of the River Lagan as it flows through Belfast's inner city.

I do not foresee the need to create new development corporations for other areas of Belfast or elsewhere.

Maghaberry Prison

13. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Maghaberry prison will be ready for full occupation.

Mr. Stanley: There are two prisons on the same site at Maghaberry, one for women and one for men. The women's prison has been fully operational since March 1986. It is anticipated that the whole of the male prison will be available for occupation from January 1988. A gradual build-up of the population in the male prison has already started and will continue over the course of next year.

Mutual Understanding

15. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to increase teaching in education for mutual understanding in schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: On 14 September I announced a new initiative in education for mutual understanding and allocated additional resources for this purpose. As part of this initiative there will be greater emphasis on EMU in the training of teachers and increased support from the Department's inspectorate. Funding for voluntary groups involved in inter schools' work will also be enhanced.

19. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met schoolchildren in Enniskillen to promote education for mutual understanding.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have not spoken directly to these children since the tragic events of Remembrance Sunday. In addressing local sixth formers at Fermanagh college of further education in September last year I took the opportunity of emphasising the importance of mutual understanding when launching "The General Lesson", a copy of which is in the Library.

Flood Damage

17. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding he will provide for the victims of the flooding at Strabane.

Mr. Needham: In my reply of 3 December 1987, at columns 638-69, I indicated to the hon. Member the help provided at that time. Last week I announced a further package of measures to help those in genuine need in both Omagh and Strabane, including the creation of 45 ACE posts to provide the much needed help to refit and redecorate damaged property. I would also encourage those who may be eligible for payments under the social security system to claim these entitlements immediately.

Schools (Parental Choice)

18. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he plans to introduce greater parental choice of schools in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: I announced new arrangements on 7 April this year to abolish intake quotas to secondary schools which will give parents greater freedom of choice in the selection of secondary school for their children. The new arrangements are planned to take effect from September 1988.

Intergovernmental Conference

16. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any plans to seek to change the scope and nature of the activities of the Intergovernmental Conference set up by the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I have no such plans at present. My hon. Friend is aware that the agreement itself provides for a review of the working of the conference next November.

Queen's University

20. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy, when fixing the block grant for Queen's University, Belfast, to stipulate that open competitions be held for academic posts and that all heads of department be required to spend a minimum number of days per week on university business; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No. Appointments to academic posts at Queen's University, Belfast and the conditions of service of staff are entirely matters for the university authorities.

Security

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security in the period since Sunday 8 November.

28. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

22. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

33. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the security position in Northern Ireland.

38. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on improving cross-border security since 8 November.

40. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery).

Election Candidates (Declaration)

23. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to introduce a declaration of non-violence to be undertaken by all local government election candidates.

Mr. Needham: The Government's discussion paper "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process in Northern Ireland" sought views by 30 November on such a proposal. We are now considering the way forward in the light of the responses received.

Housing Executive

24. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent the new budget for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive takes account of the difficulties faced by the executive in making adequate provision for the elderly, the disabled, and the homeless and in maintaining and improving existing housing stock.

Mr. Needham: Housing needs and conditions in Northern Ireland are assessed annually by the Housing Executive and the results of its reviews are considered fully when the public expenditure allocations for Northern Ireland are decided. While it has not proved possible to provide all of the funds sought by the Housing Executive for 1988-89, in recognition of the difficulties faced by the NIHE, the resources allocated are, in terms of expenditure per capita, significantly above other regions of the United Kingdom. It will be for the executive to propose, in the first instance, how these resources should be used in the provision of the various services which it supplies to tenants and applicants.

Postgraduate Teacher Training Awards

25. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to change the eligibility criteria for postgraduate teacher training awards for Northern Ireland students studying in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no such plans for the immediate future, but I shall continue to review the position each year.

Education Reform Bill

26. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to seek to extend the provisions of the Education Reform Bill to Northern Ireland.

36. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he has had on the implications of the Education Reform Bill for policy on secondary and higher education in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The provisions of the Education Reform Bill will not generally extend to Northern Ireland, apart from those relating to certain university matters. I

shall be issuing a consultative paper early in the new year inviting comments on how best measures corresponding to those in the Bill can be implemented in Northern Ireland. Thereafter, separate Northern Ireland legislation will be brought forward.

ACE Scheme

27. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the level of funding for the ACE scheme in the financial year 1987-88; and if he will make a statement on future levels of funding.

Mr. Viggers: A total of £28·84 million. An additional £10 million has been allocated to increase provision for the ACE programme in 1988-89.

Youth Training Programme

29. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the operation of the youth training programme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The youth training programme has provided a two-year training package for 16 and 17-year-olds since 1982. During that time there have been 75,000 entrants. At the end of October this year there were 14,000 young people in training.

Equal Opportunities

30. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Government are to publish their reply to the report on fair employment of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights.

Mr. Viggers: We shall announce our plans for legislation on religious equality of opportunity as soon as possible in the new year. Our detailed proposals will take full account of the recommendations of the Standing Advisory Commission's report.

31. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he accepts the recommendation of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights in its report on fair employment, that the Government establish the goal of reducing the differential between male Catholic and male Protestant unemployment from two and a half times to one and a half times over the next five years.

Mr. Viggers: The Government's goal is to effect a substantial reduction in the disparity in employment opportunity between the two communities, through the immediate adoption by all employers of the sound employment practices outlined in our "Guide to Effective Practice."

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many copies of the document "Religious Equality of Opportunity in Employment: Guide to Effective Practice" have been distributed.

Mr. Viggers: Approximately 29,700 copies of the "Guide to Effective Practice" have been distributed to date.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is yet in a positin to say what steps he proposes to take to implement the recommendations of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights report on equality of opportunity to use the Government's purchasing power to promote equal opportunities, and to eradicate religious discrimination, in employment.

Mr. Viggers: The recommendations made by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights are being carefully studied and they will be taken fully into account in framing our new legislative proposals. Details will be announced as soon as possible in the new year.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether it is his intention to legislate by means of a Bill, rather than by Order in Council, on the recommendation of the Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights' report on fair employment.

Mr. Viggers: We intend to introduce new fair employment legislation at the earliest opportunity. My right hon. Friend and I have already made it clear that we shall take the recommendations of the Standing Advisory Commission fully into account in the new provisions. We have noted the representations that such legislation should be by Bill.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

32. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry).

Terrorism

34. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with progress in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. Tom King: Since 23 November a major security operation has been mounted by the Irish security forces, supported in Northern Ireland by the RUC and the Army, which has resulted in a number of important arrests and some finds of explosives and munitions.

Since I last answered questions in the House on 12 November, two civilians have died in sectarian attacks. The security forces have continued their determined and courageous work. So far this year 431 people have been charged with serious offences, including 27 with murder, while 247 weapons, approximately 18,000 rounds of ammunition and nearly 13,000 lb of explosives have been recovered.

In addition, the Garda Siochana has recovered up to the end of October 123 weapons, 10,000 rounds of ammunition and some 4,000 lb of explosives.

Recent events north and south of the border have emphasised most clearly the vital need for both Governments to co-operate closely in the defeat of terrorism throughout the island of Ireland.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation following the Enniskillen bombing.

Mr. Tom King: Since 23 November a major security operation has been mounted by the Irish security forces, supported in Northern Ireland by the RUC and the Army, which has resulted in a number of important arrests and some finds of explosives and munitions.

Since I last answered questions in the House on 12 November, two civilians have died in sectarian attacks. The security forces have continued their determined and courageous work. So far this year 431 people have been charged with serious offences, including 27 with murder, while 247 weapons, approximately 18,000 rounds of ammunition and nearly 13,000 lb of explosives have been recovered.

In addition, the Garda Siochana has recovered up to the end of October 123 weapons, 10,000 rounds of ammunition and some 4,000 lb of explosives.

That does not include a product of the recent search, which I understand will be announced this afternoon. It included some 50 weapons and four bunkers which are believed to have been for storage of possible shipments.

Recent events north and south of the border have emphasised most clearly the vital need for both Governments to co-operate closely in the defeat of terrorism throughout the island of Ireland.

Labour Statistics

35. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of unemployed in each local office area in each of the last three years.

Mr. Viggers: The information is as follows:

Local office area (Jobmarket area)	*Number of unemployed claimants*[1]		
	October 1985	*October 1986*	*October 1987*
Antrim	3,802	3,775	3,455
Armagh	3,073	3,369	3,228
Ballymena	3,790	4,228	4,037
Ballymoney	2,692	3,137	2,889
Ballynahinch	801	878	843
Banbridge	2,095	2,214	2,144
Bangor	2,945	3,089	3,008
Belfast	38,960	41,994	40,050
Carrickfergus	2,272	2,524	2,236
Coleraine	3,941	4,407	4,130
Cookstown	2,272	2,307	2,189
Downpatrick	1,450	1,555	1,597
Dungannon	3,588	3,832	3,721
Enniskillen	4,480	4,853	4,627
Kilkeel	751	836	772
Larne	2,117	2,296	2,021
Limavady	2,318	2,550	2,424
Lisburn	4,265	4,588	4,176
Londonderry	10,021	10,389	9,956
Lurgan	3,841	4,172	3,843
Magherafelt	3,031	3,165	3,130
Newcastle	1,110	1,172	1,114
Newry	6,189	6,463	6,317
Newtownards	2,646	2,896	2,721
Omagh	3,105	3,454	3,465
Portadown	2,504	2,575	2,660
Strabane	3,763	3,917	3,948
Northern Ireland	121,822	130,635	124,701

[1] There was a change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986, which provided a more accurate and consistent measure of the numbers claiming benefits. This change consisted of compiling the statistics 3 weeks, rather than 1 week, after the specified count date each month. It resulted in the count being lower by an estimated average of 2,100 per month in Northern Ireland.

Financial Policy

37. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy that all Government-approved increases, particularly regional rates, public housing rents and public housing heating charges, will not exceed the recognised inflationary factor.

Mr. Stanley: No. The Government recognise the significance of these costs for many households but the policy with regard to increases in charges must also have regard to overall public expenditure and fiscal considerations.

Extradition

39. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the proposed changes in arrangements for extradition between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the extradition agreement between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea).

Integrated Rural Development Plan

41. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he plans to implement the integrated rural development plan for Northern Ireland, prepared and adopted by the European Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: I am satisfied that the continued operation of existing administrative and financial arrangements, including the assistance available from the European Community, provide the appropriate means for tackling the social and economic problems in rural areas in Northern Ireland.

RUC Mountain Rescue Team

42. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will ensure that the RUC mountain rescue team is maintained.

Mr. Stanley: This is a matter for the operational judgment of the Chief Constable.

Child Welfare

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps the Government intend to take to ensure that those disposed sexually to interfere with handicapped children are not appointed to positions in connection with children's welfare or education.

Mr. Needham: Since 1983 the Department of Health and Social Services has operated a pre-employment consultancy service which enables health and social services boards and voluntary child care organisations to check the criminal background of shortlisted applicants for posts giving access to children in certain child care settings, chiefly children's homes and day-care facilities. The service does not generally extend to posts giving access

to children in facilities specifically for the mentally or physically handicapped. However, an interdepartmental working party, representative of the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Education and the Northern Ireland Officer, is currently drawing up proposals for a broader vetting system for the statutory sector, covering a wider range of posts, including those giving access to mentally or physically handicapped children. At a later stage consideration will be given to extending the system to the voluntary sector.

Dentistry

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dental officers employed by each health and social services board in Northern Ireland are *(a)* full and *(b)* part-time; what full-time equivalents these numbers represent; whether their duties are similar; whether any board has any plans to increase the numbers of such officers; what change there has been in their numbers during the last three years; and what were the principal reasons for any such changes.

Mr. Needham: The table sets out the number of dental officers employed by each health and social services board in each of the past three years. The duties of these officers are similar. There are no plans to increase the number of these officers and any alterations in numbers over the past three years has been due to posts becoming vacant and subsequently being filled.

Dental Officers 1984-87
at 31 December[1]
by Health and Social Services Board

	1984			1985				1986				1987			
Health and social services board	*Number full time*	*Number part time*	*Total WRE*	*Number full time*	*Number part time*	*Total WTE*	*Change in WTE since 1984*	*Number full time*	*Number part time*	*Total WTE*	*Change in WTE since 1986*	*Number full time*	*Number part time*	*Total WTE*	*Change in WTE since 1985*
Eastern	22	4	23·68	22	10	26·38	+2·70	22	10	24·79	−4·30	22	14	24·36	−0·43
Northern	8	1	8·61	10	—	10·00	+1·39	9	—	9·00	−1·00	9	1	9·68	+0·68
Southern	10	1	10·60	9	2	9·78	−0·82	7	2	7·97	−1·81	8	2	8·97	+1·00
Western	8	5	10·40	7	5	9·40	−1·00	10	5	12·40	+3·00	10	5	12·40	—

[1] 1987 figures as at 30 September.

Matrimonial and Family Proceedings (NI) Order

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what account Her Majesty's Government took of the various views expressed by interested bodies in submissions on the draft Matrimonial and Family Proceedings (NI) Order.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 3 December to the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor).

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to increase the hill livestock compensatory allowance payable to farmers, in view of the drop in beef cattle numbers.

Mr. Viggers: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 9 December 1987 the arrangements which will apply in the United Kingdom to the 1988 hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme. I have nothing further to add.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 11 December 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases in the first half of 1987 involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland have been considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland; and what action was taken in each case.

The Attorney-General: From 1 January 1987 to 30 June 1987, the Director of Public Prosecutions (Northern Ireland) considered 10 cases involving persons injured by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland. No prosecutions were directed in eight of those 10 cases and in the remaining two cases a final direction awaits the outcome of other proceedings.

Mr. Wallace and Captain Holroyd

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Attorney-General what investigations have been carried out since February 1987 into the allegations of Captain (retired) Fred Holroyd and Mr. Colin Wallace; and whether he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The prosecuting authorities have not requested any such investigations.

BBC (Injunction)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General if he will apply to the High Court for an amendment of the injunction against the BBC granted on 4 December so that a fair and accurate report of proceedings in Parliament or a court sitting in public shall not be constituted a breach of the injunction.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to what my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal said on 9 December at column 458.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how much he expects to authorise to be spent on new track, above and below ground, by British Coal, under the Coal Industry Act 1987, in the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(2) how much he expects to authorise to be spent on coal-face cutting equipment by British Coal, under the Coal Industry Act 1987, in the years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government do not make specific allocations within their overall investment approval to the British Coal Corporation. Responsibility for specific investment decisions is a matter for the corporation.

WALES

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales to what extent employment has declined in the tobacco manufacturing industry in Wales since 1977.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Statistics of Trade Act 1947 prohibits disclosure of statistical information that could be related to an individual concern, or statistics from which such information can be deduced.

ENVIRONMENT

Sewage Works (Discharge Consents)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Norwich, South of 1 December, which sewage works in the Anglian water authority failed their discharge consent conditions in 1986; and on how many occasions.

Mr. Moynihan: The report submitted earlier in the year by Anglian water authority showed that around 300 of the authority's sewage treatment works were deemed to have failed to meet their discharge contents because more than 5 per cent. of samples taken exceeded the consent conditions. In well over half of these cases, however, the consent conditions were in the process of being reviewed as part of a general review of consents started in 1985 for works whose discharges were considered to have no appreciable effect on the receiving waters. Full details of discharges from all non-compliant works are in the public register maintained by the water authority, but I will write to the hon. Member listing the works in question.

The water authority is working towards bringing all its sewage treatment works into compliance by 1990.

Regional Water Authorities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the expenses and emoluments paid to the chairs and members of regional water authorities for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87, distinguishing between executive and non-executive board members, and including any performance bonuses for such years paid to such members after the conclusion of the financial year.

Mr. Moynihan: Information about board members' expenses and emoluments for 1985-86 and 1986-87 is included in the water authorities' 1986-87 annual reports and accounts. These were presented to Parliament on 15 July 1987.

In addition, performance bonuses were awarded for the first time for 1986-87; only chairmen and executive members of authorities which met or exceeded agreed performance aims were eligible for payment. The bonuses were calculated as a percentage of members' renumeration using the following rates:

Water Authority	*Per cent.*
Anglian	6·5
Northumbrian	15·0
North West	7·5
Severn-Trent	7·5
Southern	12·5

Water Authority	*Per cent.*
South West	5·0
Thames	[1]
Wessex	7·5
Yorkshire	11·5

[1] Did not qualify

Water Research Centre

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to offer the Water Research Centre for sale as a separate concern.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The Water Research Centre is a private company limited by guarantee. Its management and members are considering whether restructuring is required to secure a continuing service to the water industry when the utilities in England and Wales are privatised.

Storm Damage

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) of 2 December, *Official Report*, column 626, how soon after 31 January 1988 he will be able to meet the claims for special assistance from local authorities for financial help to meet damage from the storm on 15 October.

Mr. Howard: The Department will deal with claims as quickly as possible. We would expect grant normally to be paid within a few weeks of receipt of the claim, subject to the resolution with the authority of any queries on it. In appropriate cases, payment could be prior to the deadline for receipt of claims which has now been extended to 1 March 1988.

Council House Sales

Mr. Quentin Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the table giving information on sales of dwellings by each local authority in England, referred to in the answer given to the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 24 July, *Official Report*, column 730.

Mrs. Roe: I have today placed in the Library the latest version of table 2 giving information reported by each local authority in England on the progress on council house sales up to the end of June 1987.

"Paying for Local Government"

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reproduce figures F1 to F5 of Cmnd. 9714 "Paying For Local Government", by region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The sample size used in these exemplifications would be insufficient to give reliable results for all regions.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 26 November, *Official Report*, column *316*, he will provide estimates of poll tax losers and gainers by household types on a gross, before rebate, basis.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* At the request of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), we are giving priority to rolling forward the community charge computer model to take account of 1986-87 family expenditure survey data. The new information requested by the hon. Member will require a considerable amount of effort to produce. We will provide it after the task of updating the model has been completed.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 19 November, *Official Report*, columns *671-672*. he will set out the assumptions used on poll tax rebates to arrive at the net figure.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The assumptions were those in paragraph 3.46 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd 9714).

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Cigarette Imports

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes there have been in levels of imports of cheap cigarettes since the last Budget.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not possible to identify separately cheap cigarettes in the overseas trade statistics. Total United Kingdom imports for the seven months April to October 1987 amounted to 5,099·6 million cigarettes of a value of £32·5 million. For the previous seven months, September 1986 to March 1987, total United Kingdom imports were recorded as 9,926·7 million cigarettes of a value of £59·6 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year since 1968 the number of prosecutions following the illegal use of firearms registered under the 1968 Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The readily available information, which relates to prosecutions for offences under the Firearms Act 1968, is given in the table. This information relates only to the principal offence and excludes persons also found guilty of a more serious offence. Comparable data for the years prior to 1979 is not available.

Defendants proceeded against for offences under the Firearms Act 1968—England and Wales

	Number
1979	7,140
1980	7,130
1981	6,980
1982	5,430
1983	4,850
1984	4,160
1985	3,870
1986	3,160

Housing Defects

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if potential purchasers of his Department's houses are notified before they buy of the

potential implications for compensation for latent damage under the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: In respect of any Home Office housing designated under the Housing Defects Act, which was consolidated in the Housing Act 1985, arrangements are made to notify prospective purchasers that grant aid under the provisions of the Act will not be available, since the defects are known and accounted for in the valuation. The Act specified that after 26 April 1984 purchasers would no longer be eligible for financial assistance.

Remand and Bail Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the average number of days spent on remand by those remanded in custody for terrorist-type offences and *(b)* the number of bail applications refused, respectively, in 1986 and the first half of 1987, with regard to cases now completed in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The only information which is readily available relates to prisoners convicted of terrorist-type offences who are now in prison custody in category A and does not cover prisoners who have been released or downgraded.

In 1986, the average number of days spent on remand was 329 and the number of bail applications refused was 21. No cases have been completed of such prisoners who were first received in custody between 1 January and 30 June 1987.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give separately how many prisoners in British gaols give as their place of domicile (i) the Republic of Ireland and (ii) Northern Ireland; and, separately, how many of these prisoners were serving sentences for terrorist-type offences as at 30 June.

Mr. John Patten: The information which is readily available centrally relates to prisoners' place of birth and to those terrorist-type prisoners who are held in category A. On 30 June 1987, about 700 inmates of prison department establishments in England and Wales were recorded as born in the Republic of Ireland and about 400 in Northern Ireland. Of those, 13 born in the Republic of Ireland and 32 born in Northern Ireland had been convicted of terrorist-type offences and were held in category A.

Common Format Passport

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a specimen copy of the common format passport.

Mr. Renton: Prototypes of the new British passport in the European Community common format were placed in the Library in July 1984, together with a background note giving more information about it. I am arranging for these to be supplemented by the latest, but not yet final, version of the new passport which incorporates all the Community languages and contains additional safeguards against forgery, together with an updated version of the background note.

Mr. Ian Cutler

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the organisations and hon. Members who have made representations to him concerning Mr. Ian Cutler and complaints against the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Aside from the hon. Member, we have received letters about this case from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham), my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison), and the hon. Members for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). No representations on Mr. Cutler's behalf have been received from any organisation.

Mr. Cutler's complaints are being investigated by an officer of the Metropolitan police complaints investigation bureau under the supervision of the Police Complaints Authority.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of policemen and women have received official firearms training;

(2) how many police officers are currently undergoing firearms training.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, at 31 December 1986, there were 8,395 authorised firearms officers, some 7 per cent. of the total police strength in England and Wales.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Wallace and Captain Holroyd

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister (1) on what dates she has received letters from Mr. Colin Wallace or from his solicitor, Thomas Eggar and Son;

(2) on what dates she has received letters from Captain [retired] Fred Holroyd.

The Prime Minister: It is not my usual practice to give information on correspondence from third parties.

Asset Sales

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Prime Minister what is her estimate for asset sales less purchases of land and buildings for all Departments for each year from 1987-88 until 1991.

The Prime Minister: It is not possible to identify fully the sale of assets, other than those from privatisation proceeds and sales of land and buildings, within the public expenditure totals.

Net proceeds from privatisation are given in the Autumn Statement 1987.

Figures for sales of land and buildings by Department up to 1989-90 were given in a reply to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) by my right hon. Friend the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 27 January, at columns

229-30. On the same basis, purchases of land and buildings are estimated at £530 million in 1988-89 and 1989-90. Revised estimates, including figures for 1990-91, will not be available until the 1988 public expenditure White Paper is published.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Age-related Testing

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what procedures will be used to ensure that age-related testing takes account of missed schooling due to hospitalisation or other factors relating to a child's physical disability.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Education Reform Bill provides that the national curriculum requirements, including assessment arrangements, may be modified in respect of a pupil with a statement of special educational needs under the 1981 Act, or in other cases specified in the orders prescribing those requirements for foundation subjects. In addition, where, as can happen now, following a period of missed schooling, a pupil is being taught among a younger age group, the Bill will enable the pupil to be assessed against the attainment targets for that age group. The task group on assessment and testing, and the individual subject working groups, will be advising my right hon. Friend on what account might be taken of the needs of pupils in these circumstances, bearing in mind that the assessment arrangements are intended to identify what stage a pupil has reached and what further help may be needed.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Schemes (Newcastle)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list all the managing agents offering places in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne city area under *(a)* the youth training scheme, *(b)* the job training scheme and *(c)* the community programme, together with the number of places offered by each agent in each scheme.

Mr. Cope: The managing agents offering places in the Newcastle-upon-Tyne city area are listed below:

Managing agent	*Contracted places*
(a) YTS	
Alliance & Leicester Building Society	2
Argyll Stores	16
Association of British Travel Agents	8
Association of Merchants in Training	5
B & Q	6
Bainbridge	20
Benfield Motors	32
Binns	10
Boots	8
British Association of Professional Hairdressing Employers	7
British Engines	17
British Insurance Brokers Association	6
British Office Systems and Stationery Federation	1
British Printing Industry Federation	1
British Rail	14
Builders Merchants Federation	5
Burton Group PLC	12
Central Electricity Generating Board	1
Chubb	1
Clothing and Allied Products Industry Training Board	22
Community Industry	18
Construction Industry Training Board	136
Data Northern Ltd.	313
DER	3
Dixon's	2
Eagle Star Insurance	2
Electronic Rentals	1
Essanelle	14
Federation of London Clearing Banks	17
Fenwicks	88
Footballers Association Further Education and Vocational Training Society Ltd.	9
John Gerard	16
Gosforth Employment Rehabilitation Centre	60
Granada Television Rentals	7
Greggs of Gosforth	18
Habitat	2
Halifax Building Society	2
Hotel and Catering Training Board	131
IBM	4
JHP Training	152
K Shoes	1
Key Training	275
Kwikfit	4
Littlewoods	5
Lunn Poly	4
Lupins	62
Magnet & Southern	2
Marks & Spencer	7
Metcon	1
Midland Bank	1
Miltech	6
Mothercare	3
National Association for Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders	148
North East Electricity Board—Electricity Council	6
North East Furniture Manufacturers	2
NEI Plc	78
Newcastle College of Arts and Technology	324
Newcastle ITeC	97
Newcastle Local Education Authority	699
Newey and Eyre	7
North East Link	110
Northern Regional Health Authority	18
Northern Rock Building Society	34
Northumbria Ambulance Service	29
Northumbria Water Authority	6
Partco	1
Plastics Processing Industry Training Board	6
Post Office Counters	40
Post Office Letters	58
Rumbelows	2
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries	13
Shoe Repair Industry Training Association	3
Stylo Barratt	3
Sumlock	59
Swallow Hotels	5
Texas	4
Thomson Holidays	2
TR Dixon	4
Trustee Savings Bank	7
Tyne and Wear Chamber of Commerce	325
Tyneside Training Service	291
Vickers	183
Work and Learn (North East) Ltd.	233
Yorkshire Bank	1
Total	4,358

Managing agent	Contracted annual throughput
(b) the Job Training Scheme:	
Data Northern Ltd.[1]	1,000
Lloyds British Training Services Ltd.	1,250
Tyneside Skillcentre	300
Tyne and Wear Chamber of Commerce	600
Key Training Ltd.	500
Total	3,650

Managing agent	Authorised places
(c) the Community Programme:	
Age Concern	19
Boys Brigade	8
Christian Relay	34
Community Rural Aid	45
Community Service Volunteers	24
Community Task Force	241
Community Transport	140
Conservation Practice	20
Energy Support	14
Keep Britain Tidy Group	14
Keeping Newcastle Warm	105
National Association For the Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders	233
New Job Horizons	319
Newcastle City Council Agency	1,178
Northumbria Tourist Board	98
PHAB	8
Police	107
St. Anthony of Padua	340
Total	2,947

[1] Some of these places are provided outside the Newcastle upon Tyne city area.

Engineering Industry Training Board

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy towards engineering training in the light of information paper No. 82 issued by the EITB concerning options for its future direction, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Nicholls: I am concerned that the skill base of the engineering industry should enable the exploitation of new technologies and new markets.

I support the engineering industry training board's efforts to devise arrangements which will both be effective and command the general support of the engineering industry.

Closed Shop

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received since June of the current year regarding the closed shop.

Mr. Nicholls: Some 60 representations received by my Department since June have made some reference to the closed shop. These include parliamentary questions and correspondence with Members of Parliament, outside bodies and the general public.

Factory Inspectors

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will express the number of visits made by factory inspectors in the north-east in 1986-87 as a proportion of the total number of factories in the area.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible without disproportionate cost to separate the number of visits made to factories from those made to other premises where the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 is enforced by HSE's factory inspectorate.

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors were in post in each of the five years in the north-east region; and how many of the anticipated increase in the number of factory inspectors will be located in the north-east region.

Mr. Nicholas: The number of factory inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive's north-east area over the past five years is as follows:

1 April	Numbers
1983	32
1984	31
1985	31
1986	30
1987 (April)	31
1987 (November)	27

The Health and Safety Commission and Executive plan to increase the number of inspectors in the factory inspectorate by about 35 above present levels during 1988-89. Decisions on when the additional inspectors will be located have not yet been taken.

Restart Scheme

Miss Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of restart interviews which have taken place in Cleveland since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: Since the national introduction of the restart programme in July 1986, 46,427 restart interviews have taken place in Cleveland up to the end of September.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing the number of notified vacancies per registered unemployed person in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* England, *(d)* the United Kingdom and *(e)* each of the English regions for June 1979, June 1980, June 1981, June 1982, June 1983, June 1984, June 1985, June 1986, June 1987 and November 1987.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The table shows the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres, and the number of unemployed claimants, in each of the requested areas, for June of each year since 1980. Vacancy figures for June 1979 are not available on a comparable basis, while figures for November 1987, will not be available until 17 December 1987. All the figures are seasonally adjusted, and the unemployment figures allow for changes in coverage.

It is not valid to compare ratios of notified vacancies to unemployment, since roughly only about a third of

vacancies in the economy are reported to jobcentres, and this proportion will tend to vary over time and between regions.

Unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted

	June 1980	June 1981	June 1982	June 1983	June 1984	June 1985	June 1986	June 1987
South East	260,700	491,000	593,100	669,600	707,300	746,400	780,100	682,100
East Anglia	31,400	55,800	64,400	72,100	73,200	78,200	82,300	73,000
South West	85,300	137,900	156,100	173,900	182,800	195,500	203,600	179,300
West Midlands	135,000	264,900	302,200	332,000	327,900	333,700	337,300	302,400
East Midlands	78,500	139,700	155,200	176,200	184,100	193,600	197,400	182,900
Yorkshire and Humberside	123,800	213,300	240,800	266,100	273,300	287,100	305,100	282,100
North West	203,500	324,300	373,800	409,700	418,700	430,400	438,600	399,500
North	117,200	170,400	189,800	209,100	218,700	224,700	226,400	210,400
Wales	84,200	132,400	146,800	158,700	162,700	172,200	175,000	154,100
Scotland	177,700	256,400	283,800	308,200	317,600	332,700	340,900	333,800
England	1,035,400	1,797,000	2,075,700	2,309,000	2,386,000	2,489,800	2,570,800	2,311,700
United Kingdom	1,359,100	2,275,400	2,605,800	2,884,200	2,978,600	3,109,300	3,212,500	2,925,200

Unfilled vacancies, seasonally adjusted

	June 1980	June 1981	June 1982	June 1983	June 1984	June 1985	June 1986	June 1987
South East	62,100	29,800	41,700	50,980	60,170	64,380	67,810	87,470
East Anglia	4,800	2,900	4,100	4,320	5,550	5,950	5,990	7,900
South West	10,500	5,100	10,500	12,830	13,350	15,450	18,660	20,380
West Midlands	7,200	4,400	8,100	9,420	10,830	12,250	14,950	20,880
East Midlands	7,600	5,100	7,200	7,800	7,850	9,280	9,990	12,580
Yorkshire and Humberside	7,700	4,600	7,300	8,200	8,120	8,790	11,250	15,640
North West	10,200	6,600	9,700	13,420	14,920	15,710	18,880	24,640
North	5,600	3,400	5,000	5,960	6,700	7,900	9,230	12,130
Wales	5,800	4,500	5,800	6,650	7,600	7,840	9,270	11,750
Scotland	15,600	9,900	12,800	16,380	14,310	14,300	16,870	18,210
England	115,800	61,900	93,500	112,280	127,270	139,790	156,870	201,720
United Kingdom	138,300	76,900	112,900	136,510	150,760	163,620	184,970	233,660

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest level of the retail prices index.

Mr. Fowler: The November monthly figure for the retail prices index shows that there has been a welcome fall in the annual rate of inflation to 4·1 per cent. It has, however, been discovered that from February 1986 to October 1987 a computer programme error affected the monthly index. As a result, the annual inflation rate will have been understated by one tenth of 1 per cent. in most months during that period.

Each month 130,000 prices, covering many categories of expenditure, are collected and analysed in a complex set of calculations. Following a decision in March 1983 the index has since February 1986 been calculated by computerised methods. Monitoring of the system has revealed that during the programming work in 1985 a mistake was made in the detailed calculations for certain items.

From February 1986 until January 1987 there was a regular understatement of about 0·06 per cent. in the price change in each month relative to the base month, which was January 1986. From February 1987, as the faulty programme was applied to a wider range of items, the understatement relative to January 1987 was about 0·09 per cent.

The programming fault has now been rectified, and the annual inflation rate of 4·1 per cent. for November is correct. The figure for the November level of the index is also correct at 103·4. It has not, however, been possible in the time available to calculate the figures for the many detailed components. These will be published in the course of next week.

The RPI will have been understated, albeit by a numerically small margin, for up to 21 months. I wish, however, to make it plain now that special extra payments will be made to national insurance retirement and supplementary pensioners and severely disabled people, and that the Exchequer will not benefit from the effects on social security expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will make an announcement on this as soon as possible.

We believe that the computerised calculation system is now wholly correct. In view of the RPI's importance, however, I am asking the head of the Government statistical service to carry out a review of it.

TRANSPORT

National Bus Company

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those subsidiaries of the National Bus Company which have been sold off at less than their 1986 book values; by how much the price paid for those companies fell short of the book values; and whether he will give the reasons for the difference.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information on sale prices of National Bus Company subsidiaries is confidential while sales are in progress. A report will be made to the House in due course on the aggregate proceeds of sale.

Railways (Scottish Region)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if when he next meets the chairman of British Rail he will raise with him the closure of the signal and telecommunication design drawing office, Scottish region; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the employment implications for the area affected by the closure of British Rail's signals and telecommunications design drawing office, Scottish region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that the British Railways Board has been reviewing its signal and telecommunications engineering activities. This review and any employment implications are management matters for the board.

Motor Cyclists (Accidents)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents to motor cyclists have been caused by motor car drivers for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government's road accident statistics do not apportion blame. Statistics of injury accidents involving a car and a motor cycle — which represent 55 per cent. of all accidents involving a motor cycle — do, however, distinguish the main types of manoeuvre being undertaken. Information on cases in which the car turned right into the path of the motor cycle is as follows:

Year	*Number of car-motor cycle injury accidents*	*Number of such accidents in which car turned right into the path of the motor cycle*	
			Percentage
1984	35,447	14,422	41
1985	31,893	12,937	41
1986	30,106	12,407	41

Speeding

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to prevent motor cycles and motor cars being equipped to break the speeding restrictions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no plans to do so.

The performance capability of modern cars and motor cycles sold here tends to reflect consumer preferences and driving conditions generally throughout Europe. It cannot be tailored to speed limits in the United Kingdom.

Preston (Traffic)

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is now able to release the consultant's report into the traffic to the south of Preston in Lancashire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. It is not our practice to publish reports of traffic studies because they are necessarily broad-brush, and publication would inevitably lead to blight. I will comment further when replying to my hon. Friend's recent letter about the proposed Blackburn southern bypass.

Public Transport (Government Assistance)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of all Government assistance to *(a)* British Rail's Network South-East and *(b)* London Regional Transport in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. David Mitchell: In 1986-87, NSE received £195 million in PSO grant, and LRT £295 million, a subsidy of 2·43p and 4·48p per passenger mile respectively. This compares with last year's subsidy of £489 million to the provincial sector (including ScotRail) and the PTEs—a subsidy of 15·9p per passenger mile.

Libel (London Regional Transport)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue a direction to the chairman of London Regional Transport that no London Regional Transport moneys be spent pursuing any action against the London *Evening Standard* for libel.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. I have no powers to give LRT such a specific direction.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Company Taxation

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total tax revenue raised in the last financial year from companies under the small companies rate *(a)* on profits below £100,000 and *(b)* on profits between £100,000 and £500,000; and, in the latter case, what was the average rate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The corporation tax revenue raised under the small companies' rate in 1985-86 (the latest year for which adequate detailed data are available) is estimated at £¾ billion on taxable profits below £100,000 and £¼ billion on taxable profits between £100,000 and £500,000. The average rate for the latter group is 35 per cent.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of *(a)* increasing the inheritance tax business property relief to 100 per cent. and *(b)* extending the relief to holdings in excess of 10 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: *(a)* The cost of increasing the inheritance tax business relief to 100 per cent. is estimated at £20 million in the full year.

(b) The cost of extending the present 50 per cent. relief to unquoted company shareholdings in excess of 10 per cent. is estimated at £1 million in the full year.

VAT Refunds

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discretion retailers in the United Kingdom have in offering value added tax refund facilities for foreign visitors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: In common with all other member states of the European Community, the United Kingdom provides a retail export scheme which allows retailers to offer value added tax refunds to foreign visitors. Individual retailers may choose whether or not to operate the scheme.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for the last financial year the value

added tax refunded to *(a)* each county council, *(b)* each district council, *(c)* the British Broadcasting Corporation, *(d)* Independent Television News Ltd., *(e)* each co-operative wholesale society, and *(f)* each co-operative retail society under section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983.

Mr. Lilley: Information relating to specific taxpayers is confidential. However some £1·2 billion was repaid under section 20 of the Value Added Tax Act 1983 to local government bodies, including 475 county and district councils. Neither wholesale nor retail co-operative societies are eligible for repayments under section 20.

Order Papers (Printing)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measurements he has made of the efficiency of the printing service, since the introduction of computer typesetting for producing House of Commons Order Papers by Her Majesty's Stationery Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Since production of the Order Papers began at the new parliamentary press in October, copies of these papers have been delivered to the Vote Office in the early part of each morning. A printed version was not available on only one occasion before the House sat and then arrangements were made to provide the House with copies in an alternative form.

Her Majesty's Stationery Office together with House officials is continually monitoring the effectiveness of the computer typesetting of the Order Papers.

Tobacco Taxation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of revenue from tobacco taxation is derived *(a)* from areas where unemployment exceeds 13 per cent. and *(b)* from areas where unemployment is less than 8 per cent.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information is not available in the form requested.

BP Shares

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to extend the final date of the Bank of England buy-back offer for BP shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 7 December 1987 at column *71*.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer who will be responsible for financing the second and third instalments of BP shares bought back by the Bank of England.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 9 November at column *65*.

Asset Sales

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each three years from 1988-89 his proposed asset sales.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No decisions have yet been taken about the timing of individual privatisations over the next three years. Decisions on timing of other asset sales are not held centrally.

Corrugated Board Manufacturers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has made to other European Economic Community Governments about problems facing corrugated board manufacturers in the United Kingdom concerning alleged under payment of customs duties; and what information he has as to whether similar manufacturers in Germany, Holland, France and Italy are being treated in the same way.

Mr. Lilley: The circumstances involving alleged underpayments of anti-dumping duty on kraftliner paper imported from the United States of America by corrugated board manufacturers have been discussed at Community meetings in Brussels. I understand that investigations have been carried out in the other member states mentioned and a number of irregularities reported.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Walden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lawson: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 7 December. I represented the United Kingdom. The Council discussed the Commission's annual economic report for 1987-88. The report was agreed as amended by the Commission in the light of discussion with member states.

The chairman of the Economic Policy Committee gave an interim report on the committee's economic evaluation of the Commission's proposals for the abolition of fiscal frontiers. It was agreed that the committee should produce a full report, which is expected in March 1988.

The Council discussed the draft 18th VAT directive, but no agreement was reached. The Council agreed to continue work on a draft directive dealing with the prospctus to be published when transferable securities are offered to the public.

Income Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a note explaining the circumstances in which distributions by companies other than in the form of cash or shares are subject to income tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The Taxes Act provides that, in addition to dividends and certain issues of shares and securities, any other distribution out of the assets of the company in respect of shares in the company falls within schedule F of the income tax code. The company has to account for advance corporation tax on the value of the distribution, and the sum of that value plus the advance corporation tax is income of the shareholder.

The recipient is entitled to a tax credit equal to the advance corporation tax, and this covers his basic rate income tax liability. A distribution is treated as provided

out of the assets of a company if the cost falls on the company. If the cost falls on a direct 90 per cent. subsidiary of the company, a distribution is treated as made by the subsidiary. The legislation provides that "in respect of shares" covers anything done in pursuance of a right granted or offer made in respect of a share.

The Taxes Act also contains a supplementary rule that can apply where a company transfers assets to, or takes over, liabilities of a member or members. If the market value of the benefit received by the member exceeds the consideration that he pays, the company is treated as making a distribution equal to the difference. There are also special rules covering the provision of benefits or facilities to members of a close company.

Company Taxation

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions the Inland Revenue have subjected distributions by companies other than in the form of cash or shares, as taxable under section 233 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* This information is not available centrally.

Share Options

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of share option schemes approved in each of the tax years since the inception of the legislation.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* The figures are as follows:

Number of schemes approved

	FA 1980 SAYE schemes		*FA 1984 schemes*	
	In year	*Cumulative total*	*In year*	*Cumulative total*
1980-81	22	22		
1981-82	115	137		
1982-83	78	215		
1983-84	73	288		
1984-85	115	403	202	202
1985-86	111	514	1,251	1,453
1986-87	104	618	751	2,204
1987-88[1]	70	688	495	2,699

[1] To date.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the aggregate number and price of options granted in each of the tax years since the inception of the scheme.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Estimates for each year are as follows:

	FA 1980 SAYE schemes		*FA 1984 schemes*	
	Number of optants *Thousands*	*Cost of taking up options* *£ million*	*Number of optants* *Thousands*	*Cost of taking up options* *£ million*
1980-81	11	18	—	—
1981-82	89	151	—	—
1982-83	95	175	—	—
1983-84	105	185	—	—
1984-85	225	560	50	800
1985-86	200	460	50	750
1986-87	270	500	45	900

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, for each tax year since the inception of the share option scheme, for each of the schemes granted *(a)* the number of shares which were the subject of options and *(b)* the aggregate price payable for these options for (i) all companies, (ii) companies which are quoted and (iii) companies which are unquoted.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Estimates for each year are as follows:

	FA 1980 SAYE schemes		*FA 1984 schemes*	
	Number of shares over which options were granted *Million*	*Cost of taking up options* *£ million*	*Number of shares over which options were granted* *Million*	*Cost of taking up options* *£ million*
1980-81	[1]—	18	—	—
1981-82	[1]—	151	—	—
1982-83	100	175	—	—
1983-84	100	185	—	—
1984-85	250	560	420	800
1985-86	160	460	380	750
1986-87	230	500	460	900

[1] Figures not readily available.

An analysis by company type is not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, for the current tax year *(a)* the number and value of options that have been exercised and *(b)* the current market value of unexercised options in quoted companies.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Figures for 1987-88 are not yet available. Estimates for the previous year relating to share option schemes approved under the legislation shown are as follows:

Finance Act	*Number of optants exercising options in 1986-87 ('000)*	*Number of shares: options exercised in 1986-87 (million)*	*Value of shares obtained through the exercise of options in 1986-87 (£ million)*
1980	55	60	[1]65
1984	na	45	[2]80

[1] Amount paid for acquisition of shares.
[2] 1986-87 value of options exercised.

The value of unexercised options over shares in quoted companies is not readily available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Labelling

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement regarding the Government's guidelines on voluntary nutrition labelling.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's guidelines for a voluntary system of nutrition labelling were issued on 24 July 1987. They were introduced as a result of interest in nutrition labelling, both on the part of consumers and the food industry. They aim to encourage a standard approach to nutrition labelling which is clearly important for consumer information and choice. I hope that the relevant trade organisations will commend the guidelines to their members so that maximum uptake by the industry is achieved.

Edinburgh (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Edinburgh to meet representatives of the farming industry in Scotland.

Mr. MacGregor: On my recent visit to Edinburgh I had useful discussions with people involved in the farming industry in Scotland on a wide range of matters affecting the industry.

Refrigerants

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is taking measures to encourage research into alternative refrigerants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are responsible only for those refrigerants that come into direct contact with food. I assume that my hon. Friend is referring to chlorofluorocarbons and the only member of that class used in direct contact with food is dichlorodifluoromethane (R12). It is used only for a very small amount of frozen foods and its use is decreasing since acceptable alternative direct contact refrigerant systems are available. Therefore, I see no need to embark on a programme of research to identify new agents.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting on 10 December in Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Council of Agriculture Ministers met in Brussels on 10 December. Among the matters discussed was a proposal for certain areas of the Netherlands, France and Greece to be recognised as officially free from classical swine fever. I agreed to this only after careful study of the evidence on the disease status of the areas concerned, and after seeking and receiving firm and specific assurances from each of the three countries that they are applying rigorous controls to ensure that this status will be maintained, and that they would take effective and immediate action in the event of any outbreak.

The Council formally adopted the regulation on distribution of free food from intervention stocks. I am now considering its implications in close consultation with the main charitable organisations. The Council agreed on the allocation between member states of the GATT quota for frozen beef, and on quotas for high quality beef and buffalo meat, for 1988. These quotas can therefore be opened promptly, to the benefit of the trade. A new system of classification for rice was also agreed.

Bees Officers

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of bees officers employed by his Department each year from 1981.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

Bees officers employed in England 1981-87

	Number
1981	66
1982	68
1983	65
1984	64
1985	68
1986	64
1987	61

SOCIAL SERVICES

Income Support

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of claimants aged 60 years or over who will become eligible for income support as a result of the increase in the capital limit to £3,000.

Mr. Scott: The capital limit for income support is to be increased from £3,000 to £6,000. It is estimated that 10,000 people aged over 60 will receive income support as a result of this increase.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of claimants of income support who will be entitled to (i) the pensioner premium, (ii) the higher pensioner premium and (iii) the severe disability premium.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	Number
(i) Pensioner premium	1,120,000
(ii) Higher pensioner premium	595,000
(iii) Severe disability premium	7,000

Community Care

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services under which part of his terms of reference Sir Roy Griffiths will incorporate consideration of funding provision for emergency alarm systems in dispersed housing in his review of community care.

Mr. Portillo: Sir Roy's terms of reference include reviewing the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy. Any use of public funds which relates to community care could therefore be considered within his terms of reference.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ensure that those pensioners who last received their pensions by payable order on a date prior to 7 December can receive their £10 Christmas bonus before 18 December.

Mr. Scott: The Christmas bonus will be sent to all pensioners paid in arrears by payable order before Christmas, and the great majority of pensioners will have received it by 18 December.

Additional Pensions

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to encourage individuals to build up additional pensions.

Mr. Portillo: From 1 July 1988 it will be possible to contract-out of the state earnings-related pension scheme through a personal pension from a scheme approved by the Occupational Pensions Board. Personal pensions will attract minimum contributions paid by the Department. These will be made up of a partial rebate of national insurance contributions and, until April 1993, a special incentive payment. In most cases the payments by the Department will include tax relief of the employee's share of the minimum contribution. People taking out a personal pension before 6 April 1989 will be able to backdate membership to 6 April 1987 and claim an extra year's minimum contributions, including the incentive.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average level of qualifications of medical laboratory scientific officers working in the public health laboratory service.

Mr. Newton: This information is not recorded. Registration in the basic medical laboratory scientific officer grade is on the basis of a Higher National Certificate or equivalent qualification plus prescribed in-service training. Further qualifications and experience may well be required for appointment to more senior medical laboratory scientific officer posts.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the pay scale of medical laboratory scientific officers working in the public health laboratory service.

Mr. Newton: The current pay scales for medical laboratory scientific officers working in the public health laboratory service are as follows:

Grade title	*Salary scales (effective from 1 April 1987)*										
	00	*01*	*02*	*03*	*04*	*05*	*06*	*07*	*08*	*09*	*10*
Junior Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer A	[1]3,676	[2]3,951	[3]4,333	[4]4,685	[5]5,237	[6]5,469	5,544	5,653			
Junior Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer B	[2]4,209	[3]4,572	[4]4,899	[5]5,469	[6]5,692	5,757	5,867				
Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	6,686	6,936	7,481	7,627	7,838	8,068	8,342	8,644	8,898	9,146	9,435
Senior Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	8,763	9,024	9,316	9,617	9,895	10,086	10,325	10,611	10,895	11,181	11,577
Chief Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	10,912	11,131	11,427	11,702	11,978	12,268	12,663				
Senior Chief Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	12,268	12,788	13,165	13,573	13,944	14,417	14,963				
Principal Medical Laboratory Scientific Officer	14,963	16,321	17,201								

[1] Age 16.
[2] Age 17.
[3] Age 18.
[4] Age 19.
[5] Age 20.
[6] Age 21 and over.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of medical laboratory scientific officers entering the public health laboratory service leave after *(a)* one year, *(b)* two years, *(c)* five years and, *(d)* 10 years.

Mr. Newton: This information is not recorded on a routine basis. The public health laboratory service estimates that 15 per cent. of medical laboratory scientific officers have left the service in the last year.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, by region and for each year since 1983, the numbers of agency nurses employed for National Health Service work, including the latest available figures.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

National Health Service nursing and midwifery agency staff in post by Regional Health Authority at 30 September
Whole time equivalents[1]

Region	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern	[3]—	—	—	40
Yorkshire	[3]—	[3]—	40	90
Trent	—	—	—	—
East Anglian	40	110	160	180
North West Thames	620	850	1,080	1,360
North East Thames	600	980	850	1,400
South East Thames	480	770	820	860
South West Thames	380	480	520	620
Wessex	40	60	100	120
Oxford	[3]—	10	40	90
South Western	[3]—	10	40	40
West Midlands	10	100	100	170
Mersey	20	60	40	80
North Western	—	—	—	20
BG/SHA's	240	310	320	380
England[2]	2,440	3,750	4,120	5,450

[1] Figures are independently rounded to nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalent.
[2] Includes agency staff in Regional and Special Health Authorities.

[1] Insignificant when rounded.
— Nil.
Note: Due to rounding the total may not be equal to the sum of the constituent parts.
Source: DHSS Annual Census of NHS Non-Medical Manpower.

Births

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the stillbirth, neonatal and postneonatal mortality rates for singleton babies with birthweights under 1,000 grammes, 1,000 to 2,499 grammes, 2,500 grammes and over, and those with unstated birthweights, who were born in England and Wales in 1985 and in 1986 *(a)* by caesarean section, *(b)* by instrumental delivery, including forceps, ventouse and breech extraction and *(c)* by spontaneous delivery, including abnormal presentation of the head and breech spontaneous delivery.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available. The registration of births (live and still) does not identify the mode of delivery.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers of babies born, the numbers admitted to special care baby units and their average length of stay for (i) singleton and (ii) multiple deliveries in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table. Figures for singleton and multiple deliveries are not available separately. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

In-patient cases treated and average length of stay in special care baby units, and live births, England 1977-1986

Year	*Cases treated in special care baby units*	*Average length of stay (days) in special care baby units*	*All Live Births*
1977	102,785	8·0	536,953
1978	97,803	8·2	562,589
1979	93,742	8·4	601,316
1980	89,277	8·6	618,371
1981	84,061	8·9	598,163
1982	76,279	9·5	589,711
1983	71,184	10·0	593,255
1984	68,777	10·5	600,573
1985	68,634	10·8	619,301
1986	66,725	11·0	623,609

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the stillbirth and neonatal mortality rates for babies born in 1986 in England and Wales to women who delivered at home and *(a)* had booked to deliver at home, *(b)* had booked to deliver in hospital or *(c)* had made no arrangements for their delivery;

(2) if he will give the stillbirth and neonatal mortality rates for babies born in 1986 in England and Wales to women who were originally booked to deliver at home and who *(a)* delivered at home as planned, *(b)* delivered in hospital following a change of booking during pregnancy, *(c)* delivered in hospital following a decision taken during labour or *(d)* delivered elsewhere.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Neasden Hospital

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to collect centrally information relating to the date when nurses and medicine staff were transferred against their wishes from their homes at Neasden hospital; how many units of residence remain empty; what are the numbers that have been occupied by homeless families on a short-term tenancy by arrangement with the London borough of Brent; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may like to consult the chairman of Brent health authority.

AIDS

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about funding for the London Lighthouse project and hospices and community care facilities for AIDS patients.

Mr. Newton: For the financial year 1987-88, the Government have approved payments of £500,000 for capital and £100,000 revenue costs for London Lighthouse, £150,000 for capital and £50,000 revenue costs to the Mildmay Mission hospital and £88,000 for capital costs to the Newcastle community support centre. The Department is currently considering applications for further funding from London Lighthouse and the Mildmay Mission hospital. The Government attach great importance to the role that the voluntary sector has to play in collaborating with the statutory authorities in providing support including respite care for people with AIDS.

Regional Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimated outturn of expenditure by regional health authorities in England on hospital and community health services for 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: Following are the provisional figures for 1986-87:

Total expenditure on hospital and community health services[1]

Region	*£ million*
Northern	717·3
Yorkshire	818·1
Trent	992·0
East Anglian	422·0
North West Thames	844·3
North East Thames	1,052·0
South East Thames	933·6
South West Thames	704·2
Wessex	620·2
Oxford	467·3
South Western	718·4
West Midlands	1,165·0
Mersey	591·3
North Western	988·0
Total	11,033·7

[1] Includes revenue and capital expenditure on hospital, community health, ambulance, blood transfusion and other services.
Source: Annual financial accounts of regional and district health authorities (as yet unaudited).

Voluntary Carers

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to make further funds available for voluntary carers groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In 1987-88 we are providing funds from our section 64 grant scheme totalling £171,000 for national voluntary organisations directly concerned with carers. Decisions on funding levels for 1988-89 have not yet been taken.

Health Authorities (Consultations)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has as to any cases where procedures governing consultations between district health authorities and community health councils have not been adhered to;

(2) what are the procedures governing consultations between district health authorities and community health councils.

Mrs. Currie: We encourage consultation between district health authorities and community health councils on a variety of topics. Formal consultation is required when a closure or change of use of a hospital building is proposed. We are not aware of cases where procedures governing consultations between district health authorities and community health councils have not been followed. If the hon. Member is aware of any such instances, I will be happy to look into them.

Pensioners (Spending Power)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information relating to net weekly spending power of pensioners at a range of levels of gross income provided to the hon. Member for Kensington by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 20 November.

Mr. Portillo: The information requested is shown in the tables. These show the net weekly spending power of a single pensioner and a pensioner couple paying *(a)* rent of £15 and rates of £7 per week and *(b)* rent of £30 and rates of £10 per week, under the current scheme at November 1985 benefit levels and November 1986 benefit levels, and under the reformed scheme to be implemented in April 1988 at the 1985 illustrative rates of benefit.

Components of net weekly spending power for pensioners receiving housing benefit, and where eligible on income grounds, housing benefit supplement

Table 1: November 1985, Rent £15·00, Rates £7·00

Gross income	*Tax*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate rebates*	*Net income after housing costs*	*Supplementary pension (SP)*	*Housing benefit supplement (HBS)*	*Disposable income with SP or HBS*
Single Pensioner									
38·30	0·00	15·00	15·00	7·00	7·00	38·30	3·02	0·00	41·32
43·30	0·00	15·00	11·63	7·00	5·25	38·18	0·00	3·14	41·32
48·30	0·00	15·00	9·13	7·00	4·25	39·68	0·00	1·64	41·32
53·30	0·47	15·00	7·62	7·00	3·58	42·03	0·00	0·00	42·03
58·30	1·97	15·00	6·17	7·00	2·93	43·43	0·00	0·00	43·43
68·30	4·97	15·00	3·27	7·00	1·63	46·23	0·00	0·00	46·23
78·30	7·97	15·00	nil	7·00	nil[1]	48·33	0·00	0·00	48·33
88·30	10·97	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	55·33	0·00	0·00	55·33
138·30	25·97	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	90·33	0·00	0·00	90·33
Pensioner Couple									
61·30	0·00	15·00	15·00	7·00	7·00	61·30	2·52	0·00	63·82
66·30	0·00	15·00	11·38	7·00	5·15	60·83	0·00	2·99	63·82
71·30	0·00	15·00	8·93	7·00	4·17	62·40	0·00	1·42	63·82
76·30	0·00	15·00	7·48	7·00	3·52	65·30	0·00	0·00	65·30
81·30	0·00	15·00	6·03	7·00	2·87	68·20	0·00	0·00	68·20
91·30	2·84	15·00	3·13	7·00	1·57	71·16	0·00	0·00	71·16
101·30	5·84	15·00	nil	7·00	nil[1]	73·46	0·00	0·00	73·46
111·30	8·84	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	80·46	0·00	0·00	80·46
161·30	23·84	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	115·46	0·00	0·00	115·46

Table 2: November 1985, Rent £30·00, Rates £10·00

Gross income	*Tax*	*Rent*	*Rent rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate rebates*	*Net income after housing costs*	*Supplementary pension (SP)*	*Housing benefit supplement (HBS)*	*Disposable income with SP or HBS*
Single Pensioner									
38·30	0·00	30·00	30·00	10·00	10·00	38·30	3·02	0·00	41·32
43·30	0·00	30·00	20·63	10·00	7·05	30·98	0·00	10·34	41·32
48·30	0·00	30·00	18·13	10·00	6·05	32·48	0·00	8·84	41·32
53·30	0·47	30·00	16·62	10·00	5·38	34·83	0·00	6·49	41·32
58·30	1·97	30·00	15·17	10·00	4·73	36·23	0·00	5·09	41·32
68·30	4·97	30·00	12·27	10·00	3·43	39·03	0·00	2·29	41·32
78·30	7·97	30·00	9·37	10·00	2·13	41·83	0·00	0·00	41·83

Gross income	Tax	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebates	Net income after housing costs	Supplementary pension (SP)	Housing benefit supplement (HBS)	Disposable income with SP or HBS
88·30	10·97	30·00	6·47	10·00	0·83	44·63	0·00	0·00	44·63
138·30	25·97	30·00	nil	10·00	nil	72·33	0·00	0·00	72·33
Pensioner Couple									
61·30	0·00	30·00	30·00	10·00	10·00	61·30	2·52	0·00	63·82
66·30	0·00	30·00	20·38	10·00	6·95	53·63	0·00	10·19	63·82
71·30	0·00	30·00	17·93	10·00	5·97	55·20	0·00	8·62	63·82
76·30	0·00	30·00	16·48	10·00	5·32	58·10	0·00	5·72	63·82
81·30	0·00	30·00	15·03	10·00	4·67	61·00	0·00	2·82	63·82
91·30	2·84	30·00	12·13	10·00	3·37	63·96	0·00	0·00	63·96
101·30	5·84	30·00	9·23	10·00	2·07	66·76	0·00	0·00	66·76
111·30	8·84	30·00	6·33	10·00	0·77	69·56	0·00	0·00	69·56
161·30	23·84	30·00	nil	10·00	nil	97·46	0·00	0·00	97·46

Table 3: November 1986, Rent £15·00, Rates £7.00

Gross income	Tax	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebates	Net income after housing costs	Supplementary pension (SP)	Housing benefit supplement (HBS)	Disposable income with SP or HBS
Single pensioner									
38·70	0·00	15·00	15·00	7·00	7·00	38·70	3·41	0·00	42·11
43·70	0·00	15·00	11·63	7·00	5·25	38·58	0·00	3·53	42·11
48·70	0·00	15·00	9·13	7·00	4·25	40·08	0·00	2·03	42·11
53·70	0·00	15·00	7·62	7·00	3·58	42·90	0·00	0·00	42·90
58·70	1·13	15·00	6·17	7·00	2·93	44·67	0·00	0·00	44·67
68·70	4·03	15·00	3·27	7·00	1·63	47·57	0·00	0·00	47·57
78·70	6·93	15·00	[1]	7·00	[1]nil	49·77	0·00	0·00	49·77
88·70	9·83	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	56·87	0·00	0·00	56·87
138·70	24·33	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	92·37	0·00	0·00	92·37
Pensioner couple									
61·95	0·00	15·00	15·00	7·00	7·00	61·95	3·01	0·00	64·96
66·95	0·00	15·00	11·38	7·00	5·15	61·48	0·00	3·48	64·96
71·95	0·00	15·00	8·93	7·00	4·17	63·05	0·00	1·91	64·96
76·95	0·00	15·00	7·48	7·00	3·52	65·95	0·00	0·00	65·95
81·95	0·00	15·00	6·03	7·00	2·87	68·85	0·00	0·00	68·85
91·95	1·54	15·00	3·13	7·00	1·57	73·11	0·00	0·00	73·11
101·95	4·44	15·00	nil	7·00	[1]nil	75·51	0·00	0·00	75·51
111·95	7·34	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	82·61	0·00	0·00	82·61
161·95	21·84	15·00	nil	7·00	nil	118·11	0·00	0·00	118·11

Table 4: November 1986, Rent £30·00, Rates £10·00

Gross income	Tax	Rent	Rent rebate	Rates	Rate rebates	Net income after housing costs	Supplementary pension (SP)	Housing benefit supplement (HBS)	Disposable income with SP or HBS
Single pensioner									
38·70	0·00	30·00	30·00	10·00	10·00	38·70	3·41	0·00	42·11
43·70	0·00	30·00	20·63	10·00	7·05	31·38	0·00	10·73	42·11
48·70	0·00	30·00	18·13	10·00	6·05	32·88	0·00	9·23	42·11
53·70	0·00	30·00	16·62	10·00	5·38	35·70	0·00	6·41	42·11
58·70	1·13	30·00	15·17	10·00	4·73	37·47	0·00	4·64	42·11
68·70	4·03	30·00	12·27	10·00	3·43	40·37	0·00	1·74	42·11
78·70	6·93	30·00	9·37	10·00	2·13	43·27	0·00	0·00	43·27
88·70	9·83	30·00	6·47	10·00	0·83	46·17	0·00	0·00	46·17
138·70	24·33	30·00	nil	10·00	nil	74·37	0·00	0·00	74·37
Pensioner couple									
61·95	0·00	30·00	30·00	10·00	10·00	61·95	3·01	0·00	64·96
66·95	0·00	30·00	20·38	10·00	6·95	54·28	0·00	10·68	64·96
71·95	0·00	30·00	17·93	10·00	5·97	55·85	0·00	9·11	64·96
76·95	0·00	30·00	16·48	10·00	5·32	58·75	0·00	6·21	64·96
81·95	0·00	30·00	15·03	10·00	4·67	61·65	0·00	3·31	64·96
91·95	1·54	30·00	12·13	10·00	3·37	65·91	0·00	0·00	65·91
101·95	4·44	30·00	9·23	10·00	2·07	68·81	0·00	0·00	68·81
111·95	7·34	30·00	6·33	10·00	0·77	71·71	0·00	0·00	71·71
161·95	21·84	30·00	nil	10·00	nil	100·11	0·00	0·00	100·11

Notes for tables 1 to 4:

1. The November 1985 retirement pensions, housing benefit needs allowances and supplementary pension scale rates have been used for tables 1 and 2, and the July 1986 levels for tables 3 and 4.

2. The 1985-86 age allowances and tax rates have been used for tables 1 and 2, and the 1986-87 allowances and rates for tables 3 and 4.

3. Supplementary pension and housing benefit supplement have been calculated on the basis that the single pensioner is aged at least 65 but under 80, and in the case of the pensioner couple, at least one is aged 65 and both are under 80. The long-term supplementary benefit scale

rates for November 1985 are £37·50 for a single pensioner, and £60·00 for a pensioner couple: the July 1986 rates are £37·90 and £60·75 respectively. For the purposes of calculating te total supplementary pension entitlement in these tables it is assumed that the assessment includes £1·40 for water rates (the figure used in the technical annex to the White Paper ("Reform of Social Security") and also in all cases the average additional requirement for pensioners: this, net of the available scale margin, is £2·42 for November 1985 and £2·81 for July 1986.

4. Income is assumed to unearned and without disregard throughout and capital is assumed to be below £3,000.
5. The minimum rent or rate rebate is 50p per week (noted as "nil¹" in the tables where this rule has been applied).

Illustrative figures showing components of net spending power for pensioners receiving housing benefit under the revised scheme to be implemented in 1988, at November 1985 benefit levels (Rent taper 60 per cent., rates taper 20 per cent.)

Table 5: November 1985, Rent £15·00, Rates £7·00

Gross Income	*Tax*	*Rent*	*Rent Rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate Rebate*	*Disposal Income*
Single Pensioner						
40·60	0·00	15·00	15·00	7·00	5·60	39·20
43·30	0·00	15·00	13·38	7·00	5·06	39·74
48·30	0·00	15·00	10·38	7·00	4·06	40·74
53·30	0·47	15·00	7·66	7·00	3·15	41·65
58·30	1·97	15·00	5·56	7·00	2·45	42·35
68·30	4·97	15·00	1·36	7·00	1·05	43·75
78·30	7·97	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·00	48·33
88·30	10·97	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·00	55·33
138·30	25·97	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·00	90·33
Pensioner Couple						
63·25	0·00	15·00	15·00	7·00	5·60	61·85
66·30	0·00	15·00	13·17	7·00	4·99	62·46
71·30	0·00	15·00	10·17	7·00	3·99	63·46
76·30	0·00	15·00	7·17	7·00	2·99	64·46
81·30	0·00	15·00	4·17	7·00	1·99	65·46
91·30	2·84	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·56	67·02
101·30	5·84	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·00	73·46
111·30	8·84	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·00	80·46
161·30	23·84	15·00	0·00	7·00	0·00	115·46

Table 6: November 1985, Rent £30·00, Rates £10·00

Gross Income	*Tax*	*Rent*	*Rent Rebate*	*Rates*	*Rate Rebate*	*Disposable Income*
Single Pensioner						
40·60	0·00	30·00	30·00	10·00	8·00	38·60
43·30	0·00	30·00	28·38	10·00	7·46	39·14
48·30	0·00	30·00	25·38	10·00	6·46	40·14
53·30	0·47	30·00	22·66	10·00	5·55	41·05
58·30	1·97	30·00	20·56	10·00	4·85	41·75
68·30	4·97	30·00	16·36	10·00	3·45	43·15
78·30	7·97	30·00	12·16	10·00	2·05	44·55
88·30	10·97	30·00	7·96	10·00	0·65	45·95
138·30	25·97	30·00	0·00	10·00	0·00	72·33
Pensioner Couple						
63·25	0·00	30·00	30·00	10·00	8·00	61·25
66·30	0·00	30·00	28·17	10·00	7·39	61·86
71·30	0·00	30·00	25·17	10·00	6·39	62·86
76·30	0·00	30·00	22·17	10·00	5·39	63·86
81·30	0·00	30·00	19·17	10·00	4·39	64·86
91·30	2·84	30·00	14·87	10·00	2·96	66·29
101·30	5·84	30·00	10·67	10·00	1·56	67·69
111·30	8·84	30·00	6·47	10·00	nil*	68·93
161·30	23·84	30·00	0·00	10·00	0·00	97·46

Notes to Tables 5 and 6:

1. Retirement pensions are at November 1985 basic rates. However, the first line in each part of the tables shows the gross income of a pensioner whose retirement pension has been topped up to the income support level.
2. Housing benefit levels and tapers and income support rates are at November 1985 levels as set out in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691). The pensioners are assumed in all cases to be aged under 80: under the reformed schemes, pensioners over 80 would have a higher disposable income (in most of the shown cases, £1·80 higher for a single person and £1·76 for a couple on the basis of the illustrative assumptions).
3. Tax allowances and rates are those in force for 1985-86.
4. Income is assumed to be unearned and without disregard throughout and capital is assumed to be below £3,000.
5. The 20 per cent. minimum contribution to domestic rates has been applied, but the effect of compensation for this element is not shown.
6. The minimum rent rebate or rate rebate payable is 50p per week (noted as "nil*" in the tables where this rule has been applied).
7. Under income support, unlike supplementary benefit, separate help with water rates will not be available; this should be borne in mind when comparing the disposable incomes under the old and the new schemes. The tables also take no account of transitional protection for those receiving supplementary benefit at the changeover.

National Insurance Fund

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any plans to make changes in the Treasury contribution to the national insurance fund;

(2) what is the proposed Treasury contribution in cash and as a proportion of total income to the national insurance fund for 1987-88 and for each financial year until 1991.

Mr. Scott: The Treasury supplement which in the current year is 7 per cent. of gross contributions, yields about £2·1 billion and represents nearly 8 per cent. of the national insurance fund's income. It will be 5 per cent. of gross contributions in 1988-89. Estimates of what this will yield in 1988-89 will be given in the Government Actuary's report on the national insurance contributions rerating orders, which will be published when the orders are laid before Parliament in the new year. Decisions on the size of the supplement after 1988-89 have not yet been taken.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the investment income of the national insurance fund for each year since 1979; and what is his estimate for each year to 1990.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Investment income of the National Insurance Fund

	£ million
1979-80	541·6
1980-81	607·5
1981-82	587·6
1982-83	496·3
1983-84	489·7
1984-85	520·5
1985-86	541·0
1986-87	610·3
1987-88	625·0

Figures for years up to 1986-87 have been derived from the annual accounts of the national insurance fund. the figure for 1987-88 is an estimate based on current trends. Estimates of investment income in 1988-89 will be given in the Government Actuary's report on the national insurance contributions rerating orders which will be published when the orders are laid before Parliament in the new year. Estimates of the fund's investment income are not available for years after 1988-89.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those items of expenditure for the national insurance fund which existed in 1979 and which have ceased to exist or been reduced since that date.

Mr. Portillo: The following items of expenditure from the National Insurance Fund have ceased to exist:

Earnings-related supplement to short-term benefits.
Child dependency addition to short-term benefits.
Injury benefit.
Death grant.
Maternity grant.

Supplementary Benefits

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of supplementary benefits claimants *(a)* on the long-term rate and *(b)* on the long-term rate and receiving £6·50 a week or more in additional requirement payments.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 26 November 1987]:* The information is as follows:

(a) 2,530,000 claimants
(b) 214,000 claimants
Source: Annual Statistical Inquiry, February 1986.

Cancer (Children)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the outcome of consultations with professional bodies on the report by the United Kingdom children's cancer study group.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The report of the United Kingdom children's cancer study group is receiving careful consideration in consultation with a number of interested groups. The Department's Standing Medical Advisory Committee is expected to give its views at its next meeting in late January.

Dental Reference Officers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of dental reference officers for the United Kingdom for the last five years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The number of dental officers in the dental reference service in England, at 31 December was:

	General Service	*Specialist Orthodontic Officers*
	(whole time equivalent)	in post
1982	21·2	2·0
1983	19·4	3·0
1984	21·7	3·0
1985	19·7	3·0
1986	22·2	2·5

On the basis of available statistics, the whole-time equivalent number of general service officers in 1987 is projected to be in the region of 25 and there were 2·5 specialist orthodontic officers in post over the full year.

Staff numbers in the reference services in other parts of the United Kingdom are matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Radiotherapy

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has yet completed his review of the guidelines recommending centralisation of radiotherapy services; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The Department's internal review of its guidance to health authorities on the organisation of radiotherapy services is nearing completion. An announcement will be made as soon as conclusions have been reached.

DEFENCE

Tornado Aircraft (Operations Costs)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the additional cost, over and above normal operating costs of Tornado squadrons in the United Kingdom and West Germany, of deploying and operating nine Royal Air Force Tornado aircraft at Goose Bay, Canada, from February to November 1987, including the costs of transporting crews to and from Canada.

Mr. Freeman: The additional cost of deploying Tornado aircraft to Goose Bay from February to November 1987, over and above normal operating costs, is estimated at £7,457,000.

Exercises

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the low-flying avoidance area over the Isle of Man was temporarily suspended to permit low-level overflight by Royal Air Force Hercules transport aircraft participating in exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list Royal Air Force participation in Red Flag exercises in the United States of America since 1977, giving the number and type of Royal Air Force aircraft involved and dates of the exercises on each occasion.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

Royal Air Force participation in Red Flag exercises

Date	*Aircraft involved*
1977[1]	
18 August to 12 September	9 Buccaneer
August to September	4 Vulcan
1978[1]	
21 October to 18 November	9 Buccaneer
	9 Jaguar
1980[1]	
26 January to 9 February	9 Jaguar
9 February to 23 February	9 Jaguar
1981[1]	
10 January to 22 January	8 Jaguar
18 January to 30 January	9 Tornado
	2 Jaguar
30 January to 13 February	9 Jaguar
15 October to 29 November	9 Buccaneer
1983[1]	
9 January to 21 January	9 Jaguar
	2 Hercules
19 January to 18 February	2 Buccaneer
24 January to 4 February	9 Jaguar
	8 Buccaneer
6 February to 18 February	9 Jaguar
1984	
7 January to 21 January	9 Jaguar
	2 Buccaneer
21 January to 4 February	9 Jaguar
3 February to 17 February	9 Jaguar
1985	
5 January to 16 February	8 Jaguar
	2 Hercules
17 January to 3 February	9 Jaguar
1986	
21 October to 7 November	9 Tornado
	2 Hercules
8 November to 22 November	9 Tornado
1987	
20 October to 7 November	9 Tornado
	8 Phantom
7 November to 21 November	2 Hercules
7 November to 25 November	9 Tornado
	8 Phantom

[1] Precise central records not available for the period before 1984 although details given are thought to be broadly accurate.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list Royal Air Force participation in Green Flag exercises in the United States of America since 1977, giving the number and type of Royal Air Force aircraft involved and dates of the exercise on each occasion.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is as follows:

RAF Participation in Green Flag Exercises

Date	*Aircraft Involved*
1985	
4 March—15 March	9 Tornado
18 March—29 March	8 Tornado
1986	
1 March—15 March	9 Tornado
15 March—28 March	9 Tornado
29 March—12 April	9 Tornado
1987	
2 March—13 March	9 Tornado
11 March—28 March	9 Tornado
28 March—15 April	9 Tornado

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list Royal Air Force participation in Blue Flag exercises in the United States of America since 1977, giving the number and type of Royal Air Force aircraft involved and dates of the exercise on each occasion.

Mr. Freeman: There has been no RAF participation in Blue Flag exercises in the United States of America.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Her Majesty's Government will support any proposal that representatives of the Soviet Union be invited to monitor any future British nuclear tests at the Nevada test site.

Mr. Sainsbury: If such a proposal were to be made on a Government-to-Government basis we would give it full consideration taking account of the requirements of national security. I would also remind the hon. Gentleman of my reply to his earlier question which I answered on 1 December at column *568*.

Range Safety

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the final report of the range safety review working group.

Mr. Freeman: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mould Radio System

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress in installing the Mould radio system.

Mr. Sainsbury: Progress on the Mould system is satisfactory.

Jaguar Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which aircraft is expected to replace the Jaguar in the ground attack role.

Mr. Sainsbury: Current planning is that the European fighter aircraft (EFA) will replace Jaguar in the ground attack role.

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force police, expressed as full-time equivalent staff, are currently assigned to investigation of complaints about low-flying aircraft; and what changes have taken place in these staffing levels since 1977.

Mr. Freeman: Fourteen RAF police plus one RAF provost branch officer are currently assigned to the investigation of complaints about low-flying aircraft. Detailed information is not available for the period prior to 1982, since when there has effectively been no change in these staffing levels.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 9 November, *Official Report*, columns *36-37*, whether a low-level flight by several aircraft in formation is counted as one sortie in the figures given for overall numbers of low-level flights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. Each aircraft in a formation would book into the United Kingdom low-flying system separately.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy on 9 November, *Official Report*, column *38*, if, in the light of recent accidents in the United States involving low-level flying by United States Air Force B-52s and KC-135s, he will institute a policy of maintaining records of low-level flights over Britain by these types of aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. We see no need to maintain the sorts of records the hon. Member mentions for these aircraft. KC 135 aircraft do not fly at low level in the United Kingdom. There are no B-52 aircraft based in the United Kingdom, and, although they visit fairly regularly, any low flying would be infrequent.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many confirmed breaches of low-flying regulations in each year since 1974 were caused by aircraft diverging from planned route, height or speed due to weather conditions;

(2) how many confirmed breaches of low-flying regulations in each year since 1974 were caused by technical failure or malfunction other than to navigation systems;

(3) how many confirmed breaches of low-flying regulations in each year since 1974 were caused by aircraft diverging from planned route, height or speed for tactical or training reasons;

(4) how many complaints about low-flying in each year since 1974 have upon investigation, been found to have involved breaches of low-flying regulations;

(5) how many confirmed breaches of low-flying regulations in each year since 1974 were caused by navigation system failure or malfunction.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested cannot be provided without disproportionate effort.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties were flown over the United Kingdom in the period 1 January to 31 October.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 January and 31 October 1987 125,335 such sorties were flown over the United Kingdom.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints were received about low flying over the United Kingdom in the period 1 January to 31 October.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 January and 31 October 1987 the Ministry of Defence received 4,794 complaints about military low flying.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum height specified in the United Kingdom military low-flying handbook for overflight of the residential area of Balivanich, Benbecula.

Mr. Freeman: There is none because the residential area of Balivanich lies within the controlled airspace of Benbecula airport.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level flights were carried out over the Western Isles in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: The Western Isles are part of a low-flying administrative area which also includes all of Scotland north of a line between the Forth and Clyde. Information on low-level flights for the Western Isles above is therefore not available.

Chief of Defence Equipment Collaboration

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the post of chief of defence equipment collaboration is being allowed to lapse at the end of the current year; and what policy changes will follow from the abandonment of the post.

Mr. Younger: As announced to the House on 19 December 1984, at columns *205-6*, Sir David Perry was appointed chief of defence equipment collaboration so that he could give himself full time to promoting international collaboration in weapons procurement. Thanks to Sir David, international collaboration has now become an essential and critical part of our procurement strategy, and we have decided that its further pursuit can best be managed as part of our regular procurement work in the Ministry of Defence. It will therefore become part of the responsibilities of the Procurement Executive headed by the chief of defence procurment. No policy changes are involved in this adjustment; the United Kingdom remains fully committed to collaboration with allied nations in weapons procurement.

Sir David Perry will retire on 31 December 1987, and I should like to pay tribute to his long career of public service, and to the distinction with which he discharged the duties of his final appointment.

TR Reconnaissance Aircraft

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have been held with the Lockheed company concerning the possible purchase of the TR-1 reconnaissance aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Departmental Library Services

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current reorganisation of library services in his Department.

Mr. Freeman: As part of its move towards greater efficiency and more economic use of staff and book stock, the Ministry of Defence's central London libraries will be merged on one site which is presently being prepared at 3-5 Great Scotland Yard. The complex move is scheduled to take place in the autumn of 1988. At the same time the library is currently planning a modernisation of its system to allow for the introduction of more computerisation in this area.

Stand-off Weapon

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what decisions have been made on research and development of a British nuclear warhead to fit the NATO modular stand-off weapon.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Harrier Aircraft (Training Detachment)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purposes of, and lessons learned from, the three-day training detachment of five Royal Air Force Harrier aircraft at RAF Stornoway in May.

Mr. Freeman: Because of the temporary non-availability of normal mainland stations, these aircraft were detached to RAF Stornoway to enable them to carry out routine training. This was accomplished satisfactorily.

St. Kilda (Radar Installation)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the additional NIDIR tracking radar being installed on St. Kilda is expected to become operational.

Mr. Freeman: The additional NIDIR tracking radar will be relocated from South Uist to St. Kilda in 1988 and is expected to become operational by autumn 1988.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the two new Plessey Watchman radars being installed on St. Kilda are expected to become operational.

Mr. Freeman: The two Plessey Watchman radars are expected to become operational on St. Kilda during the autumn of 1988.

Military Aircraft (Stornoway)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what purpose military aircraft deployed to Royal Air Force Stornoway conduct run and break manoeuvres over built-up areas immediately prior to landing.

Mr. Freeman: Military aircraft landing at RAF Stornoway do not normally overfly the main built-up area in the vicinity and follow standard RAF flying procedures in the interests of safety and fuel economy.

Dispersal

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department's dispersal programme to Glasgow has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: The dispersal programme, announced in 1979, committed us to transfer 1,400 jobs to Glasgow. Some 1,330 jobs have already been established there, of which 1,000 have been filled by local recruitment. It has now been proposed that the final tranche of 70 jobs should come fom the Directorate of Contracts (Stores and Logistics) in London and Leeds and move to Glasgow by the autumn of 1988. A significant degree of compensation for the loss of the contracts work in Leeds will be provided by the transfer of 35 jobs from London to the nearby Harrogate area.

Army (Northern Ireland)

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the manpower strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland giving details of the number of operatives for *(a)* the Ulster Defence Regiment, *(b)* Regular British Army and *(c)* British Territorial Army on 30 June.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The figures requested are as follows:

	Number
Ulster Defence Regiment	6,504
Regular Army	9,365
Territorial Army	3,784

The figures for the Ulster Defence Regiment include both full-time and part-time soldiers. Soldiers of the Territorial Army are not used in support of the RUC in counter-territorial operations.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are currently estimated to be Catholics; what proportion this represents of the regiment's manpower; and what proportion of the recruitment to the regiment in 1985 was from the Catholic community.

Mr. Ian Stewart: About 3 per cent. of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have declared their religion as Roman Catholic. Just over 4 per cent. of those accepted for service during 1985 declared their religion as Roman Catholic.

Army Medical Boards

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what persons must sit on an Army medical board; and whether the subject of an Army medical board must be present at the hearing.

Mr. Freeman: The composition of an Army medical board is dependent upon the type of board convened of which there are four: a Ministry of Defence (Army) medical board, a full medical board, a two-member board or a joint service medical board. The regulations require such medical boards to examine the subject.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rights of appeal Army service men and women have in respect of Army medical board recommendations.

Mr. Freeman: A member of the Army who wishes to appeal against the recommendation of an Army medical board may submit a redress of complaint, through the chain of command, under section 181 of the Army Act 1955.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rights Army service men and women have to inspect information disclosed about them to an Army medical board or an Army medical appeals board.

Mr. Freeman: Information disclosed to a medical board is classified as medical-in-confidence and consequently neither service men nor women have a right of inspection.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average time an Army medical board takes to report its findings.

Mr. Freeman: This depends upon the type of board and the nature of the case. Findings are usually reported within two to four weeks,

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average time an Army medical inquiry board takes to report its findings.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to give the average time taken to report the findings of a board of inquiry as it is dependent upon the case and the number of witnesses involved.

Army Personnel (Downgrading)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what medical criteria may be used to recommend the downgrading of Army service men and women.

Mr. Freeman: Medical assessments of service men and women are made in accordance with the regulations contained in the appropriate service publications.

Army Officers (Restraint)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance is issued by his Department on the circumstances which would necessitate the forcible restraint of an Army officer when travelling to hospital.

Mr. Freeman: Guidelines are contained in the publication "Regulations for the Army Medical Service." These take account of the possible reaction of the patient to travel and the type of transport to be used.

Army Medical Reports

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the status of non-adverse medical reports as used by the Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: All medical reports, like any other medical document, are medical-in-confidence.

Services (Medical Records)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what circumstances an individual service man or woman's legal representatives are entitled to see an individual service man or woman's medical records.

Mr. Freeman: For reasons of medical confidentiality the practice is only to release medical documents on a doctor-to-doctor basis. However, when a legal representative, acting with his or her client's consent, establishes a clear legal need to see that client's medical documents, for example in connection with litigation, consideration would be given to disclosing the documents to that representative's medical adviser.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the circumstances in which civilian doctors are allowed to inspect an individual Army service man or woman's medical records held by the Army.

Mr. Freeman: A service man or woman's service medical documents will normally be made available to a civilian doctor only for the purposes of treatment and with the written authority of the individual concerned.

Services (Medical Treatment)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Army service men and women being medically treated have the right of second opinion by a doctor, military or civilian, of their own choice.

Mr. Freeman: Yes. This is, however, at the patient's own expense unless referral has been made by the doctor treating the patient.

Correspondence

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what dates, since 1975, letters have been received by his Department from Mr. Colin Wallace or from his solicitor, Thomas Eggar and Son;

(2) on what dates, since 1975, letters have been received by his Department from Captain [retired] Fred Holroyd.

Mr. Freeman: We do not comment on general inquiries about correspondence between third parties and the MOD.

Rosyth Dockyard (Whole Body Scanning)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Rosyth dockyard workers have undergone whole body scanning *(a)* in each year since 1981 and *(b)* since April 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: Whole body scanning is voluntary and has been made available for all who wished to have it. Since 1981 and up to 6 April 1987, the number of Rosyth dockyard workers who have undergone whole body scanning each year is:

	Number
1982	0
1983	3
1984	21
1985	25
1986	26
1987[1]	6
Total	81

[1] Up to 6 April 1987.

Since 6 April 1987 all matters concerning the health and safety at work of employees have been the primary responsibility of the commercial managers.

Zimbabwe and Mozambique

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the numbers of British service personnel seconded to Zimbabwe and Mozambique, respectively, for training purposes in each of the past five years to date; and what number are expected to serve in each of these two countries in 1988.

Mr. Freeman: The total number of British service personnel seconded to Zimbabwe for training purposes in each of the past five years is as follows:

	Number
1983	102
1984	58
1985	59
1986	62
1987	48

The number expected to serve in Zimbabwe in 1988 is 45.

No British service personnel have been seconded to Mozambique for training purposes over the past five years, and no such secondments are planned for the future. However, at the request of the Government of Mozambique, and with the agreement of the Zimbabwean Government, the British military advisory and training team in Zimbabwe is providing a limited programme of training to members of the Mozambican army.

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current annual costs of the British military training missions in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, respectively; from what sources they are met; and what are the projections of costs and funding for these missions in 1988.

Mr. Freeman: There is no British military training mission in Mozambique. The total cost of the British military advisory and training team in Zimbabwe was about £3·3 million in 1987-88, and is expected to be about £3·6 million in 1988-89. The bulk of these costs are met by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's United Kingdom military training assistance scheme, although an element of support costs is provided by the Government of Zimbabwe.

Type 42 Destroyer

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to replace the type 42 destroyer in service with the Royal Navy; and whether he will make a statement on the type of vessel and time scale of such a replacement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The type 42 will still be in service into the next century. No decisions have yet been taken on a replacement.

Ammunition and Explosives (Accidents)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many deaths and injuries of military personnel due to ammunition and explosives accidents occurred in each year since 1975; and how many deaths and injuries of civilians due to British military ammunition and explosives accidents occurred in each year since 1975.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer, 4 December 1987]:* This information is not held centrally.

SCOTLAND

Rating Reform

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has given to the Data Protection Registrar's representations about the poll tax register.

Mr. Lang: The comments made by the Data Protection Registrar on the draft Community Charges (Registration) (Scotland) Regulations, are, like all other comments made on the draft Regulations, currently under consideration. I will be responding to the points made by the registrar shortly.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he will take to make sure that information from the Community Charge Registrar will not be disclosed for public inspection, or supplied, other than for purposes directly connected to the specific operation of the new charge.

Mr. Lang: The provisions for inspection of the community charges register are set out in section 20 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987. The information to be made available for public inspection consists essentially of the names and addresses of those registered as liable for the community charges, which is a matter of legitimate public interest.

Civil Defence

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish guidance on the financial, staffing and resource implications of the Scottish Home and Health Department's circular "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service: Health Service Civil Defence Planning."

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. Specific funds have been made available since 1982 to health boards to assist with the costs of civil defence planning. Boards will be able to use these funds to take forward the planning tasks outlined in the circular.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the Scottish Home and Health Department's circular "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service: Health Service Civil Defence Planning" issued on 6 July.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to draw up a staged programme of implementation of the civil defence duties of health boards as set out in the Scottish Home and Health Department's circular SHHD/DGM (1987) 41.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes; and it will be issued in due course.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health boards have followed the recommendations of his Department in appointing an emergency planning officer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All health boards have appointed an emergency planning officer.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why an assessment of the likely effects of the nuclear winter was not included among the civil defence plan-making duties of the health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are a number of areas within the broad parameters of the planning guidance issued to the Health Service which may require further study and guidance. Consideration is being given to identifying these and to the best way to take them forward.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland why assessment and guidance on the likely effect of deep psychological trauma on the public and medical personnel were not included in the civil defence plan-making duties of the health boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This is one of several areas requiring further study.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with representatives of the medical professions on the moral and ethical problems associated with the policy of triage after nuclear attack; and when he will issue guidelines on the implementation of triage after nuclear attack.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such discussions have been held. Since the circumstances of any accident, whether as a result of a nuclear attack or a civil emergency, vary unpredictably, it is not feasible to issue guidance on the medical criteria used to decide priorities for treatment.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he anticipates that detailed guidance relating to armed forces casualties, and to host nation arrangements, as referred to in paragraph 4.4 of the Scottish Home and Health Department's circular SHHD/DGM (1987) 41 "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service: Civil Defence Planning" will become available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The review of joint civil and military medical planning requirements is complex, and a firm date cannot yet be given for its completion. Guidance to the Health Service will be issued as soon as possible after the completion of the review.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much civil defence grant was paid to each health board in each of the last five years; and what proportion these sums constituted of the total emergency planning budget of each health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Funds allocated to health boards and the Common Services Agency specifically for civil defence planning purposes in each of the last five years are set out in the table. Information on the total emergency planning budgets of health boards is not held centrally.

Health board	*1982-83* £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £	*1985-86* £	*1986-87* £
Argyll and Clyde	15,500	16,300	11,000	7,000	13,220
Ayrshire and Arran	13,200	13,900	11,000	11,000	12,940
Borders	16,200	9,400	6,500	10,800	8,950
Dumfries and Galloway	10,700	6,000	9,500	7,500	10,746
Fife	17,500	14,600	18,500	21,500	20,950
Forth Valley	15,800	10,300	6,500	9,500	11,522
Grampian	16,100	16,900	33,000	16,000	15,785
Greater Glasgow	32,800	34,400	14,000	21,500	15,000
Highland	11,500	7,900	12,500	9,000	9,500
Lanarkshire	19,300	20,300	18,100	20,500	19,642
Lothian	37,600	30,050	14,000	13,000	5,253
Orkney	1,900	1,800	2,000	3,000	7,822
Shetland	1,900	2,000	2,000	3,000	5,000
Tayside	13,600	17,800	18,000	19,000	14,400
Western Isles	5,100	2,200	2,500	3,000	7,380
C.S.A.	—	39,400	30,500	40,000	37,000
Total	228,700	243,250	209,600	215,300	215,110

NORTHERN IRELAND

Child Welfare

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will increase the monitoring of teachers in special care schools so as to ensure that children at such schools are not sexually interfered with;

(2) what facilities are at present available to him for monitoring potential dangers to handicapped children from teachers disposed to abuse them in any way.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responsibility for ensuring that children at school are not subject to abuse rests with the managers of schools, principals and teachers. My Department, however, maintains a system for recording misconduct cases among teachers, enabling it to initiate appropriate action; new appointments are also checked against this record.

The Department is empowered to withdraw recognition from a teacher on grounds of misconduct and to direct that the teacher's employment be terminated. There is also a requirement for schools to be open to inspection by inspectors and other officers of my Department.

There are no plans to increase monitoring of teachers in post. However, an interdepartmental working party is currently drawing up proposals for a system that would enable employers to check the criminal background of persons being appointed to posts involving substantial contact with children.

Waste Paper

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent his Department uses recycled paper or provides paper for recycling.

Mr. Stanley: The information is not available in the form requested. However in the year 1986-87 some 25,000 bags of waste paper were sent for recycling.

Dentistry

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the districts in each health and social services board in Northern Ireland; how many district dental officers are employed by each of these boards; if the duties of district dental officers are similar in each board area; whether any of the boards plan to increase the number of such officers; how the numbers have changed in the last three years; and what were or are the reasons for any such changes or proposed changes.

Mr. Needham: There are no districts and no district dental officers in the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many senior dental surgery assistants there are employed by each health and social services board in Northern Ireland; whether their duties are similar in each board area; what increases there have been in the number of such officers in the last three years; whether any of them has any plans to increase the numbers of such officers; and what are the principal reasons for such changes or proposed changes.

Mr. Needham: The table sets out the number of senior dental surgery assistants employed by each health and social services board in each of the last three years. The duties of these officers are similar in each board area except for a few officers who are employed in the dental school in the Eastern board area. There are no plans to increase the numbers of these officers.

Increases over the past three years were the result of filling existing vacant posts.

Senior Dental Surgery Assistants 1984-87 at 30 September by Health and Social Services Board

H&SS Board	*1984*	*1985*		*1986*		*1987*	
		Number	*Change since 1984*	*Number*	*Change since 1985*	*Number*	*Change since 1986*
Eastern	14	14	—	15	1	16	1
Northern	1	1	—	1	—	1	—
Southern	3	3	—	3	—	3	—
Western	2	3	1	3	—	3	—

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many chief dental officers there are in the employment of each health and social services board in Northern Ireland; whether their duties are similar in each board area; whether there are any plans to increase the number of such officers; what increases have taken place in the last three years and what are the principal reasons for any such change.

Mr. Needham: There is one chief administrative dental officer employed by each health and social services board and their duties are similar. There are no plans to increase the number and there have been no increases in the last three years.

Western Health Board

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what increase of staff there has been in the number of officials employed by the Western health and social services board over the last three years and the present year, or financial year, to date; what grades have been increased in number and by how many in each grade; what has been the annual cost of such increases in staff; and what were the precise reasons for each increase.

Mr. Needham: The detailed information required could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The information which is readily available is given in the table.

Western Health and Social Services Board Staffing 1984-1987 at 30 September

Employment Category	*1984*	*1985*	*Change since 1984*	*1986*	*Change since 1985*	*1987*	*Change since 1986*
Administrative and Clerical	767	808	+41	810	+2	836	+26
Works and Maintenance	170	158	−12	164	+6	167	+3
Ancillary and General	4,299	4,203	−96	3,966	−237	4,010	+44
Nursing and Midwifery	3,010	3,043	+33	3,000	−43	3,041	+41
Social Services	414	416	+2	418	+2	440	+22
Professional and Technical	446	449	+3	426	−23	392	−34
Medical and Dental	277	278	+1	284	+6	291	+7
Ambulance	101	113	+12	115	+2	113	−2
Total	9,484	9,468	−16	9,183	−285	9,290	+107

Mental Hospitals

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how many patients in mental hospitals in Northern Ireland who have a visual impairment also suffer from an additional handicap; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: This information is not collected centrally.

Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the figures for the first half of 1987 of the number of persons proceeded against for

scheduled offences in Northern Ireland; how many persons pleaded guilty to the principal offence; and how many persons in such contested cases were found not guilty of the principal offence.

Mr. Stanley: During the first six months of 1987, a total of 390 persons were tried for indictable scheduled offences by a judge sitting without a jury, 352 pleaded guilty and 38 pleaded not guilty. 18 of the latter were found not guilty.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in the first six months of 1987.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 21 October at columns *756-60*.

Royal Ulster Constabulary Station, Cadogan Park

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what pre-contract arrangements have been made for the proposed Royal Ulster Constabulary station at Cadogan park; and what information he has as to whether structural steel is being fabricated for this purpose.

Mr. Stanley: The construction and repair of buildings for the Royal Ulster Constabulary is the responsibility of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. The authority has informed me that no pre-contract arrangements have been made for the proposed Royal Ulster Constabulary station at Cadogan park. It would not be in the public interest to disclose details of materials to be used.

Royal Ulster Constabulary Station, Ballynafeigh

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when it is hoped to complete the building of the Royal Ulster Constabulary station at Ballynafeigh.

Mr. Stanley: The construction and repair of buildings for the Royal Ulster Constabulary is the responsibility of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. The authority has informed me that it hopes to begin work on the new police station at Ballynafeigh during 1988. It is not possible to give a forecast for completion.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve are currently estimated to be Catholics; what proportion this represents of the manpower of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve, separately; and what proportion of recruitment to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve in the latest calendar year was from the Catholic community.

Mr. Stanley: The religious denomination of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserve are not recorded at present. Nevertheless, I understand that about 10 per cent. of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and full-time reserve are Roman Catholic and that around 10 per cent. of those recruited to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and around 12 per cent. to the full-time reserve in 1986 were Roman Catholic. The Royal Ulster Constabulary will continue its efforts to attract suitably qualified recruits from all parts of the community.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, and its Reserve, currently hold private firearms certificates.

Mr. Stanley: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Lay Assessors

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Londonderry, East on 18 November, what consideration he has given to the possibility of having lay assessors; and whether he plans to give any further consideration to such proposals.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 27 November 1987]:* The Government agreed with the conclusion reached by Sir George Baker in his review of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 that the appointment of lay assessors to sit with the judge in Diplock courts would not be an improvement on the present mode of trial. There are no plans to give the subject further consideration.

Flood Damage (Assistance)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give a breakdown of the funds allocated by his Department to the victims of the recent floods in the Province between *(a)* the Housing Executive, *(b)* the Department of Health and Social Security, *(c)* voluntary organisations and *(d)* local residents.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* All funds expended by statutory bodies and given to voluntary bodies from Government are intended to help local residents. Final figures are not yet available, but the Housing Executive estimates that it will spend approximately £250,000 in repair work to its properties; the DHSS has paid £273,000 to approximately 600 claimants under the social security system; £13,000 has been set aside to reimburse voluntary organisations for costs already incurred and a further £5,500 will be made available to them; £56,753 of EC money has been distributed by the voluntary sector directly to households; funds have been provided by the Department of Economic Development for 45 Action for Community Employment posts to be taken up by voluntary bodies and the local councils; and other costs are still to be incurred in providing help.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anglo-American Relations

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the United States Government the implications for Anglo-American relations of attempts made by American corporations and individuals to undermine the financial standing of United Kingdom companies or their European partners.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss international economic, financial and trade matters with the Americans. I would be happy to consider any detailed matters which my hon. Friend wishes to raise.

Ethiopia

Mr. Julian Amery: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call upon the Ethiopian Government, and the resistance movements against which they are fighting, to negotiate a ceasefire so that aid provided by Her Majesty's Government should reach the victims of the famine as soon as possible.

Mrs. Chalker: The Twelve issued a statement on 13 November condemning attacks by rebel groups on food aid convoys and urging that no obstacle be put in the way of the transportation of food aid. With our European partners we have repeatedly urged progress towards a peaceful solution of the internal conflicts in Ethiopia. A ceasefire based on humanitarian considerations would relieve much suffering and assist relief efforts.

Parliamentary Business

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many *(a)* ministerial statements, *(b)* private notice questions, *(c)* debates on Government motions, *(d)* debates on Opposition motions, *(e)* debates on Adjournment (half-hour), *(f)* debates on Adjournment (other than half hour), *(g)* debates on statutory instruments and *(h)* other debates which took place in each of the last six parliamentary Sessions, required the attendance in the House of Ministers or officials in his Department.

Mr. Eggar: Information is not readily available in the precise form requested, which could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However the following details have been drawn from departmental statistics from both the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office:

	Statements	*PNQs*	[1] *Debates*	[1] *Adjournment Debates*	*Statutory Instruments*
Session: 1981-82[2]	16	1	19	4	7
Session: 1982-83[2]	6	1	8	10	11
Session: 1983-84	26	14	17	25	4
Session: 1984-85	5	3	16	19	16
Session: 1985-86	14	11	17	14	3
Session: 1986-87	2	0	5	11	2

[1] Departmental records do not distinguish between debates on Government, Opposition or other motions, nor Adjournment debates whether half hour or others.
[2] Detailed records for the ODA were not kept prior to 1983 and have been compiled from available data.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Bills his Department initiated in each of the last six parliamentary Sessions; if he will name them; and how many became Acts of Parliament.

Mr. Eggar: The following Bills were initiated and became Acts of Parliament:

Session 1986-87
Territorial Sea Act
Diplomatic and Consular Premises (Control) Act
Irish Sailors and Soldiers Land Trust Act

Session 1985-86
British Council and Commonwealth Institute (Superannuation) Act
European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese) Accession Act
European Communities (Amendment) Act
Commonwealth Development Corporation Act
Crown Agents (Amendment) Act
Australia Act

Session 1984-85
Hong Kong Act
Brunei and Maldives Act

Session 1981-82
Canada Act
Taking of Hostages Act

Members of the European Parliament

Mr. Cabora: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what payments are made to European Members of Parliament for *(a)* salary, *(b)* office, research and secretarial allowances, *(c)* daily allowance for attending meetings on parliamentary business and *(d)* allowance per mile for travel on parliamentary business, expressed in (i) £ sterling and (ii) European currency units.

Mrs. Chalker: The salary of United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament is £18,500. The figures supplied by the European Parliament for allowances paid to MEPs are as follows:

Travel allowance:
0·56 ecu (40p) per kilometre for the first 400 kilometres.
0·28 ecu (20p) per kilometre thereafter.
Daily subsistence away from home on parliamentary business: 148 ecu (£106).
Office allowance (including travel within home country on parliamentary business): 2,129 ecu (£1,530) per month.
Research and Secretarial allowance: 3,446 ecu (£2,480) per month, paid directly to employee against a contract.

Tibet

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications of the current situation in Tibet for United Kingdom interests.

Mr. Eggar: We continue to monitor the situation in Tibet. We do not believe that at present it has direct implications for United Kingdom interests.

EEC (Majority Voting)

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's

Government's relations with the EEC of the trend in the number of important decisions reached by majority voting.

Mrs. Chalker: The use of majority voting, as provided for in the European Community treaty and in the amendments to it contained in the Single European Act, will lead to swifter decision making. We support this development because it will speed up progress towards the completion of the single large market, a long-standing objective of the United Kingdom.

Falkland Islands (Conservation)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column 7, if he will give details of the various conservation requirements at the times fisheries licences were awarded for the Falkland Islands conservation zone.

Mr. Eggar: The conservation requirements of the fishery, which are determined by the Falkland Islands Government's scientific advisers, the renewable resources assessment group at Imperial college, are the regulation of fishing effort and the preservation of fish stocks to ensure the continued viability of the fishery.

Mozambique (Air Malawi Incident)

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has protested to the Government of Mozambique about the recent shooting down of an Air Malawi civil airliner by the Mozambique armed forces and about the consequent deaths of British passengers aboard the aeroplane; and what action he intends to take about this matter.

Mrs. Chalker: We have expressed concern about this tragic incident on a number of occasions, most recently during my visit to southern Africa. The Mozambican authorities have expressed their profound regret both to Her Majesty's Government and to the bereaved families. We have formally reserved the right to claim compensation.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 14 December 1987

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner Cities Unit

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what basis he estimates a 1:1·6 public-private sector leverage ratio for his Department's inner cities unit.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My estimate of a 1:1·6 public-private sector leverage ratio for our inner cities initiative set out in my answer of 24 November at columns *151-52* relates to those projects supported by our inner city task forces which also include a financial contribution from the private sector. In these cases we estimate that every £1 from our inner cities initiative has attracted £1·60 from the private sector.

I regret that my previous answer of 24 November 1987 did not make it clear that that estimate was not an estimate of the public-private sector ratio over the inner cities initiatives as a whole.

Inner City Task Force

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, for each inner city task force, he will list *(a)* the recipients of grants to the voluntary sector, *(b)* the size of the grant *(c)* the purpose of the grant.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The voluntary sector recipients of task force grants, and the size and purpose of these grants, are as follows:

Task Force Funding

Project and Description	£
Highfields, Leicester	
ISWE Foundation—to provide consultancy support for this Afro-Caribbean organisation	3,000
South Highfields/Vulcan Road Boundary Wall Scheme—joint financing of construction skills training for 15 local people	4,100
ISWE—to support development of a low cost distribution service for ethnic food stuffs to the local community	5,900
Textile Arts Centre—to meet cost of new premises to allow successful community organisation to expand training operation and develop a textile cooperative	165,000
Highfields Workshop Centre—to buy a delivery van to provide transport for 2 Community Programme schemes providing work experience for 30 long-term unemployed local people	10,653
Police Foundation—to help establish a mobile crime prevention workshop	25,000
Leicester Bengali Language School—contribution to expansion of School, in particular to improve its textile training programme for women	15,900
PATH (East Midlands)—to help towards the cost of training for 15, mainly black, young people in housing management	20,730
Raddle Bookshop Computer Training—contribution to City and Guilds certificated computer training project for 30 trainees over two year period	108,326
Social Responsibility Centre—New Testament Church of God—contribution towards church refurbishment project which will provide on-site construction training for 26 long term unemployed local people	379,426
Leicester Ecology Group—to acquire a building which will house a new 23 place Community Programme scheme waste recycling operation	75,000
SHOP Training Development—to increase amount of textile training for local Gujurati and Bangladeshi women on an existing project in Highfields. Additional creche facilities are also being made available	4,473
North Central Middlesbrough	
Cleveland Youth Business Centre: association with Christian Relay, Business in the Community, local businesses and local authorities to provide wide range of help to young people including training and business advice	240.265
Association of Marine and Related Charities (AMARC)—contribution will allow AMARC training agency to expand in Middlesbrough. Over 250 new training places will result	325,000
Cleveland Committee for the Employment of Disabled People (CEDEMP)—to establish 15 place Community Programme fitting conversion kits to cars so they can be used by disabled people	15,000
Action Resource Centre—for feasibility study into creating jobs through cooperation between private sector and local community and voluntary groups	9,000
Police Foundation—to help establish a mobile crime prevention workshop	25,000
Middlesbrough Cooperative Initiative—to meet the initial cost of a Cooperative Initiative in Middlesbrough, based on the successful Mondragon group of cooperatives in Spain	200,000
Cleveland Centre for the Development of Alternative Products—contribution to establishment of centre, which will act as focus for development of innovative products which are of benefit to the community	72,000
Local Residents Economic Initiative Survey—to enable Cleveland Council for Voluntary Service to work up 2 pilot projects	13,635
Ethnic Minority Day Centre for the Elderly—to meet shortfall in funding for centre which will provide day facilities for elderly people from the ethnic minorities	9,000
John Paul Centre Luncheon Club—to establish a luncheon club for at least 60 elderly residents of the area. Nine Community Programme participants will be given full training in catering and cooking skills	10,000
Care and Repair (Cleveland) Limited—contribution to innovative scheme giving disadvantged owner occupiers the opportunity, at low cost, to have detailed annual survey of their properties	27,600
Apex Trust Employment Projects—to help establish a centre which will design and manufacture educational equipment and other aids for the mentally handicapped	18,107
Project Fullemploy Study of Ethnic Minority Training Problems—to find out the kind of training problems faced by ethnic minority residents in the Task Force area	1,000
NACRO Community Laundry—to help set up a local community laundry service for the disabled and elderly	8,132
Hartlepool	
Shoe Repair/Leatherware Community Business—to help West View Residents Association set up this business	1,600

Project and Description	£
Trading Places—towards cost of a Women's Business Focus Day	500
Nottingham	
All Saints Volunteers Training Project—to enable the project to provide additional training facilities for basic computer/office skills in Task Force area	19,919
Handsworth, Birmingham	
Black Business in Birmingham—for business advice, loans and grants to small business	88,500
MACRO Films—YTS scheme aimed at improving the ratio of black people working in the TV and film industries	60,000 and 9,045
Handsworth Opportunities Programme for Employment (HOPE)—a Community Programme building refurbishment scheme	35,000
Opportunities Industrialisation Centre Feeder Programme—a training package to motivate young people to take advantage of training, employment and self-employment opportunities	47,000
Handsworth Outward Bound—in partnership with the private sector—an opportunity for young people to take part in an outdoor challenge programme	5,300
City and Handsworth Alternative Scheme—a locally based brance of NACRO working with offenders and seeking to place them in employment and training	20,535
CANDEL Potohari Project—provision of building for women's cooperative and a CP scheme aimed at raising awareness of dangers of AIDS and drugs misuse	68,000
Black Star Car Company—car repair Community Programme and Community Business scheme	28,535
Handsworth Builders' Association—to launch an association providing support and advice to small local builders	105,000
Police Foundation—to provide a mobile crime prevention workshop to fit locks, give advice etc., mainly to low income residents in the Task Force area	25,000
Federation of Black Housing Associations—support for conference	4,670
Rotton Park-Winson Green Employment—to set up a foundation, with the co-operation of many local voluntary organisations, aimed at launching/supporting a number of community businesses, creating employment	25,000
Attock Welfare Employment and Training—CP scheme to provide counselling and support to young Muslims and link them to existing training and employment opportunities	10,000
Guru Ravidas Association—to provide training workshops for use by the local community	18,000
Inner City Contracts (Handsworth) Limited—for establishment of a local non profit-making company in the building trade	58,325
Handsworth Employment Scheme Catering Limited—for catering training	44,000 and 9,000
Handsworth Churches Forum—for a package of YTS and CP schemes related to secretarial/computer skills and for care schemes for elderly and housebound	2,500 and 100,825
Birmingham Young Volunteers—for sample training in various skills for young people in Lozells	8,000
Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre—to provide training for workers in care for the elderly, young children and catering, and to provide these facilities locally	29,000
Lozells Methodist Church/Task Force Undertakings—Electronics Workshop	21,864
Birmingham Interpretation and Translation Service—conversion of voluntary service into community business	32,269
Inner City Glass Decorating—(CP) scheme	9,400
Rastafarian Enterprise Initiative (Tree of Life Group)—expansion of community business	23,000
Positive Image—Women's Development and Nursery Enterprise Project	42,050
Handsworth Crime Prevention—schemes to provide a service to disabled, elderly and unemployed, including property marking service	1,648
Handsworth Day Care Centre—Latch Key CP scheme	5,000
United Youth Association—building skills training programme	71,875
Schools Outreach—preventative care complementing existing teaching	32,000
Chapletown and Harehills, Leeds	
PATH—vocational training for young black people in commercial and financial services	93,349
Teach North Project WTOTO—nursery conversion project	35,575
APEX Trust—towards setting up an unemployment centre	1,000
Apex Trust—training officers salary	12,524
Apex Trust—equipment for Community Resource Centre	2,300
Apex Trust—Two-day event on training opportunities	200
Action Resource Centre—to set up a project development unit in TF area	23,241
Jamacia Society—Leeds/Sight and South Education Limited—for conversion of a building for YTS scheme	132,000
Leeds West Indian Centre Limited (CP)—Visiting service for elderly, personal advice, etc	9,100
Palace Youth Project—employment help centre	1,094
Chapletown and Harehills Enterprise Trust—towards 150 place CP project	249,000
Computer Assisted Learning Project (CHALCS)—training for young people up to 'O' level and beyond	68,000 and 22,147
Project Fullemploy—open learning centre	12,000
Police Foundation—crime prevention project (as for Handsworth, mobile centre	25,000
Self-build Initiative	12,000
196 Chapeltown Road—Church of God of Prophecy—feasibility study	500
NACRO—computer unit	31,000
ACE—Catering project, run through TEAMWORK—Employment Liaison Officer	4,585 10,538
Harehills Lane Baptist Church—nursery/playgroup	29,500
Foleshill and Hillfields, Coventry	
Project Fullemploy—multi-ethnic training initiative	20,000
Jobs for Coventry Foundation—business starter units feasibility work	2,500
Jobs for Coventry Foundation—improvements to workspace units	2,500
Jobs for Coventry Enterprise Workshops—preliminary conversion work	33,500
Midshire Trust Limited—feasibility and purchase of building for business starter units	4,000 and 160,000
Coventry Home Insulation Project (CHIP)—training scheme	10,000
APEX Trust—Employment and Enterprise Innovation Centre—Job search facilities for disadvantaged unemployed	27,500
APEX Trust—CP workshop—56 place CP scheme	13,800
Coventry Job Change Limited—purchase of hand tools for workshop for older, long term unemployed	1,000
Coventry Community Workshops—Asian-managed CP agency	40,000 and 5,000
Media Link—purchase of capital equipment for ML training course	5,000

Project and Description	£
Care and Repair Scheme with Orbit Housing Association—advice and guidance to elderly owner-occupied	27,200
Rochdale	
Oldham & Rochdale Groundwork Trust—contribution to the establishment of a landscape design team	12,000
Spitalfields, Tower Hamlets	
UHRU—publicity event to develop work placements and funding links with the private sector	[illegible]
Samuel Lewis Housing Trust—to adopt basement premises in a block of flats as workshops	47,090
Tower Hamlets Environment Trust—for a survey into the potential use of vacant land	2,500
Toynbee Housing Association—for estate improvements	5,000
Moss Side, Manchester	
Fielden House—contribution to training potential CP managers/supervisors	1,040
Selcare Trust—establish new engineering workshop	25,800
IMPACT—capital expenditure for a bus conversion CP project	23,375
Prince's Youth Business Trust—for grants for young entrepreneurs	26,000
Northen Black Business Association—funding of co-ordinator cost	10,000
PATH—ethnic minority training in housing management	45,000
Community Knits—capital equipment for CP knitwear project	20,400
Moss Care Housing Association—training for 6 apprentices on a housing/office project	78,848
Intowork—interim revenue support for a young business counselling service	14,210
Project Fullemploy—funding for computer equipment; and a business outreach worker	55,615
Moss Side Youth Club—contribution to BBC-sponsored educational trip to Venice	800
Moss Side Boxing Club—for extension/refurbishment	7,768
Associaion for Educational development—funding for a book-keeper/counsellor post in the local enterprise agency	16,000
NIA project—contribution to establishment of an Afro-Caribbean theatre and performing arts training project	250,000
North Kensington	
Carnival Industrial Project—revenue funding for a CP project	15,500
Portobello Trust—loans to young entrepreneurs	2,000
Project Fullemploy—capital equipment; and pre-recruitment training courses	59,540
Notting Hill Housing Trust—seminar to stimulate joint ventures in community improvement	2,000
Mangrove Video and Media Project—capital costs for a CP project	26,300
Latymer Christian Centre—to establish a training centre	111,770
Portobello Trust—funding for workshops for 6 new businesses, and for temporary premises and staff for the support unit	81,920
Moroccan Co-ordinating Committee—contribution to setting up a new voluntary body to initiate employment and training opportunities for the Moroccan community	20,242
Venture Centre—management study to enable a workshop scheme to be set up	518
New Opportunities for Voluntary Action—grant for capital equipment to enable NOVA to run training courses in new technology	6,861
Youth Film Foundation—contribution to establishment of the Foundation to provide training and work experience for young film and television workers	40,815

Project and Description	£
Central London Co-operative Development Agency—costs of a feasibility study, plus temporary support for running costs	21,350
North Kensington Amenity Trust—contribution to conversion of 3 bays under Westway to form a sports centre, and managed workshops	224,242
Mangrove Community Association—to refurbish a room for training courses	1,610
Grove Housing Association—to fund a development worker	23,000
Bristol	
Drake Fellowship—to provide outward bound training courses for deprived young people	5,568
NACRO—to provide laundry and repair service for the elderly	32,600
Newfoundland Employment Agency—to develop a training and advice cnetre in St. Pauls	20,300
Project Fullemploy—to provide higher education access course to aid the prospect of employment	10,000
St. Pauls Adventure Playground—to improve safety on the playground	22,000
St. Werburgh's City Farm—to build an educational and community centre	14,000
Stapleton Road Congregational Church—to refurbish the church to provide space for a mothers and toddlers group and other community facilities	10,000
Inkworks Nursery—to provide two additional full-time staff to run the nursery	22,503
New Trinity Community Centre—to refurbish a church to provide a music venue and cultural centre	125,000
East Bristol Youth Housing Association—refurbishment work to provide housing for single homeless	10,000
All Hallows Community Centre—to extend the range of training provision provided by this organisation	15,000
Project Fullemploy—to provide enterprise training to 40 local people	12,800
Youth Workshop Trust—to provide a translation and information service to people whose first language is not English	23,833
Maternity Links—to assist with the cost of running a Women's Health Care Centre	11,000
North Peckham, Southwark	
Southwark Environment Trust 1. To convert premises into workshops, office and business units	60,000
2. To provide running costs of the organisation following withdrawal of support from the Council	25,510
South East Adult Training—contribution to Adult Training Couse that provides 100 training places	42,312
Industrial Society—course translation service for Vietnamese to increase take up of training places	15,383
Business in the Community—this provides for the establishment of a Directory of Black businesses in the Greater London area	16,249
Committee Against Drug Abuse—this provides computer equipment to assist the administration and management of this organisation	1,250
Prince's Youth Business Trust (PYBT)—grants to help Task Force area young people start-up in business under the rules of PYBT	10,000
North Peckham Baptist Church—to purchase materials for refurbishing the local church	800
Positive Action Training in Housing—training costs to prepare local black people for jobs in housing management	25,000
Caribbean Teachers Association—to provide capital equipment for an adult training scheme	7,718
Apex—to provide an Employment Resource Centre	26,500

Project and Description	£
Work and Schools Project—to train 10 disaffected youngsters prior to an industrial placement	24,771
Video Unit—to train local young people and make a video of the Task Force area in the process	1,175
Fullemploy—to train 10 local people to a standard suitable for employment with the BBC	14,900
Faith Chapel—to assist in the refurbishment of the Chapel to house a centre for the elderly and a creche	14,265
Church and Community Projects—community centre refurbishment costs	20,000
Sojourner Truth Youth Association—to fund a study to improve the managment and administration of this organisation	9,941
Wolverhampton	
AFEME Youth Organisation—this is a Literacy and Communications Course for at least 15 young people	3,000
Mount Shilo Church—for renovation, equipment and staff costs of a Youth Development Centre	40,000
West Midlands Caribbean Parents Association—to provide a studio to enable disadvantaged young people to receive electronics and photographic training	6,000
Gujerati Association—for construction of an extenion to a community centre to provide space for additional training courses	49,500

In addition some voluntary bodies are the recipients of grants to operate in more than one Task Force area. The size and purpose of these is as follows:

	Grant (£)
Industrial Society—'Headstart' project providing enterprise information, advice and training for at least 6,000 people in inner city areas (cost shared equally with the MSC)	293,365
Action Resource Centre (ARC)—support for 2 project development posts to arrange private sector support for voluntary projects in inner city areas	41,295
Urban Trust—support for an Employment Initiatives Unit to link private sector support in multi-racial inner city areas with projects meeting the employment, enterprise and social needs of the ethnic minorities	35,380
National Association for the Care of Offenders Resettlement (NACRO)—establishment of Inner City Community Safety Unit to work in Task Force areas	214,194
Also: support for a Development Unit to establish MSC's Job Training Scheme in Task Force areas and develop the scheme in line with future adult training provision	223,971
Evangelical Enterprise—linking Task Force areas with local church network to provide jobs, training, enterprise opportunities and community service for Task Force residents	150,000
Police Foundation—Mobile Crime Prevention Workshop in 3 Task Force areas	75,000
Business in the Community (BIC)—support for the establishment of Neighbourhood Development Partnerships in Task Force areas	265,000
Apex Trust, National Youth Bureau (NYB), Intermediate Treatment Fund (ITF)—Inner Cities Youth Initiative to provide field staff in 2 Task Force areas to develop projects geared to the needs of young ex-offenders and those at risk of offending	99,450

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will consider publishing an annual report and annual accounts for each inner city task force.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. The inner cities initiative is aimed at improving the targetting of the money channelled through all existing Government programmes, and receives only a modest top-up budget. I announced the setting up of the initiative to the House in February 1986, and made a statement on its expansion in April of this year. I shall continue to report progress and developments to the House as suitable occasions arise.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, for each inner city task force that has established a development fund, he will list *(a)* the size and *(b)* the source of private sector contributions; and whether these contributions are in the form of grants or loans.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The size, source and form of private sector contributions (including advice and administration) to task force development funds is currently as follows:

Task force	Source	Size	Form of contribution
North Peckham	Lloyds Bank	£100,000	Loans fund with repayments returning to the fund, for loans at preferential rates of interest. Full time secondee to administer fund from January 1988.
Manchester/Moss Side	Barclays Bank	£50,000	Loans fund with repayments returning to the fund, for loans at preferential rates of interest.
Bristol/St. Paul's	National Westminster Bank	. . .	Concessionary offers on finance and administrative charges. Staff secondment to assist management of fund.
Wolverhampton	Co-operative Bank	. . .	Loans available to grant recipients at preferential rates of interest, plus free banking for one year.
Middlesbrough	Barclays Bank	£50,000	Loans fund with repayments returning to the fund, for loans at preferential rates of interest. Staffing and administrative support.
Handsworth	National Westminster Bank	. . .	Services of business development manager to administer development fund.
Leeds/Chapeltown	Yorkshire Bank	. . .	Accountant's services to administer fund. Loans/overdrafts at lower rate for applicants referred through the fund.
North Kensington	Midland Bank	. . .	Still under consideration.

The support of the banks for the task force development funds marks a very significant contribution to tackling the problems of the inner cities, and in particular the need by small business there for loan finance which would not otherwise be available. Discussions are continuing with other banks, in respect of other task force areas.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement for each inner city task force on the level of co-operation with the relevant local authority.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We regard the co-operation and support of the local authority as helpful to the success of the work of our inner-city task forces. I am glad to say that co-operation is generally either good or improving. Where this is not the case we are nevertheless determined to press ahead vigorously with the work of the task forces to achieve our policy objectives and thereby benefit the communities concerned.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list, for each inner city task force, the recipients, size and purpose of grants or loans from their development fund.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The task force development funds are administered by local enterprise agencies and not directly by the task forces. Individual applications are assessed by the agency concerned and the clearing bank supporting the relevant fund. The full details of every grant that the hon. Member requests could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table for each inner city task force area, drawn from 1981 census figures, showing the total population broken down by the usual census categories for age, social class, employment, housing, tenure, socio-economic group, together with a statement of any estimates of change since 1981 made by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information is not available in the form requested. I will give the hon. Member a full reply as soon as possible.

FIMBRA

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects that the FIMBRA organisation, established under the Financial Services Act, will be formally incorporated by the Securities and Investments Board, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Financial Services Act provides that the Securities and Investments Board may not recognise a self-regulating organisation without the consent of the Secretary of State. The Act also requires the Secretary of State to refuse his consent if he considers, after receiving and considering a report on the matter from the Director General of Fair Trading, that the rules of the organisation have, or are intended or likely to have to any significant extent, the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition or, if they have or are intended or likely to have that effect to any significant extent, then the effect is no greater than is necessary for the protection of investors.

My right hon. and noble Friend has considered the rules submitted by FIMBRA to the board, and has received and considered a report on them by the Director General of Fair Trading. He has concluded that on the basis of the information presently available to him he does not consider that the rules have or are intended or likely to have, to any significant extent the effect described above. He has therefore today given his consent to the board for the recognition of FIMBRA.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications for membership have been made to the FIMBRA organisation, established under the Financial Services Act; how many have been approved; how many have been rejected; and how many are still being processed.

Mr. Maude: That is a matter for FIMBRA.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he intends to extend the final date for application to join the FIMBRA organisation, established under the Financial Services Act; and what provision he will make for firms which have been unable to apply before the current final date for application through circumstances beyond their control.

Mr. Maude: I have today made an order specifying 27 February 1988 as the day appointed for the purposes of paragraph 1(1) of schedule 15 to the Financial Services Act. This has the effect that any person who has applied for membership of a recognised self-regulating organisation or for authorisation by the Securities and Investments Board by that date, and whose application has not been determined before the date on which section 3 of the Act comes into force, will until such time as his application is determined be treated as though authorised by the board. A person who applies for membership of a recognised self-regulating organisation after this date will receive authorisation only when he is admitted to membership of the authorisation. I have no powers under the Act to provide additional transitional provisions for late applicants, but the Department will be continuing its campaign to alert all involved in good time to the requirement to be authorised.

Financial Services Act

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the operation of the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Maude: I have today made an order bringing into force sections 26 to 30 of the Financial Services Act on 1 January 1988. These provisions empower the Securities and Investments Board to receive and consider applications for direct authorisation. The order also commences certain related provisions concerned with fees (section 112), the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (section 189 and schedule 14) and the penalties for making untrue or misleading statements in connection with an application.

The order also brings into force paragraphs 25(2) and (3) of schedule 1 on 18 January 1988. This will enable the board to issue certificates to the effect that a periodical publication is of the kind specified in paragraph 25(1) of the schedule, and hence outside the scope of the Act.

The order also brings into force most of paragraph 1 of schedule 15 from 27 February 1988. This paragraph makes certain transitional provisions. In particular, by virtue of sub-paragraph (5), any licence issued under section 3 of the Prevention of Fraud (Investments) Act which is in effect on 27 February shall, unless revoked under section 6 of that Act, continue in force until the day on which section 3 of the Financial Services Act comes into force.

I refer my hon. Friend also to the other replies I am making to him today.

Unfair Trade Unit

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action the unfair trade unit has taken concerning the reported requirement of the Japanese Government that the typeface used to mark vehicle identification numbers remains unchanged for all cars imported into Japan of a particular model.

Mr. Alan Clark: The European Commission is negotiating with the relevant Japanese authorities for the removal of non-tariff barriers to the export of cars to Japan. I understand that vehicle identification numbers have not been raised with my Department during discussion of such barriers with the United Kingdom industry.

British Telecom

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has had any discussions with, or representations from, the Director General of OFTEL about any reference to the Monopolies and Merger Commission in respect of British Telecom.

Mr. Maude: The Director General of Telecommunications has told my right hon. and noble Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, what he has also publicly indicated — that he is considering licence modifications with BT. The Director General has publicly stated that he may need to make a licence modification reference to MMC.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what he estimates to be the cost of the loyalty bonus for British Telecom shareholders; and whether he now has a figure for the numbers who received it.

Mr. Butcher: Arrangements are in hand to transfer bonus shares of a market value on 30 November 1987 of nearly £90 million to almost 920,000 British Telecom shareholders on the United Kingdom register.

Due to different administrative arrangements, the numbers of qualifying shareholders in Japan and North America are not likely to be known until late January.

Post Office (Sale)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he expects to raise any money from the sale of any part of the Post Office in any of the next three financial years.

Mr. Butcher: It is our policy to transfer activities from the public to the private sector wherever this is practicable and makes commercial sense, but we have no firm plans at present for the sale of any part of the Post Office.

Scientific Research and Development

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he now expects to publish the survey of scientific research and development within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I expect to publish in January 1988 the results of the survey of expenditure and employment on research and development performed in industry in the United Kingdom during 1986.

Customs Duties (Standing Committee)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what criteria he used in deciding how many officials from his Department attended the Sixth Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c. on Wednesday 2 December on the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 11) Order 1987.

Mr. Alan Clark: The officials present represented the divisions concerned with the subject matter covered by the instrument.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage increase in the number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom since May 1979, using the same method of calculation as in May 1979.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available. It is not possible to give a reliable estimate of unemployment now on the method used in 1979.

Small Businesses

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what controls affecting small businesses he proposes to abolish within the next 12 months.

Mr. Cope: The White Papers on deregulation contained proposals on a number of industrial relations and other issues, but it is too early to say whether legislation to implement them will be brought forward within the specified period.

Voluntary Part-time Work

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to support the adoption of the EEC draft directive on voluntary part-time work.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on Monday 7 December, at column *31*.

Jobs (Castleford)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job vacancies were registered with jobcentres in the Castleford travel-to-work area in November.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available. The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres between 7 November 1987 and 4 December 1987 will be available on 14 January 1988.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to improve job prospects in the Castleford travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: All my Department's employment, training and enterprise measures are available in the Castleford and Pontefract travel-to-work area. Unemployment has fallen by 1,146 in the area in the last year.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people he estimates will have retired under the job release scheme in 1987.

Mr. Lee: From January to November 1987 inclusive, 10,155 people have retired under the job release scheme.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the proposed ending of the job release scheme in January 1988.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) have both raised questions on this subject. I refer the hon. Member to my replies on 4 November, at column *726*, and on 2 December, at column *601*. To date, 24 hon. Members have written with representations from their constituents.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total expenditure under the technical and vocational education initiative for each year since its inception; and if he will make a statement on its future funding.

Mr. Cope: Expenditure to date on the pilot project phase is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	7
1984-85	26
1985-86	39
1986-87	[1]70

[1] Provisional.

In total, some £250 million will have been made available for pilot projects between 1983 and the end of the pilot phase in 1992.

In the 1986 White Paper "Working Together — Education and Training" the Government announced the extension of TVEI into a national scheme available to all local authorities in Great Britain from the autumn this year. Funding for the extension amounts to some £900 million over the next 10 years.

Benefits

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements currently exist for establishing whether claimants to unemployment benefits are available for work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: We introduced in October last year a new procedure to ensure that claimants to unemployment benefits are available for work. The procedure, which followed criticisms by the Public Accounts Committee of the effectiveness of the previous arrangements, consists of a questionnaire to all new claimants about the work they are looking for and the steps they are taking to find it.

The questionnaire has clearly enabled a better assessment to be made by the independent adjudicating authorities of claimants' entitlement to benefit. However, experience has also shown some changes to be desirable. First, it is clear that the existing questionnaire needs to seek more information in certain respects, such as on the qualifications and experience of claimants for the jobs they are seeking. Second, the current procedure does not pay sufficient regard to the fact that the circumstances of claimants can change considerably over time.

Accordingly, I am introducing two changes to existing procedures. The first is a revised questionnaire for use as from 1 February next year when a claim is first made. The new form seeks more information on such subjects as the claimant's qualifications and experience and on the type of work which is being sought. A copy of the revised questionnaire has been placed in the Library. It will be supplemented as soon after 1 February as possible by providing new claimants to benefit in areas of buoyant labour demand with information on occupations in which there are jobs immediately available.

The second change is to issue a questionnaire from the end of April next year to all those claimants being invited to a restart interview. This will seek information about qualifications, training and recent job-seeking efforts in order that the restart interviewer can identify more accurately the most appropriate help that can be offered. The questionnaire will also seek information about any restrictions which claimants are placing on the jobs they will take so that a check can be made that they continue to be available for work. The new procedure will be introduced in a small number of offices as from 1 February next year in order to gain practical experience of its use prior to its national introduction at the end of April. A copy of the questionnaire for use in the initial offices has been placed in the Library.

Neither of these measures affects the law on availability for work which was last re-enacted in the Social Security Act, 1975. They are intended solely to ensure that the law is administered effectively.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Rate Support Grant (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will recalculate the education component of the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement for Bolton to take account of errors discovered and acknowledged by his Department; what steps he has taken to ensure that further errors have not been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department provides the information on pupil and student numbers which is used in calculating the education component of each authority's grant-related expenditure assessment. This year for the first time students attending TVEI courses at local authority colleges were separately classified, but were inadvertently omitted from the student number count supplied to the Department of the Environment. As is usual, all the student data were sent to authorities for checking in August, but the error did not come to light until November, after the completion of calculations for the settlement. I have asked for procedures to be reviewed within my Department. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said in reply to my hon. Friend on 10 December, at column *261*, the error will be corrected in a supplementary report for 1988-89.

Education Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost of producing, printing and distributing his Department's booklet "Education Reform: The Government's Proposals for Schools".

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 10 December, at column *222*.

Maintained Sector

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the numbers of children of compulsory school age entering the maintained sector from the private sector of education over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received regarding the making of nursery education a statutory obligation for local authorities.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations.

Capitation Allowance

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list, by local education authority, the schools where the capitation allowance is exceeded by parental donation.

Mr. Dunn: The latest available information is contained in paragraph 7(ix) and paragraphs 39-41 of the 1986 annual report by Her Majesty's inspectorate and is based on school visits. A copy of the report is in the Library of the House. The Department does not hold detailed systematic information for individual schools across LEAs.

National Curriculum

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he plans to publish the interim report of the science working group in relation to the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am publishing the interim report of the national curriculum science working group today. I am grateful to the chairman and members of the working group for their report, which is a substantial and imaginative document. I believe it provides a sound basis for the group's further work on attainment targets and programmes of study for science. Copies of the report and of my response will be lodged in the Libraries of both Houses.

A-level and O-level Examinations

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many boys and girls passed one or more A-level subjects for each year from 1970; and how many pupils gained one or more O-levels from 1970 both in absolute terms and as a percentage of the age group in state secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: The information is shown in the table.

Maintained school leavers: England

Academic year	*With one or more GCE A level passes*		*With one or more higher[1] grades at GCE O level or CSE*	
	Numbers (000s)	*As a percentage of the 17 year old population[2]*	*Numbers (000s)*	*As a percentage of all maintained school leavers*
1969-70	68·59	11·1	212·03	39·5
1970-71	72·69	11·5	213·08	39·7
1971-72	74·36	11·7	227·62	40·2
1972-73	74·32	11·8	239·75	[3]—
1973-74	74·77	11·5	271·97	45·3
1974-75	75·78	11·4	280·42	46·1
1975-76	80·06	11·7	293·41	47·0
1976-77	84·77	12·0	323·87	48·7
1977-78	86·68	12·3	331·65	48·6
1978-79	87·13	11·9	342·29	49·3
1979-80	89·23	11·8	348·54	49·4
1980-81	93·07	12·1	344·49	49·9
1981-82	99·56	12·6	361·99	51·2
1982-83	103·58	13·1	377·31	52·3
1983-84	101·63	13·0	370·07	52·2
1984-85	96·24	12·6	360·56	52·2
1985-86	91·87	12·3	349·96	52·0

Source: School leavers survey. Data subject to sampling error. The data exclude CSE/GCE achievements gained by young people from maintained schools at tertiary and other FE colleges.

[1] In 1969-70 to 1973-74, O level pass and CSE grade 1; for later years, O level grades A-C, CSE grade 1.

[2] GAD estimates of the population.

[3] Owing to the raising of the school leaving age, the total numbers of school leavers was unusually low, and percentages based on this figure would be unrepresentative.

Subject Teaching

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the subjects taught in *(a)* state schools and *(b)* independent schools for the most recent period for which information is available.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not available in precisely the form in which the hon. Member asks. But examinations attempted by fifth formers in secondary schools give an indication of the breadth and balance of the curriculum pursued by individual pupils. The following figures show the examinations attempted within the areas of the proposed national curriculum foundation subjects, for pupils at maintained and independent schools:

School Leavers 1985-86, England
Percentage attempting O Level/CSE in the curriculum area

Curriculum areas studied	*Maintained schools*	*Independent schools*
(E)nglish	85	95
(M)athematics	80	93
(S)cience[1]	64	84
(T)echnology[2]	40	21
(M)odern (L)anguages	37	78
(H)istory/(G)eography	61	80
(C)reative (A)rts[3]	34	32
E M	78	92
E M S	60	81
E M S T	23	14
E M S ML	31	68
E M S HG	47	68
E M S CA	22	26
E M S T ML	8	10
E M S T HG	17	12
E M S T CA	7	4
E M S ML HG	25	58
E M S ML CA	11	21
E M S HG CA	17	21
E M S T ML HG	6	9
E M S T ML CA	2	2
E M S ML HG CA	8	17

Source: School leavers survey.

[1] Science includes physics, chemistry and biology.

[2] Technology includes craft, design and technology and other sciences.

[3] Creative arts includes art and music.

Universities (Contracts)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to ensure that universities do not enter into major contracts with foreign high technology companies without first alerting British-owned companies; what information he has on such contracts under consideration by British universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is advised on major contracts for the supply of computer or communications equipment to British universities by the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils. The board normally recommends a process of open competitive tender whereby interested British and foreign companies are invited to bid against an operational requirement and a fixed cash limit. Exceptionally, single tender action involving a British or a foreign supplier is allowed where there are strong grounds for ensuring technical compatibility with existing equipment or for establishing a lead site to demonstrate a novel type of application that only one supplier can support. In cases where a British or a foreign company offers a study contract including a capital gift of high technology equipment to a university, it is a matter for the university to decide whether or not to accept the contract, taking into account the recurrent costs associated with the gift of the equipment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on any assessments made as to the extent of the availability of illegal drugs in Her Majesty's prisons, and the action taken to prevent their importation and use.

Mr. John Patten: The following information relates to prison department establishments in England and Wales. Responsibility for establishments in Scotland and Northern Ireland rests with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The best evidence available by which to assess the scale and nature of the smuggling, trafficking and misuse of drugs in establishments is the number of finds of substances or implements. In 1986, there were some 2,300 reports of such finds, the great majority of which were of cannabis or of implements for smoking cannabis. In the first 10 months of this year, 1,126 reports were received, of which the great majority again concerned finds of cannabis and related implements.

Measures to prevent and detect illicit drugs are kept continuously under review. Regular and special searches are conducted, including the use of dogs specially trained in drug detection work. The number of trained dogs has been increased. Dogs have been trained to detect heroin and cocaine as well as cannabis. The police investigate cases where there is reason to believe that a visitor intends to smuggle drugs into an establishment. Staff training on drugs has been improved. A new training package aimed specifically at the problems and needs of the prison service was issued to all establishments in 1985. In September 1987 further guidance and instructions were issued to all establishments, a major theme of which was the prevention of smuggling by visitors and by inmates returning from home leave. The abolition of the privilege whereby unconvicted prisoners can have food and drink sent in for them will remove a significant avenue into certain prisons for drugs.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on current advice and treatment provided for prisoners either charged with offences relating to drugs or found to be dependent on narcotics.

Mr. John Patten: The possibility of a history of drugs misuse is one of the factors medical officers inquire into during the course of their examination of inmates being received into prison custody. Where indicated medical help in withdrawing is offered, its nature and extent are determined by the medical officer's clinical assessment of the individual case. Additionally at a number of establishments personal support continuing after withdrawal is provided by members of staff or drug counselling agencies from the community.

Guidelines prepared in discussion between the prison department and probation service for the introduction at

all establishments of a more co-ordinated response to drug misusers were issued on 25 September. These describe the responsibility of the governor to ensure the development of a coherent system and the complementary roles of medical and probation officers in the provision of care and support. The use of suitable drug counselling agencies from the community is encouraged. The particular advice offered an inmate prior to discharge will depend upon individual circumstances but progressively as the system is introduced will include the issue of a brief advisory card with which all establishments have been supplied. I am arranging for a copy of the guidelines and card to be placed in the Library.

Police Officers (Dismissals)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many officers have been dismissed from each constabulary over the last five years in each year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following table shows numbers of officers punished in disciplinary proceedings by dismissal from their force.

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Avon and Somerset	—	2	—	2	3
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	—
Cambridgeshire	2	—	—	—	—
Cheshire	—	1	—	—	—
City of London	—	—	—	—	—
Cleveland	1	2	1	—	—
Cumbria	—	1	—	—	1
Derbyshire	—	1	—	—	—
Devon and Cornwall	—	—	1	—	—
Dorset	—	—	—	—	—
Durham	—	—	—	—	—
Dyfed-Powys	—	—	—	2	—
Essex	—	—	—	—	2
Gloucestershire	—	1	—	—	—
Greater Manchester	3	5	5	1	5
Gwent	—	—	—	1	—
Hampshire	1	3	—	—	—
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	—
Humberside	—	1	1	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—	1
Lancashire	—	5	1	—	2
Leicestershire	—	1	—	—	—
Lincolnshire	—	1	—	—	—
Merseyside	—	1	3	—	2
Metropolitan	8	10	14	9	12
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	—
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	—
Northumbria	2	—	—	—	—
North Wales	—	2	—	—	—
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	1	—
Nottingham	1	—	—	—	—
South Wales	—	—	—	2	2
South Yorkshire	—	—	1	—	—
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	—
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	—
Surrey	—	—	1	2	1
Sussex	—	—	—	—	1
Thames Valley	2	1	1	1	2
Warwickshire	1	—	—	—	—
West Mercia	—	—	—	—	—
West Midlands	—	—	1	—	1
West Yorkshire	—	—	2	2	3
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	—

Police Officers (Staff Wastage)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage wastage as a proportion of the total number of officers employed by each constabulary for each of the last five years in each constabulary.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The available information is as follows. Separate information on each force outside the Metropolitan police could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The number of police officers employed is calculated on the mean average of actual strength at the beginning and end of each year.

Year	*Average police strength*	*Wastage (including transfers and secondments)*	*Percentage of wastage over average police strength*
Police forces in England and Wales (excluding Metropolitan police)			
1982	93,094	4,670	5·0
1983	92,983	4,585	4·9
1984	92,561	4,866	5·3
1985	92,403	5,111	5·5
1986	92,687	5,008	5·4
Metropolitan Police			
1982	25,673	1,380	5·4
1983	26,500	1,246	4·7
1984	26,748	1,206	4·5
1985	26,736	1,370	5·1
1986	26,813	1,589	5·9

Lorry Ban (London)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what degree of effort goes into the enforcement of the lorry ban in the former Greater London council area; and whether that effort has diminished or increased since the Greater London council's abolition.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Greater London (Restriction of Goods Vehicles) Traffic Order 1985 came into force on 31 January 1986. Its enforcement is a matter for the commissioner, and has to take its place with other demands on police resources. I understand that effective enforcement is hindered by the large number of roads excluded from the ban and the legally inadequate state of the signing.

The commissioner informs me that enforcement has neither increased nor diminished since the abolition of the Greater London council.

Gartree Prison (Escapes)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set up an inquiry into the circumstances of the escape of two prisoners from Her Majesty's prison Gartree on 10 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have asked the deputy director-general of the prison service, Mr. G. H. Lakes CB, MC, to conduct an immediate investigation into the circumstances and I will inform the House of his findings as soon as possible.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of the rule 43 prisoners presently being held on F wing, Brixton prison, are there for medical reasons;

(2) how many rule 43 prisoners are currently being held on F wing, Brixton prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On 7 December, 62 rule 43 prisoners were held on landing 4 of F wing, part of which has recently been taken into use for such prisoners. In addition, there were 15 prisoners elsewhere in F wing who were on rule 43 before being moved there for medical reasons.

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the planned use of F wing, Brixton prison, in *(a)* the short term and *(b)* the long term.

Mr. John Patten: The use of prison accommodation is constantly under review, but there are no firm plans at present for further changes in the use of F wing at Brixton.

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Holland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people currently being held on remand in police cells *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in London, require psychiatric assessment of treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: On the night of 6/7 December—the most recent date for which information is available—51 remand prisoners awaiting state of health or psychiatric reports were held in police cells in England and Wales. All were awaiting transfer to Brixton prison. Thirty-five were held in London and 16 elsewhere. Information on prisoners requiring psychiatric treatment is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Firearms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to whether the local police had been advised or were aware prior to the recent shooting of a court bailiff and a solicitor's clerk at Wolverhampton that the occupier of the house from which he was being evicted was in possession of a shotgun and —or had threatened violence against anyone attempting to dispossess him prior to the date on which the shootings took place.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands police that his officers were not consulted before this eviction took place; and that they were not asked to attend it. They were therefore unaware of any threat of violence. It was established, after the tragedy, that the occupier had been lawfully in possession of a shotgun.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the bodies which he consulted before publishing the White Paper on firearms.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following organisations were consulted and a number of others volunteered their views:

Arms and Armour Society
Association of Chief Police Officers
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
British Deer Society
British Medical Association
British Shooting Sports Council and Constituent Bodies
Council for the Protection of Rural England
County Landowners' Association
Countryside Commission
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Forestry Commission
Historical Breech Loading and Small Arms Association
Imperial War Museum
National Farmers' Union
Nature Conservancy Council
Red Deer Commission
Royal Armouries
Scottish Shooting Council
Scottish Sports Council
Shooters' Rights Association
Shooting Sportspersons' Liaison Committee
Sports Council
Sports Council for Wales
Welsh Shooting Council

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to why the firearms referred to therein were destroyed;

(2) if, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to the year in which the anti-terrorist operation referred to therein took place; and at what location;

(3) if, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to the date on which the weapons referred to therein were destroyed;

(4) if, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to the cost to the police authority of the weapons referred to therein;

(5) if, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, he will call for a report from the chief constable of Kent as to whether all members of the police authority were informed of the purchase by the Kent police of the weapons referred to therein.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I stated in my reply to the hon. Member on 8 December, at column *133*, the firearms referred to were acquired for a specific anti-terrorist operation. This was conducted in 1978 at Leeds castle, Maidstone, Kent.

As part of the nationally agreed policy not to dispose of surplus firearms on the open market or to sell them off to firearms dealers, the weapons were destroyed on 7 February 1983. The chief constable was entitled to act on his own authority in this matter. The financial records for the period in question have not been retained.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what information he has for England and Wales, and for each year from 1976 to 1986, from the number of rifles, shotguns and pistols recovered by the police from armed criminals, as to how many firearms had been acquired by the criminal from sources other than loss by or theft from licensed firearms and shotgun certificate holders; and what those sources were for each category of firearm;

(2) what information he has for England and Wales, and for each year from 1976 to 1986 inclusive, as to how many rifles, pistols and shotguns lost by or stolen from licensed firearms certificate holders or shotgun certificate

holders were subsequently used in any type of violence against the person, particularly homicide, serious injury and armed robbery;

(3) what information he has, for England and Wales, and for each year from 1976 to 1986 inclusive, by type of offence and type of firearm, rifle, pistol or shotgun, as to how many firearm offences were committed by licensed firearms certificate holders or shotgun certificate holders which resulted in death or injury to a person other than the holder.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 30 November and from the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 7 December, at columns 3-4.

Mr. Frank Turner

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, the complaint against the Kent police by Mr. Frank Turner referred to therein was first made.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of Kent that the complaint made by Mr. Turner was lodged on 27 August 1986.

Police (West Yorkshire)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest available figures for uniformed police officers in the West Yorkshire metropolitan police force; and what is the current establishment figure.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 30 November 1987 the strength of the West Yorkshire police was 5,209. The authorised police establishment is 5,204, and there is approval for 17 supernumerary police posts.

Immigration Rules

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will lay before the House the statement of changes to the immigration rules announced on 16 November, *Official Report*, column *788;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I am laying before Parliament today for publication tomorrow a statement of changes in the immigration rules to introduce the changes which I announced on 16 November. The effect of these changes will be to provide for (1) leave to enter or remain for up to four years to be granted to persons of independent means, sole representatives, writers and artists; (2) leave to remain for up to four years to be granted to business men and self-employed persons; (3) leave to enter for up to two years to be granted to au pairs; and (4) a reduction to six months in the maximum period of a visit.

As I indicated to the House on 16 November, people in the categories affected by the changes will no longer need to apply for merely routine extensions of leave in order to remain for the maximum allowed in that category. The effect of the changes will be to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, improve the overall level of the service which the Department offers to the genuine applicant and enable efforts to be concentrated more effectively and speedily on those cases where important decisions have to be made. These changes will become effective on 1 February 1988. I hope that the House will before then have an opportunity to consider these changes.

Police, Fire and Civil Defence Authorities

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has reached a decision on the applications from the joint police and fire and civil defence authorities for redetermination of their expenditure levels for 1988-89; what maximum precepts he proposes to set in consequence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: All six joint police authorities and six of the seven joint fire and civil defence authorities sought redetermination of the expenditure levels I announced on 24 July and I am today notifying them of my decisions. On police, I have decided not to increase the expenditure levels for South Yorkshire, Northumbria and West Yorkshire, but have redetermined the expenditure levels for the other forces as follows:

	£ million
Merseyside	68·906
West Midlands	93·423
Greater Manchester	95·221

On fire and civil defence, I have decided not to increase the expenditure levels for London, Merseyside, Tyne and Wear and West Midlands. The expenditure levels for the other authorities have been redetermined as follows:

	£ million
South Yorkshire	22·514
West Yorkshire	37·558

My proposals for the maximum precept levels for these authorities for 1988-89 are as follows:

	Police
Greater Manchester	15·38
Merseyside	19·30
Northumbria	13·92
South Yorkshire	15·59
West Midlands	14·11
West Yorkshire	15·72

	Fire and Civil Defence
Greater Manchester	10·82
Merseyside	8·22
South Yorkshire	11·21
Tyne and Wear	11·04
West Midlands	7·48
West Yorkshire	13·41
London	8·15

Formal notification of the proposed maximum precepts has been sent to the authorities today. I have asked the authorities to let me know by 15 January whether they accept the maximum precepts.

Civil Defence

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, further to his answer of 30 October, he will give a functional and geographical breakdown of United Kingdom programmed civil defence expenditure in 1987-88.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 4 December 1987]:* Information is not available in the form requested, but programmed expenditure for United Kingdom Departments in 1987-88 is as follows:

Department	*£ million*
Cabinet Office	0·35
Central Office of Information	0·05
Department of Energy	0·25
Department of the Environment	2·20
Department of Health and Social Security	2·00
Department of Trade and Industry	0·10
Department of Transport	4·90
Welsh Office	0·40
Home Office	69·20
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	20·80
Department of Employment	0·10
Scottish Home and Health Department	7·95
Northern Ireland Office	2·00
Total	110·30

Revisions in some Departments' assessments of their programmed civil defence expenditure account for the difference between the total and the figure given on 30 October in reply to the hon. Member.

ENERGY

Scottish Coalfield

2. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the anticipated production outturn for the Scottish coalfield in 1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Production in the Scottish coalfield over the 12 months to September 1987 was approximately 6 million tonnes. I do not expect the figure for the calendar year 1987 to be greatly different.

North Sea Oil

12. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are his latest estimates of the projected output of oil from the North sea over the next five years; and how these figures compare with the projected level of demand for oil in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: On current estimates of future production and demand the United Kingdom is likely to remain self-sufficient in oil well into the 1990s.

Energy Efficiency

13. **Mr. John Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps the Government are taking to encourage energy efficiency in domestic households.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department's Energy Efficiency Office is working closely with the insulation, heating, and fuel industries to encourage householders and landlords to invest in cost-effective measures to reduce fuel bills.

28. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to influence developers and the building professions to improve energy efficiency in rehabilitation work.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Energy Efficiency Office is spending £0.5 million this year on research and development and through the demonstration scheme to promote the energy efficient renovation of buildings. Future programmes are subject to the outcome of the EEO review.

41. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to provide advice to householders on energy efficiency.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer today to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands).

British Coal

14. **Mr. Michael Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of British Coal.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

22. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to meet the chairman of British Coal; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

25. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to meet the deputy chairman of British Coal to discuss the sale of British Coal housing.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend and I have regular meetings with the deputy chairman of British Coal to discuss a wide variety of issues concerning the coal industry.

26. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of British Coal; and what was discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

44. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to have discussions with the chairman of British Coal regarding the financial structure of the industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I have regular meetings with the chairman of British Coal to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Refuse Combustion

15. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his Department's research into refuse combustion as a source of power generation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Municipal and industrial refuse, surplus straw and forestry wastes are major potential sources of energy. My Department is undertaking a substantial programme of R and D aimed at overcoming the difficulties of handling and burning these materials. In the current financial year over £700,000 is expected to be spent on the work.

Renewable Energy

16. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the level of his Department's research into renewable forms of energy.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I regularly receive representations about the Department's involvement in research into renewable forms of energy.

Fast Breeder Nuclear Technology

17. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress towards commercial viability of fast breeder nuclear technology.

Mr. Parkinson: Electricity utilities from France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and Britain have recently agreed to work together towards a common conceptual fast reactor design. The aim is to produce an improved design of demonstration reactor.

Coal Industry (Productivity)

18. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what changes have occurred in the productivity per manshift in the coal industry since 1979.

23. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what improvements have occurred in output per man shift in the coal industry since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: For the week ending 5 December, average deep mined revenue output per man shift was 4·07 tonnes, a new weekly record level of productivity. This represents an increase of over 80 per cent. on the average of 2·24 tonnes for 1978-79.

CEGB (Projects)

19. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has received any application from the Central Electricity Generating Board for authorisation for any new projects on the lines of the Dinorwig plant in North Wales.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have not received any applications for projects of this type.

Electricity Council

20. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff are currently employed by the Electricity Council.

Mr. Parkinson: As at 30 September 1987 the Electricity Council employed 1,252 staff.

59. **Mr. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Electricity Council; and what matters they discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet Sir Philip Jones regularly to discuss a range of topics.

Colliery Closures

21. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent information he has received from the chairman of British Coal on the number of proposed colliery closures.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from the chairman of the British Coal Corporation that at present there are five collieries proposed for closure.

Heating Fuel

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to which fuel is currently the most popular form of domestic heating; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: Gas is the most popular fuel for domestic heating. Competition and consumer choice determine the market share of each fuel.

Electricity (Production Costs)

27. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the cost, in terms of pence per kilowatt hour, of the electricity output of *(a)* new coal-fired power stations, *(b)* new nuclear power stations, *(c)* new combined heat and power stations, and *(d)* the Severn barrage.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The latest analysis of comparative generating costs showed that the average lifetime costs per KWh adjusted to April 1987 prices was 2·82p/KWh for Hinkley Point B and 3·03 p/KWh for the first stage of the coal-fired station at Drax. The Severn Tidal Power Group indicated in a study published in July 1986 that the cost of electricity produced from a barrage would be 3·45 p/KWh, adjusted to April 1987 prices. It is not possible to estimate the cost of electricity output from CHP stations because of the wide variation in design options.

Energy Savings (Industry)

29. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to achieve further energy savings in industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: It is for industry to seize the opportunity offered by improvements in energy efficiency. My Department provides help and advice; we have recently launched a new campaign aimed at the most energy-intensive industrial sectors.

Insulation

30. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the implications for his support for community programme insulation projects of the Energy Efficiency Office review.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Support for community insulation projects will continue as planned. About 500,000 homes, mostly those of pensioners, will have been draughtproofed by the end of 1987/88, and over 300,000 more will be treated in 1988-89.

Electricity Demand Forecasts

31. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy in which years since 1967 the Central Electricity Generating Board's electricity demand forecasts for four or five years ahead have subsequently proved to be accurate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibilities of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

33. **Mr. Rowlands:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further measures he intends to introduce to assist and promote greater conservation of energy for domestic consumers.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will consider whether any further measures should be taken following the review of the Energy Efficiency Office.

Generating Stations (Closures)

34. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many electricity generating stations have been closed by the Central Electricity Generating Board since 1979; and what total of generating capacity this represents.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Since 1979 the CEGB has closed 66 small power stations with a total generating capacity of 12,378 MW.

Opencast Sites

35. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many opencast coal sites there are in operation in the United Kingdom; to how many of these he has paid an official visit in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from the British Coal Corporation that there are currently 49 opencast mine sites coaling in the United Kingdom. I have visited one coaling site and one reclaimed site. I plan to visit more sites in the future.

Oil Stocks

36. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his current estimate of the length of time for which Britain will be self-sufficient in oil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). Current estimates lead my Department to believe that the United Kingdom's self-sufficiency in oil could last well into the 1990s.

Electricity Industry (Privatisation)

37. **Mr. Prescott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further advice he has received from Lord Marshall and the Central Electricity Generating Board on proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry; and if he intends to act upon them.

Mr. Parkinson: I regularly meet Lord Marshall to discuss a range of issues concerning the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. I shall of course take into account his advice when developing proposals for the future of the industry.

49. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity boards to discuss privatisation of the industry.

52. **Mr. Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairmen of the area electricity boards to discuss privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) earlier today.

54. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received regarding the proposed privatisation of the electricity industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I have received representations from electricity consumers, unions, other nationalised industries and other interested parties and will take these into account when considering proposals for the privatisation of the industry.

58. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he will give, in the course of preparation for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry, to the specific requirements of final consumers and the case for rationalisation in electricity distribution.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We are currently developing our proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. The protection of consumers' interests is being given a top priority. No decisions have yet been taken on the future structure of the industry.

60. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Electricity Council to discuss privatisation of the industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) today.

Solar Energy

38. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current scope and status of passive solar energy design research by his Department.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department's programme on passive solar design covers both domestic and non-domestic buildings and comprises design studies, field trials, supporting research and development and information dissemination. Nearly £1 million has recently been committed to the second phase of the design studies.

Electricity Supply Industry

39. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response he has made to the recent views expressed to him about the future of the electricity supply industry by representatives of employers and trades unions.

Mr. Parkinson: I hold regular discussions both with the industry's senior management and representatives of the trade unions. I am giving full consideration to their views in drawing up proposals for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

42. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what advance estimate he has made of the eventual cost of any promotional and advertising campaign accompanying the selling-off of the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Parkinson: It would be premature to make such an estimate.

43. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what cost savings have been achieved in the

electricity supply industry in each of the last five years; and what cost saving target has now been set for the next financial year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The electricity supply industry was set a performance aim of a reduction of 4·25 per cent. in controllable costs—fuel, salaries and most other goods and services — per unit sold in real terms between 1982-83 and 1984-85. The industry estimates that had it not been for the effects on its operations of the miners' strike in 1984-85 controllable cost savings would have been close to target. Between 1983-84 and 1986-87 it achieved a further reduction of 4·6 per cent. as compared with the aim for the period 1983-84 to 1987-88 of a reduction of 6·1 per cent. The performance aim for the next financial year is under discussion.

50. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what the rate of return on investment for the electricity supply industry has been in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is not possible to measure the rate of return on investment in an individual year. The Government expect the electricity supply industry to achieve a 5 per cent. real rate of return on its new investment as a whole.

61. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, how many people are employed in the electricity supply industry; and what is his estimate of future employment.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The average number of employees in the industry in 1986-87 was 132,000. The level of employment is a matter for the industry.

Insulation

40. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, how many homes have been given financial assistance for insulation since 1983 for *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* other high-risk groups.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 9 December 1987, at column *189*.

Electricity Supplies

45. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the total number of households supplied with electricity in each year since 1975.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The electricity boards record the number of domestic customers, supplied in Great Britain as:

	Millions
1975-76	19·3
1976-77	19·6
1977-78	19·8
1978-79	20·1
1979-80	20·2
1980-81	20·4
1981-82	20·6
1982-83	20·8
1983-84	21·0
1984-85	21·2
1985-86	21·5
1986-87	21·7

Source: Handbook of Electricity Supply Statistics SSEB and NOSHEB report and accounts.

Oil Exploration

46. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of oil exploration on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: At the end of November, the total number of offshore exploration and appraisal wells commenced this year was 113.

Fast Reactor Programme

47. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to discuss the future of the European collaboration programme on fast reactor technology.

Mr. Parkinson: I have discussed fast reactor matters in various meetings with Mr. Collier since I took on my present responsibilities.

Power Station, Hinkley Point

48. **Mr. Paddy Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations he has received opposing the Central Electricity Generating Board's proposals for a pressurised water reactor at Hinkley Point.

Mr. Parkinson: To date my Department has received more than 950 representations following publicity which I required the board to give to its application. In addition, I understand the local planning authorities have received representations direct.

Nuclear Power Industry

51. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to safeguard the future of the nuclear power industry.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Nuclear power makes a vital contribution to diversity in electricity generation and the Government are committed to ensuring that diversity is maintained when the electricity supply industry is privatised.

British Gas

53. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will next meet the chairman of British Gas: and what subjects he proposes to discuss.

Mr. Parkinson: I have no current plans to meet the chairman of British Gas. When I do, I will discuss a wide range of issues related to the gas industry.

Plutonium

55. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy who is specified as the owner of the eventual separated plutonium, in contracts for the reprocessing of nuclear wastes from foreign countries at Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Contracts for the reprocessing at Sellafield of foreign irradiated nuclear fuel normally provide that the plutonium and uranium products separated by reprocessing shall remain the property of the owner of such fuel. The separated plutonium is returned to its country of origin or to any other destination only on receipt of assurances covering peaceful use, application safeguards, physical protection and controls on retransfer.

Economy Tariffs

56. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what statistics he has on the uptake of economy tariffs offered by area electricity boards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Electricity Council estimates that just over 2 million domestic customers in England and Wales are on Economy 7 and a further 1 million customers are on other types of economy tariff.

Gas Reserves

57. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his latest estimates of gas reserves on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) on 23 November 1987, at columns 3-4.

CEGB (Ministerial Meeting)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling).

Coalfield Communities Campaign (Exhibition)

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the coalfield communities campaign to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am pleased to have offered my support for an exhibition relating to the activities of the coalfield communities campaign. This will take place in the Upper Waiting Hall from 14 to 18 March 1988.

Sellafield

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the cost of promoting Sellafield for visitors in 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am asking the chairman of BNFL to write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Coalfield Communities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if Her Majesty's Government will give further consideration to the recommendations of the Select Committee on Energy that a Cabinet Committee be appointed to examine the problems of coalfield communities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: The Government made clear, in their response to the Select Committee, that a number of Government programmes provide help, and that no additional useful function would be served by discussions in a committee.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Integrated Schools

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many integrated schools in Northern Ireland receive grants from his Department.

Dr. Mawhinney: Three schools, established as independent integrated schools, are now recognised by my Department as grant-aided maintained schools.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the rebuilt Lisburn road Royal Ulster Constabulary station is to be on the proposed Cadogan park site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Police Authority has applied for planning permission to build a new police station on the proposed Cadogan park site and the Department of the Environment has decided to hold a public inquiry under article 22 of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 into the application. The matter has been referred to the Planning Appeals Commission and it is due to be heard early in 1988.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to make the milk quotas allocated to dairy farmers in Northern Ireland available for public inspection.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* No. Under the United Kingdom quota regulations, access to a quota register entry in relation to a holding is restricted to the owner or a person with an interest in that holding.

Artifical Insemination

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many officials are employed in artificial insemination centres in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The total staff complement for the centres is 111, although numbers actually engaged on the work vary from time to time according to season.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by what agency he intends to replace artificial insemination centres.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The Department will be inviting formal declarations of interest in undertaking this work from the private sector. It is not possible to say which bodies will respond.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many artificial insemination centres are organised by the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The Department provides the artificial insemination service in Northern Ireland through one main centre and 10 sub-centres.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost to his Department of each of the artificial insemination centres in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* The specific cost of running each artificial insemination sub-centre is not readily available. The total cost of providing the artificial insemination service was almost £2·1 million in 1986-87.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will keep the cost of artificial insemination replacement services at the present level.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 10 December 1987]:* It is not possible to guarantee that the cost of the artificial insemination services will remain unchanged for the future, or that present levels of subsidy to the services will continue indefinitely.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many plastic bullets were fired in Northern Ireland in the second half of 1986; in what circumstances; in what location the bullets were fired; and how many persons were injured as a result of the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply he received from my hon. Friend the former Minister of State for Northern Ireland on 18 February at column *735*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Science and Technology Graduates

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been received to his Department's advertisements for science and technology graduates to work at GCHQ, ref. S(B)941.

Mr. Mellor: An encouraging response has been received to this advertisement, which is aimed at filling a number of posts next year.

France (Iranian Dissidents)

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations he has made to the French Government with regard to the expulsion from France of Iranian dissidents;

(2) whether he will seek assurances from the French Government that none of the Iranian dissidents to be expelled from France will be returned to Iran against their wishes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: No. The UNHCR, as the protection power in this case, has been playing the leading role and has been in touch with the French authorities. We have fully co-operated with the UNHCR over the return to this country of one of the Iranians who has refugee status here.

Illegal Arms Shipments (Ireland)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, with regard to the capture of arms in the 'Eksund', what information Her Majesty's Government have received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland about the several previous illegal shipment of arms, announced by the Irish Minister of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are naturally in close touch with the Irish authorities. We have a full exchange of views and information, but cannot go into detail about these confidential contacts.

We welcome the recent statement made by the Irish Justice Minister reporting in the search so far and indicating that they will continue to take vigorous action in their hunt for illegal arms.

Iran-Iraq Conflict

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose to the United Nations Security Council that a further resolution on the Iran-Iraq conflict be considered which specifies the origin of the current conflict; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Security Council resolution 598 includes a call for the establishment of an impartial body to inquire into responsibility for the conflict. This is one of the elements of the resolution currently under discussion. It would not be wise to pre-empt the outcome of that discussion.

EC (British Civil Servants)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the EEC Commission has sought the permission of Her Majesty's Government to the participation of British civil servants seconded to the Commission in the courses at Time Manager International, Henley-on-Thames, designed to improve morale and public presentation; and if the cost has been provided for in the Community budget.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that this training programme, which is entirely the responsibility of the Commission, is part of a reinforced training programme for staff, irrespective of nationality. The costs will be provided from the Commission's training budget.

Mrs. Sturt, Thornton Heath

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to be in a position to reply to the letter of 23 November from the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West on the subject of Mrs. Sturt, of 33 Langdale road, Thornton Heath, Surrey.

Mr. Eggar: The deputy high commission in Madras has been asked to provide a full report on this case. I shall reply to my hon. Friend's letter as soon as possible.

Molesworth and Greenham Common

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to the statement by the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, of 10 December, *Official Report*, column 605, if he will give further details about the numbers of missiles to be removed from Molesworth and Greenham Common.

Mr. Mellor: As I said in my statement of 10 December, there are 96 operational missiles at Greenham Common and 16 operational missiles at Molesworth. In order to maintain these numbers operational at all times, it is

normal military practice to keep a small number of items of spare equipment available. This spare equipment varies over time, but currently includes five spare missile bodies at Greenham Common and two spare missile bodies at Molesworth. Both the operational missiles and the spare missile bodies will be removed.

INF Treaty

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to the statement by the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, of 10 December, *Official Report*, column 630, if he will list the documents relating to the intermediate nuclear forces treaty that are to be deposited in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: As I indicated in my statement to the House on 10 December, the INF treaty has already been deposited in the Library. The basing country agreement, signed on 11 December, will be deposited in the Library this week, and the exchange of notes between the United Kingdom and Soviet Union as soon as the exchange has been completed. Moreover, subsequent to my statement, the United States Government have published the memorandum of understanding on data. This will, therefore, be deposited in the Library as soon as a clean copy is available.

ENVIRONMENT

Ministerial Cars

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the savings to Her Majesty's Government from changing the present practice of removing tyres from ministerial cars at 2 mm tread depth to one of allowing tyres to wear down to the 1mm plus unit of tread level specified in current construction and use regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: It is departmental policy to ensure that ministerial cars comply in all respects with current construction and use regulations.

Tyres are checked regularly by the drivers to ensure that there is a minimum of 1 mm over three quarters of the width, and there is a similar check when the vehicles are serviced. A decision on whether to replace or not is taken based on the tyres' overall condition.

Housing and Planning Act 1986

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names and addresses of those organisations which have been given grants under section 11 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, detailing the terms of reference of the grants and the geographical area each organisation is expected to cover.

Mr. Waldegrave: Section 11 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 does not contain a power to make grants.

Easington

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will pay an official visit to the Easington constituency to meet representatives from the Durham county council, Easington district council and the parish councils within the constituency.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to make such a visit.

Maen Valley Park, Falmouth

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what grounds he has decided to call in the planning application for Maen valley park, Falmouth, Cornwall; and at whose request this was done.

Mr. Waldegrave: The grounds for calling in the planning application at Maen valley park, Falmouth, Cornwall, which lies within an area of outstanding natural beauty, were set out in my Department's letter of 7 December to Kerrier district council. The proposals appear to have implications for national policies relating to the conservation of the natural beauty of such areas.

The application was brought to the Department's attention by the Council for the Protection of Rural England and by a local resident.

Housing Records

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has begun consultations with a view to making regulations on access to housing records under the Access to Personal Files Act 1987.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope to publish draft regulations for consultation in the spring of next year.

House of Commons (Members' Tea Room)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the improvements carried out in the Members' Tea Room to the dispensing and display counter and ventilation system; who were the contractors; whether the tender price was adhered to; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The new servery was designed to improve the service to right hon. and hon. Members and the working conditions for staff of the Refreshment Department. A comprehensive range of equipment has been installed for the storage, preparation, display and dispensing of food and drink, and for storing and dispensing crockery.

The purpose of the new supply and extract ventilation system is to overcome long-standing complaints about stagnant air and high room temperatures.

The main contractor for the refurbishment scheme was Messrs. Haymills (Contractors) Ltd. The work was carried out in accordance with the terms of its tender.

Footpaths and Rights of Way

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to issue guidelines or increase funding to local authorities in order to establish definitive maps of footpaths and rights of way in their areas.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The Department's circular 1/83 on public rights of way already provides comprehensive guidance on these procedures. The allocation of resources

for this work is for individual surveying authorities to decide in the light of the relevant circumstances within their area.

Water Authorities

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the total revenue raised in the current financial year by each water authority; and if he will express this as a per capita sum for each adult over 18 years in the area of each authority.

Mr. Moynihan: The total revenue raised by each water authority in its budget for 1987-88 is set out in the table. These comprise all sources of income taken into revenue account, including grants and other non-charge income and land drainage precepts.

	£ million
North West	423
Northumbrian	119
Severn Trent	455
Yorkshire	286
Anglian	347
Thames	574
Southern	199
Wessex	123
South West	98

Information on the number of adults over 18 years in each water authority area is not held centrally, primarily because water authority areas do not coincide with local authority areas.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sources and amounts of income and the total expenditure of each water authority in England and Wales in 1986.

Mr. Moynihan: The income and expenditure of the water authorities in England and Wales was set out in their annual reports and accounts for 1986-87 which were laid before Parliament on 15 July 1987. Copies are available in the Library. This information is summarised in "Water Facts" published annually by the Water Authorities Association. I will place a copy of the edition covering 1986-87 in the Library as soon as it is available.

Women (Domestic Violence)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is yet in a position to say what arrangements will be made on behalf of women who have been rehoused following incidents of domestic violence to enable them to keep their addresses secret or off the public poll tax register.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on 2 December, at columns *618-19*.

Community charges registration officers will be required to omit from the published version of the register the name of any individual who satisfies them that he or she may suffer physical injury if his or her name is listed.

Women's Aid Refuges

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *200*, regarding exemptions from the poll tax for certain hostels providing accommodation and care, whether Women's Aid refuges will be included in the exemption category; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The exemption for residents of caring institutions will not apply to women's refuges. Refuges are not analogous to the hostels which provide a substantial degree of care, and whose residents will be exempt. Help will be available to women on low income in refuges, through the community charge rebate system and the uprating of benefit.

Water Rates

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each local authority area the water rate.

Mr. Moynihan: The information requested is not held centrally. Information on the average household bill for each water authority in England was given by my right hon. Friend in a reply to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 29 June 1987, at column *46*.

Local Authority Dwellings (Unlawful Occupation)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *192*, what figures he has for the number of local authority dwellings that were unlawfully occupied in each London borough for each of the years 1985-86 and 1986-87;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 12 November, *Official Report*, column *192*, what figures he has for the number of local authority dwellings that were unlawfully occupied in each of the London boroughs not referred to in his answer.

Mrs. Roe: The numbers of council-owned dwellings in unlicensed occupation were reported, for the first time, by local authorities in their 1987 housing investment programme returns; figures for London boroughs at 1 April 1987 appear on page 7.7 (col. A99) of the "HIP 1 (1987) All items print". A copy has recently been placed in the Library.

Homelessness

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total number of dwellings let to new secure tenants *(a)* by metropolitan authorities outside London, *(b)* by English non-metropolitan authorities and *(c)* by all English local authorities (i) between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, (ii) between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, (iii) between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, (iv) between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, (v) between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986, and (vi) between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987;

(2) what was *(a)* the total number of households and *(b)* the total number of homeless households taking up nominations (i) by metropolitan authorities outside London, (ii) by English non-metropolitan authorities and (iii) by all English local authorities to secure housing association or new town tenancies (1) between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, (2) between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, (3) between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, (4) between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, (5) between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and (6) between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987;

(3) what was *(a)* the total number of homeless households and *(b)* the number of homeless households in priority need accepted (i) by metropolitan authorities outside London, (ii) by English non-metropolitan authorities and (iii) by all English local authorities (1) between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, (2) between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, (3) between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, (4) between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, (5) between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and (6) between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987;

(4) what was the total number of dwellings let *(a)* by metropolitan authorities outside London, *(b)* by English non-metropolitan authorities and *(c)* by all English local authorities (i) under secure tenancies and (ii) under non-secure tenancies to new tenants who were homeless households (1) between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, (2) between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, (3) between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, (4) between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, (5) between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and (6) between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987;

(5) what was the total number of dwellings let through the national mobility scheme, and, for London, other mobility schemes *(a)* to homeless households and *(b)* to other households (i) by metropolitan authorities outside London, (ii) by non-metropolitan authorities in the south-east, (iii) by English non-metropolitan authorities and (iv) by all English local authorities (1) between 1 April 1981 and 31 March 1982, (2) between 1 April 1982 and 31 March 1983, (3) between 1 April 1983 and 31 March 1984, (4) between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985, (5) between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986 and (6) between 1 April 1986 and 31 March 1987.

Mrs. Roe: Following are estimates derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns:

	[1]*1981-82 thousands*	[1]*1982-83 thousands*	[1]*1983-84 thousands*	[1]*1984-85 thousands*	*1985-86 thousands*	*1986-87 thousands*
1. Lettings to new secure tenants						
(a) Metropolitan excluding London	84·5	87·9	84·5	81·4	87·8	89·4
Non-metropolitan	112·5	119·1	115·8	116·1	116·8	113·6
England	244·2	246·6	236·0	228·7	235·5	232·5
(b) of which homeless[2]						
Metropolitan excluding London	10·0	12·0	12·5	14·0	16·9	18·2
Non-metropolitan	17·4	18·5	17·0	18·7	23·0	24·4
England	41·2	43·5	42·9	46·4	55·6	59·1
2. Lettings to non-secure tenants who were homeless[2]						
Metropolitan excluding London	n/a	n/a	0·3	0·6	0·5	0·6
Non-metropolitan	n/a	n/a	4·8	5·1	5·1	5·3
England	n/a	n/a	6·0	7·4	7·3	7·7
3. Dwellings let through the National Mobility Scheme and, for London, other mobility schemes						
(a) to homeless households[2]						
Metropolitan excluding London	n/a	. .	0·2	. .	. .	. .
Non-metropolitan authorities in the South East[3]	n/a	. .	0·1	0·1	. .	. .
Non-metropolitan (all)	n/a	. .	0·2	0·1	0·1	0·1
England	n/a	0·6	1·6	1·3	1·2	1·2
(b) to other households						
Metropolitan excluding London	[4]0·9	1·7	1·6	1·7	1·6	1·9
Non-metropolitan authorities in the South East[3]	[4]0·7	1·0	1·5	1·5	1·2	1·4
Non-metropolitan (all)	[4]2·0	3·5	4·4	4·6	4·7	4·3
England	[4]6·3	9·2	12·2	11·8	9·7	9·5
4. Nominations made to housing association or new town dwellings						
(a) Total						
Metropolitan excluding London	5·0	5·9	6·3	5·9	6·3	7·3
Non-metropolitan	15·5	10·0	9·3	8·2	7·4	7·5
England	25·4	20·0	20·0	18·0	17·6	18·3
(b) of which homeless[2]						
Metropolitan excluding London	0·2	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·7	0·5
Non-metropolitan	0·7	0·5	0·6	0·6	0·5	0·6
England	1·7	1·6	1·6	1·5	2·1	2·0
5. Households for whom authorities accepted[2] responsibility for securing accommodation[5]						
(a) Total						
Metropolitan excluding London	n/a	n/a	n/a	32·8	28·3	30·8
Non-metropolitan	n/a	n/a	n/a	42·3	44·0	48·2
England	n/a	n/a	n/a	107·5	103·2	111·1
(b) of which, in priority need						
Metropolitan excluding London	15·0	19·6	19·4	21·3	23·3	25·6
Non-metropolitan	37·3	31·9	33·1	33·5	41·2	44·9
England	70·2	70·9	74·9	81·2	93·4	101·4

n/a Not available.
. . Nil, or less than 50.
[1] Includes information reported by Greater London council.
[2] Households accepted as homeless under Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 or Housing Act 1985.

[3] The standard region comprising the non-metropolitan districts in the Department of the Environment administrative Eastern (excluding East Anglia) and South Eastern regions.
[4] Includes homeless households.
[5] These figures differ from financial year totals derived from the Department's published estimates which are based on separate quarterly returns on homelessness (P1E).

Radioactive Waste (Disposal)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when, pursuant to his answer of 19 November to the hon. Member for Burnley, he expects to write to the hon. Member on land fill sites used for radioactive waste disposal.

Mr. Moynihan: I have now written to the hon. Member.

Council Property Sales

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by each English local authority the number of *(a)* applications received from tenants to buy their council property, and *(b)* sales to tenants under the provisions of the Housing Act 1980; and what percentage each of these figures are of the local authority stock in April 1981.

Mrs. Roe: Information on right to buy sales up to June 1987, as reported by each authority, appears in the "progress on council house sales" table placed in the Library on 11 December, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), at column *275*.

The cumulative numbers of applications received by all of the English authorities could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times since 1979 Her Majesty's Government have approved proposals to opencast sites under the Opencast Coal Act 1958 or the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Trippier: Between 1 January 1979 and 8 December 1987, 78 authorisations were issued in respect of British Coal Corporation — formerly National Coal Board — opencast sites in England. Requests for information in respect of sites in Scotland and Wales should be addressed to the respective Secretaries of State for those countries.

Mr. Radice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many times since 1979 Her Majesty's Government have approved proposals to opencast sites under the Opencast Coal Act 1958 or the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 when the inspector has recommended that those proposals be dismissed.

Mr. Trippier: Information is available only for the period commencing March 1984 when the then National Coal Board Opencast Executive was brought into the planning system. Since that date an inspector's recommendation of dismissal has been overturned once.

LDDC (Mr. John Mills)

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what grounds, and on the basis of what material and information, he reached his decision to dismiss Mr. John Mills as deputy chairman of the London Docklands development corporation; whether the grounds for the decision were communicated to Mr. Mills; and if he had an opportunity to comment on those grounds.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of state removed Mr. Mills from office under the powers of paragraph 6(d) of schedule 26 of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 because he was satisfied that he was unsuitable to continue as a member of the board of the LDDC.

The only material and information taken into account were statements made by Mr. Mills before his appointment; the information he then disclosed; and the information he has provided to the chairman of the LDDC and the Department of the Environment following a recent interview for television in which the chairman was asked if he knew of Mr. Mills' involvement in two liquidations and of his convictions under consumer protection legislation.

On the afternoon of 30 November, and before he was dismissed by the Secretary of State, Mr. Mills was seen at the Department of the Environment. He was told at the meeting that questions of his candour and judgment arose and given an opportunity to enlarge on the material he had provided; to offer explanations; and to say what he wished about past events and his future as deputy chairman.

WALES

Welsh Language

62. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific steps have been taken by his Department following the consultation on a possible new Welsh Language Bill; what has been the outcome of any further discussions undertaken by his Department on this matter; what further steps he intends to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on 10 December at column *215*.

School Examinations

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of children taking *(a)* CSE exams, *(b)* O-level exams and *(c)* A-level exams in each local education authority in Wales as a percentage of the total number in the relevant age group in each authority for the latest available year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The estimated percentages of all candidates from maintained schools attempting examinations in summer 1986 are as follows:

	Candidates attempting[1]		
	CSE	*O level*	*A level*
Clwyd	74·2	81·0	17·8
Dyfed	63·0	78·8	16·8
Gwent	71·4	83·5	11·9
Gwynedd	72·4	78·2	15·2

	Candidates attempting[1]		
	CSE	O level	A level
Mid Glamorgan	74·7	79·5	14·6
Powys	72·3	81·3	15·2
South Glamorgan	65·4	80·5	17·5
West Glamorgan	76·5	81·3	14·2

[1] A candidate attempting more than one type of examination is counted under each type.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by each Welsh local education authority the total number of children achieving *(a)* CSE grades 2 to 5, *(b)* O-level grades A to C and CSE grade 1 and *(c)* A-level grades A to E as a percentage of the total number of pupils in the relevant year group in each local education authority, for the latest available year.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information which relates to school leavers from maintained schools in 1985-86 is as follows:

	Total number of leavers	Percentage of candidates achieving[1] Lower grades[2]	Higher grades[3]	A level pass
Clwyd	6,005	39·1	39·1	15·1
Dyfed	4,955	24·4	40·0	19·2
Gwent	6,650	36·1	36·8	11·8
Gwynedd	3,500	32·6	32·2	18·5
Mid Glamorgan	8,325	27·0	31·5	15·0
Powys	1,615	28·5	43·7	16·7
South Glamorgan	5,640	28·5	33·8	18·6
West Glamorgan	5,435	31·5	41·8	14·2

[1] Leavers are counted only once in the analysis according to the highest qualification attained.
[2] O-level grades D, E, CSE grades 2-5.
[3] O-level grades A to C, CSE grade 1.

Wales Railway Centre

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on progress with the development of the Wales Railway Centre.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Cardiff Bay development corporation has recently approved a grant to the Wales Railway Centre for the erection of perimeter fencing and other environmental improvements at the Bute street site. The locomotives will shortly be transported to the centre to undergo refurbishment under an MSC community programme project. I understand that the railway centre has approached the Welsh Development Agency, South Glamorgan county council and the Development Corporation for future grant aid.

DEWIS

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant a third year of funding to DEWIS, the Clwyd alternative to care and custody, from March 1988, in the light of the proposed redundancies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am in touch with the Clwyd council about the future of this project and expect to reach a decision about its funding shortly.

Connah's Quay (School Closure)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Connah's Quay Golftyn infants school to meet members of staff, the parent governors, the parents and local councillors to discuss the proposed closure of the school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No proposals for the closure of Golftyn infants school have been published. My right hon. Friend would not wish to prejudice his decision in the event of any such proposals coming before him.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Connah's Quay high school to meet staff members, parent-teachers association leaders and local councillors to discuss the proposal of Clwyd Education Authority for a change of character or closure of this school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am aware that Clwyd local education authority is considering its secondary school provision but no proposals for either the closure or change in character of Connah's Quay high school have been published. My right hon. Friend would not wish to prejudice his decision in the event of any such proposals coming before him.

Schools (Capitation Allowance)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list by local authority the school where the capitation allowance is exceeded by parental donation.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Heartbeat Wales

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to which food retailers have associated themselves in the Health Education Council's Heartbeat Wales campaign.

Mr. Ian Grist: Heartbeat Wales has contacts with all the key sectors and so far has jointly planned or supported health promotion schemes with the Welsh Meat and Livestock Commission, Tesco and Unigate.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Statistics)

93. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will indicate for the last five years, the number of civil servants *(a)* recruited, *(b)* leaving the service and *(c)* transferred between Departments.

Mr. Brooke: For the five years 1982 to 1986 there were 198,000 entrants to the non-industrial Civil Service, mainly as recruits to junior grades. During the same period there were 229,000 leavers from the non-industrial Civil Service, from all causes.

Statistics covering entrants to and leavers from the industrial Civil Service are not available, but the overall numbers of industrial civil servants in post have declined from 132,000 as at 1 January 1983 to 93,000 as at 1 January 1987.

Statistics covering transfers of staff between Departments are not collected centrally.

Payroll Giving

94. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the value to the arts of the Government's payroll giving scheme since it was introduced.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that this information is not available.

International Monetary Fund

Mr. Wells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to the enhanced structural adjustment facility of the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Lawson: At the annual meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers in September, I announced that the United Kingdom would make a contribution to the interest subsidy associated with the proposed enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) of the International Monetary Fund, which is designed to support structural adjustment programmes in low-income countries. Since then I have reviewed the United Kingdom's contribution to the enlarged SAF, decisions on which should be completed by the end of this month. The United Kingdom executive director to the IMF has now been authorised to increase Her Majesty's Government's earlier offer to an interest subisidy sufficient, at present interest and exchange rates, to subsidise lending rising to 1 billion SDRs (the equivalent of £750 million). This is more than double our earlier offer.

The facility will complement the United Kingdom's own initiative for measures to relieve the burdens of bilateral debt servicing of these countries, which I announced last spring in Washington and which we are continuing to press. There is increasing international recognition of the need to relieve the debt burdens of the poorest African countries, provided they are pursuing sustained programmes of economic reform.

Additional funds will be made available to the overseas aid programme to cover the costs of this increased contribution. The additional costs in 1988-89 will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the total of planned public expenditure.

The prospect of this additional contribution has been warmly welcomed by the IMF managing director and is being made on the basis that appropriate contributions will be made by other major countries and that differentially favourable access will be given to those in greatest need, especially the low-income heavily-indebted countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Employment

Mr. Adley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect of the recent fall of share prices on the level of employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The forecast published in the Autumn Statement took account of the fall in world stock markets. While this inevitably made the prospect more uncertain, growth of 2½ per cent. (3 per cent. for the non-oil economy) was forecast, holding out the prospect of further falls in unemployment.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an estimate of the number of people buying homes in the United Kingdom with the benefit of mortgage tax relief over the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that about 8·4 million tax units are benefiting from mortgage interest relief in 1987-88.

Capital Gains Tax

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the cost to the Exchequer for the last year of capital gains tax relief where compulsory purchase has been involved; and how many cases there have been.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About £3 million on the basis of receipts in 1986-87. Information is not held centrally on which to base an estimate of the number of cases involved.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Electricity Council and British Gas about the implications for their industries and consumers of the proceedings on the levying of value added tax, initiated in the European Court of Justice on 15 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The European Court of Justice is not expected to issue its judgment until some time in the new year. The judgment's detailed implications, if any, for individual industries will need to be assessed when the judgment is issued. The Government have not yet held discussions with the Electricity Council or British Gas.

Job Creation

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to his reply of 9 December, how many of the jobs created between 1983 *(a)* in manufacturing industry and *(b)* in the services sector were in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Estimates of self-employment by industry are not available for Scotland. The table sets out the figures for employees in employment in manufacturing and in services, along with estimates of total employees in employment, total self-employment in Scotland, and total employment.

Employment in Scotland (thousands, mid-year)
(changes on a year earlier in brackets)

	Employees in Employment				
	Manufacturing	*Services*	*Total (Manufacturing Services and other)*	*Self-employment Total*	*Total Employment*
1983	444	1,216	1,899	179	2,078
1984	434	1,231	1,901	185	2,086
	(−10)	(+15)	(+2)	(+6)	(+8)
1985	430	1,244	1,904	200	2,104
	(−4)	(+13)	(+3)	(+15)	(+18)
1986	410	1,260	1,888	205	2,093
	(−20)	(+16)	(−16)	(+5)	(−11)
Change between 1983-1986	−34	+44	−11	+26	(+15)

Some of the decrease in the figure for manufacturing will be the result of the reclassification of jobs such as industrial cleaning, catering, computer services and road haulage previously done by manufacturers' own employees and now done by subcontractors. This developing feature of our economy has the effect of exaggerating the extent of the move from manufacturing to service sector employment. Service sector and total employment in Scotland have increased since 1983.

Rating Reform

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide that payment of community charge by farmers on behalf of employees dwelling in tied accommodation shall be tax deductible.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* We have no such plans. Under existing law, any employer who pays any tax for an employee as part of the latter's remuneration package can normally claim a deduction for tax purposes. However, an employee whose remuneration package includes the payment of any tax on his behalf would normally be taxed on the benefit.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Appraisal)

87. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress is being made in appraising the performance of civil servants.

Mr. Luce: All Departments have introduced or are introducing staff appraisal systems for all non-industrial staff. These systems assess the results achieved by staff against agreed objectives. They have been generally well received by staff and managers alike.

Ethnic Minority Recruitment

88. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what information he has collected on the level of recruitment from ethnic minority groups into the Civil Service open structure grades and their training grades.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service Commissioners have been monitoring the ethnic origin of applicants to all their recruitment schemes since September 1986. The progress of candidates is being analysed, including the main fast-stream recruitment. The first year's results will be published in the commissioners' 1987 annual report.

Recruitment

92. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what are the implications for his policy on training of the current level of Civil Service recruitment.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service has much to offer new recruits with a range of induction, vocational and management training and has the ability to vary that provision to meet fluctuations in demand.

Civil Service College

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what professional qualifications can be gained by those studying at the Civil Service College.

Mr. Luce: Civil servants studying at the Civil Service college may gain the following professional qualifications: the certificate and diploma in public sector internal audit and accounting awarded by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA); the professional qualification of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) which offers the designated letters MIAA; the National Computer Centre certificate in systems analysis and design; the Institute of Personnel Management's full professional qualification and certificate in personnel practice, and the certificate of the Institute of Training and Development.

The college also monitors the content, quality and results of training undertaken by civil servants in other educational establishments which leads to the parts I and II examinations of the British Computer Society.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship

68. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what was the level of business sponsorship of the arts in 1986-87; and what forecast he has made of future levels.

Mr. Luce: The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts estimates a figure of £25 million in 1986-87. I expect the level to continue to rise.

Funding

70. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will explain in more detail the background to his announcement to increase arts funding for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: My announcement of a substantial increase in arts funding for 1988-89 and the two subsequent years

represented an important practical step towards the implementation of the long-term plan for the funding of the arts which I outlined in my speech in Newcastle in July. The average increase in allocations of 10 per cent. next year is intended to get this new approach off to a good start and to encourage arts insitutions to become more self-reliant in their development and growth.

79. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the Arts Council to discuss the level of funding for the arts in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman and secretary-general of the Arts Council on several occasions before announcing the level of the council's grant-in-aid for 1988-89 on 5 November. The council will keep me advised of its plans for the distribution of the grant-in-aid.

Aldeburgh Foundation

71. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last visited the Aldeburgh Foundation; and what was the outcome of the visit.

Mr. Luce: I visited the Aldeburgh Foundation on 4 November and was very encouraged by what I saw. The foundation has increased its audiences by over 30 per cent. over the last year, and has turned a substantial loss into a profit, in the course of four years.

West Midlands

72. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the director of Midlands Arts to discuss the level of funding for the arts in the west midlands in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I expect to meet the director when I visit the west midlands region early in 1988. It is for the Arts Council to determine the distribution of its grant-in-aid to the regions and between different art forms.

Public Lending Right

73. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he has any plans to increase the funding of the public lending right scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: As I announced in answer to a written question on 5 November, at column *848*, the annual fund will be increased by £0·75 million to £3·5 million from 1988-89. This represents an increase of 27 per cent. and is the second substantial increase in three years. It will raise the fund in real terms to its highest level since the scheme was implemented.

Funding

74. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the director of Merseyside Arts to discuss the level of funding for the arts on Merseyside in 1988-89.

78. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of Southern Arts to discuss the level of funding for the arts in southern England for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I announced the Arts Council's level of grant-in-aid for 1988-89 on 5 November. It is for the council to determine its distribution of those moneys to individual regions.

British Library Project

75. **Mr. Butler** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether the cost of the British Library project is included in the recently announced 17 per cent. settlement of arts funding over the next three years.

Mr. Luce: No. The three-year settlement of arts funding excludes the costs of the British Library capital project at St. Pancras, which will continue to be reviewed annually in the usual way.

Museums and Galleries

76. **Mr. Martin:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what provision will be made for the building and maintenance of national museums and galleries in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: As I announced on 5 November, at columns *848-50*, I intend that not less than £6 million of the increase in provision for museums and galleries in 1988-89 will be devoted to strengthening the building and maintenance programme of the national museums and galleries. This represents a rise of over 20 per cent.

I shall be announcing shortly the detailed allocation for each institution.

77. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister for the Arts which national museums and galleries have sold items from their collections over the past three years.

Mr. Luce: The majority of national museums and galleries have powers, on certain conditions, to dispose of items from their collections either by sale, exchange or gift. Whether and to what extent they do so is for the trustees and director of each institution to determine. Since 1985, the following national museums and galleries sponsored by my Department have sold items from their collections: British museum; Victoria and Albert museum; National Maritime museum; British museum (Natural History).

Photography (Funding)

80. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the level of funding for photography in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I meet the chairman at regular intervals, but it is for the Arts Council to decide the level of funding of any particular art form.

Greater London Arts

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet Greater London Arts to discuss arts funding in London for 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so, but I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) today.

Subsidised Art Bodies

82. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how he intends to encourage subsidised arts bodies to become more self-reliant in their development and growth.

Mr. Luce: I have included substantial sums for incentive funding in the arts budget for next year and the two succeeding years. I intend this money to be used to help arts bodies improve their financial viability, and especially their trading activities. The Arts Council is conducting consultations on its schemes for incentive funding, and parallel developments are in train with other bodies funded by my Department.

I have also substantially increased the budget for the successful business sponsorship incentive scheme, and am considering further measures to stimulate arts marketing.

London (Arts Funding)

83. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what will be the level of financial support for the arts in London in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: The level of financial support for the arts in London is not determined centrally. Substantial assistance will be provided to London arts organisations from the central Government's arts programme out of my office's grants-in-aid of the Arts Council, the British Film Institute, the Crafts Council, the national museums and galleries, the British Library, and other bodies. In addition, the arts in London enjoy considerable support from local authorities in London and the Greater London Arts Association. Moreover, London has a thriving and successful commercial arts sector, the main financial support of which comes from those who use its services.

Wales (Funding)

84. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he plans to meet the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council to discuss the level of funding for the arts in Wales in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I have no immediate plans to do so. I have announced the Arts Council's grant-in-aid for 1988-89, and the council will now determine the share for Wales.

Welsh Arts Council

85. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met representatives of the Welsh Arts Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I met the chairman informally recently.

Scotland (Funding)

86. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what will be the level of financial support for the arts in Scotland in 1988-89.

Mr. Luce: I have announced the level of the grant-in-aid to the Arts Council, and it is now for the council to determine the sum available for Scotland. I understand that an announcement is expected in the near future.

David Shepherd (Art Exhibition)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Minister for the Arts if his Department has considered an application for an art exhibition by David Shepherd to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Luce: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for an exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 11 to 15 January 1988.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Solicitors Complaints Bureau

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Attorney-General how many firms of solicitors have been reported to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau as practising uncertificated in the years 1985, 1986 and 1987.

The Attorney-General: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if, in the light of the guidance in paragraph 9 of the note on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers and ministerial responsibility for the release of information to the media, she will review the relationship between her press office and the media.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if she will amend the note of guidance on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants so as to extend to retired civil servants the same privileges on the publication of memoirs as are extended to Ministers.

The Prime Minister: No. The principles and conventions governing publications by former members of the public services are as set out in part IV of the report of the Committee of Privy Councillors on Ministerial Memoirs, Cmnd. 6386.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the difficulties confronting civil servants in the exercise of their duties to present Government policies and decisions, pursuant to paragraph 3 of the note of guidance on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants in relation to Ministers by the head of the Home Civil Service.

The Prime Minister: Apart from the questions from the hon. Member, I have received no such representations.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement outlining the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the financial problems facing the European Economic Community as set out at the recent Copenhagen Councils, with particular reference to the conditions required to be met before Her Majesty's Government agree to an increase in own resources.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on Tuesday 8 December, at columns 167 to 168, on the outcome of the Copenhagen European Council.

Inner Cities

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Prime Minister which Minister has the principal responsibility for job creation in the inner cities, including the establishment of new businesses; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's aim is to create a climate which encourages and harnesses enterprise in the inner cities and to remove barriers against private investment, jobs and prosperity. It is the responsibility of all Ministers whose policies affect inner cities to further those objectives.

British National Space Centre

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Prime Minister what funds have been made available to the British national space centre for the collaborative programme with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, announced after her visit to Moscow in March; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The British national space centre will consider funding any proposals for collaborative space science projects with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics within its existing budget. The British national space centre has supported three scientists to work with the USSR on a mission to Mars and its moon Phobos, and is currently discussing other possible collaborations in a number of fields, including X-ray astronomy, solar terrestrial physics and planetary science.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Development and the Environment (Dakar Conference)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many members of the official British delegation to the Dakar European-African conference on development and the environment will be in charge of media and public relations tasks;

(2) if he will list the members of Her Majesty's Government's delegation to the Dakar European-African conference on development and the environment in January 1988.

Mr. Eggar: The exact composition and delegation will depend on the conference papers, which have not yet been received. We would expect public relations tasks and the media to be handled by the conference organisers.

Ethiopia (Wheat)

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the largest quantity of wheat which could be delivered to a value of £1,000, to a given port in Ethiopia, if the wheat was *(a)* bought in the market in an EEC member state, *(b)* bought from EEC intervention stores or *(c)* bought at the cheapest price on the world market.

Mr. Eggar: On the basis of the most recent tender for United Kingdom food aid to Ethiopia, £1,000 would cover the total costs of the delivery to a port in Ethiopia of 7·3 tonnes of wheat whether purchased on the Community market or from EC intervention stocks. However, since much of the cost is borne on the EC agriculture budget, expenditure of £1,000 from the United Kingdom aid budget allows the delivery of 16 tonnes of wheat.

We have been informed by the World Food Programme that, on the basis of its cheapest recent tender on the world market, £1,000 would cover the cost of the delivery of 17·5 tonnes of wheat to its (different) specification to a port in Ethiopia.

Third World (Sugar)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking in order to aid those Third world countries which are over dependent on the production of sugar to diversify from their production towards other commodities.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development gave the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 24 November, at column *118*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pollution

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, column 1194, 19 November, to the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), what conclusions he has reached on the need to take action in relation to fish and shellfish quality, water quality, conditions at sea disposal sites, and the effect of contaminants in relation to the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: At the international conference on 24-25 November, North sea Ministers agreed on a range of measures to protect the North sea. These were listed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 30 November at column *416-7*.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what legal proceedings have been instituted in respect of the United Kingdom's enforcement of a 75 per cent. European Community or British nationals manning level requirement on fishing vessels operating under the British flag; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implications of the Jader agreement, of 19 May, relating to manning levels on fishing vessels.

Mr. Gummer: As from 1 January 1986 the Fisheries Ministers introduced new licensing conditions aimed at ensuring that vessels fishing against the United Kingdom's quotas have a real economic link with this country. These conditions provided

(i) that the vessel must operate from the United Kingdom, Channel Islands or Isle of Man;

(ii) that at least 75 per cent. of the crew must be British citizens, or EEC nationals (excluding Spanish and Portuguese nationals under the transitional arrangements on the free movement of workers provided for in the treaty of accession), ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom or Islands;

(iii) that the skipper and all the crew must be contributing to national insurance in the United Kingdom or Islands.

On 24 April 1986 judicial review proceedings were initiated by Agegate Ltd., a vessel-owning company

incorporated in this country but with predominantly Spanish shareholders, seeking a declaration that licence conditions (ii) and (iii) were contrary to the EEC treaty. On 1 December 1986 an order of reference was made from the High Court, Queen's Bench Division, to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg requesting a preliminary ruling under article 177 of the EEC treaty on the Community law questions involved. The European Court of Justice has yet to give its ruling on these questions.

On 22 May 1987, a further reference was made by the High Court, Queen's Bench Division, to the European Court of Justice for a preliminary ruling on certain questions raised in judicial review proceedings by Jaderow Ltd. and a number of other vessel-owning companies incorporated in this country but beneficially owned in large part by Spanish interests. The questions concerned the compatibility with Community law of licence condition (i). The judicial review proceedings which were stayed pending the preliminary ruling of the European Court of Justice, concerned our proposal to revoke the licences of a number of vessels owned by Jaderow and the other applicants which had in our view failed to comply with this condition in the six-month period January to July 1986.

The agreement to which my hon. Friend refers was signed by leading counsel on both sides of the judicial review proceedings and provided that the applicants' vessels would, thenceforth and until judgment was given, comply with condition (i), in return for an undertaking on our behalf not to take enforcement action against the applicants (or others in a similar position) for breach of this condition with respect to the period between 1 January 1986 and 30 June 1987 or to seek to enforce licence conditions (ii) and (iii) above until judgment was given in the Agegate case. This agreement formally debars us for the time being from enforcing the licence conditions on the nationality, residence and national insurance status of the crews of British fishing vessels, which would in any case have been impossible to enforce effectively pending the ruling of the European Court of Justice on their compatibility with the Community law. The agreement does however provide for compliance by the vessels concerned with the licence condition on operating from the United Kingdom.

Merchant Shipping Bill

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning part 2 of the Merchant Shipping Bill since its publication.

Mr. Gummer: I have received a number of expressions of support for the proposed legislation, from hon. Members and others. The Secretary of State for Transport is of course responsible for the Merchant Shipping Bill as a whole.

Farms

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of farms in the United Kingdom which are in the size range of *(a)* under 100 acres, *(b)* between 100 and 199 acres, *(c)* between 200 and 299 acres, *(d)* between 300 and 399 acres, *(d)* between 400 and 499 acres, *(f)* between 500 and 599 acres, *(g)* between 600 and 699 acres, *(h)* between 700 and 799 acres, *(j)* between 800 and 899 acres, *(k)* between 900 and 999 acres and *(l)* over 1,000 acres.

Mr. Gummer: The distribution by size of the main agricultural holdings in the United Kingdom at June 1986 is given in the table. This is based on the size groups which are closest to those requested and for which data are readily available.

Total area hectares (ha)	*Number of holdings*
Under 40 ha (99 acres)	161,947
40 and under 50 ha (124 acres)	16,089
50 and under 100 ha (247 acres)	42,187
100 and under 200 ha (494 acres)	24,756
200 and under 300 ha (741 acres)	7,090
300 ha (741 acres) and over	7,729
Total main holdings	259,798

Notes: Excludes minor holdings.
Total area on each holding includes crops and grass, sole right rough grazing, woodland and other land.

Forestry Management

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food from which budgets he envisages the grants for forestry management and diversification outlined in his set-aside proposals for an extensification scheme coming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Provision has been made in the latest public expenditure survey for the cost of payments to farmers under the extensification scheme for setting aside land from cereals and putting it to fallow, woodland or non-agricultural use. 25 per cent. of United Kingdom expenditure under the scheme will be eligible for reimbursement from the Community's European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund.

EC Surplus

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the need for a more systematic distribution of EEC surplus food that could be organised by charities; and what has been his response.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* I have received a number of representations about this in recent weeks. I am continuing close consultations with the main charitable organisations and have explained to those concerned that the Government are still considering the implications of the European Community free food scheme.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that a further free distribution of surplus EEC food is made available to needy families during the winter period.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* The Council of Ministers has now adopted a permanent scheme for distribution of free food from intervention stocks. The Government are considering the implications of this in close consultation with the main charitable organisations.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek powers to prohibit the dumping of sewage sludge in Channel waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* No. This Ministry has all the necessary powers and uses them in order, among other things, to ensure protection of the marine environment, the living resources which it supports and human health, and to prevent interference with legitimate uses of the sea.

SCOTLAND

Doctors' Lists

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many doctors' practice lists are *(a)* under 1,000, *(b)* under 1,200 and *(c)* under 1,500 in size.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 1 October 1986, the latest date for which this information is available, there were *(a)* 779 doctors with a list size of less than 1,000, *(b)* 982 doctors with a list size of less than 1,200 and *(c)* 1,316 doctors with a list size of less than 1,500.

Rating Reform

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the application of the community charge to members of monastic communities; and if it is his intention to propose any amendments to the law in relation to such people.

Mr. Lang: The position of members of religious orders under the community charge proposals is still under consideration.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he now intends to make in respect of student nurses under the poll tax legislation.

Mr. Lang: Student nurses, like other adults, will be liable for the personal community charge and eligible for community charge rebates in appropriate circumstances.

Local Authorities (Rates)

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many members of Scottish local authorities are not liable to pay rates.

Mr. Lang: Information on the personal financial or other domestic circumstances of councillors is not held centrally.

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table similar to that on page 34 of the "Scottish Economic Bulletin No. 35" showing expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry in Scotland for each year since 1976-77 at *(a)* cash and *(b)* constant 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Lang: Gross expenditure on regional preferential assistance in Scotland for each year since 1976-77 at cash and constant 1986-87 prices is given in the table.

Expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry in Scotland
Fiscal year (at cash prices)

£ million

	1976-77	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Local Employment Act:											
Grants	0·7	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scottish Development Agency Act:											
Land and factory building	9·5	18·6	27·8	37·8	47·3	55·1	46·4	43·6	23·3	23·8	20·2
Loans to small tourist enterprises	—	—	0·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Industrial Development:											
Regional Selective Assistance	12·9	19·3	14·9	17·8	22·3	19·6	20·2	24·7	31·8	48·1	35·4
Regional Development Grants	108·2	105·0	107·3	70·2	113·3	142·7	287·3	143·0	109·2	107·5	170·2
Highlands and Islands Development Board:											
Grants	2·5	3·1	4·1	4·6	6·4	7·0	8·7	11·9	12·0	12·7	12·8
Land and factory building	—	0·8	2·0	3·9	4·9	4·8	6·9	5·4	10·9	4·9	3·0
Other Assistance:											
Investment Grants	0·6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tourism (Development of Tourism Act 1969 Section 4)	0·7	1·0	1·3	1·6	1·9	2·0	—	—	—	—	—
Regional Employment Premium	78·8	1·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Small Firms Employment Subsidy	—	0·7	1·5	7·4	2·0	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total gross expenditure	213·9	150·1	159·0	143·3	198·1	231·2	369·5	228·6	187·2	197·0	241·6

Notes:

1. From 1982-83, expenditure outside Assisted Areas, on land and factory building under the Scottish Development Agency Act has been excluded.
2. The Scottish Tourist Board took over responsibility for loans to small tourist enterprises in August 1982. Loans are now available in non-assisted areas also and the scheme is therefore no longer regarded as part of Regional Preferential Assistance (RPA).
3. RSA is provided under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and its predecessors.
4. HIDB loans and equity are classed as non-preferential as these are deemed to be similar to non-preferential assistance outside the HIDB area.
5. HIDB expenditure on land and factory building prior to 1977-78 is not separately identifiable.
6. Assistance under the Development of Tourism Act 1969, Section 4 was extended to non-assisted areas in August 1982 and is therefore no longer regarded as part of RPA.
7. Small Firms Employment Subsidy was ended in March 1980.
8. The 1979-80 total for Small Firms Employment Subsidy excludes estimated non-regionally preferential payments.

Expenditure on regional preferential assistance to industry in Scotland
Fiscal year (at constant 1986-87 prices)

£ million

	1976-77	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Local Employment Act:											
Grants	1·7	0·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scottish Development Agency Act:											
Land and factory building	23·3	40·1	54·1	62·9	66·4	70·5	55·4	49·7	25·5	24·5	20·2
Loans to small tourist enterprises	—	—	0·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Industrial Development:											
Regional Selective Assistance	31·7	41·5	28·9	29·7	31·3	25·1	24·1	28·2	34·7	49·6	35·4
Regional Development Grants	265·4	226·1	208·8	116·9	159·1	182·5	342·7	163·1	119·4	110·7	170·2
Highlands and Islands Development Board:											
Grants	6·1	6·7	8·0	7·7	9·0	9·0	10·4	13·6	13·1	13·1	12·8
Land and factory building	—	1·7	3·9	6·5	6·9	6·1	8·2	6·2	11·9	5·0	3·0
Other Assistance:											
Investment Grants	1·5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tourism (Development of Tourism Act 1969 Section 4)	1·7	2·2	2·5	2·7	2·7	2·6	—	—	—	—	—
Regional Employment Premium	193·3	3·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Small Firms Employment Subsidy	—	1·5	2·9	12·3	2·8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total gross expenditure	524·7	323·2	309·3	238·7	278·2	295·8	440·8	260·8	204·6	202·9	241·6

Joint Planning

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is satisfied with the adequacy of the existing arrangements for joint planning between health boards and local authorities; and if he has any plans to make joint planning between health boards and local authorities a statutory requirement, as provided for in section 5 of the National Health Service (Amendment) Act 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are satisfied that the existing voluntary arrangements for joint planning as revised in April 1985 provide a suitable framework and that generally boards are making progress in preparing and implementing joint plans. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to introduce mandatory arrangements. We are, however, closely monitoring progress on the preparation of joint plans, and health boards are aware of the need to complete outstanding plans as quickly as possible.

Long-stay Hospitals

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement with regard to his Department's policy on long-stay hospitals in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government's policy in relation to the long-stay hospitals continues to be based on the SHAPE report which gave the highest priority to long-stay services. The share of revenue expenditure allocated to these services has increased between 1981-82 and 1985-86 from 35·25 per cent. to 38·61 per cent., and it is expected that this shift will continue.

Youth Training

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of YTS participants found employment within *(a)* three months and *(b)* six months of leaving schemes based in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen.

Mr. Lang: Information is not available in the form requested. Of those who left YTS in the 15-month period

from April 1986 to June 1987 (the latest figures available) the proportion in employment three months after leaving the scheme was as follows:

	per cent.
Glasgow City	47
Lothian and Borders (including Edinburgh)	58
Grampian and Tayside (including Dundee and Aberdeen)	58

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen, the YTS schemes available in the fiscal year 1988-89, the number of places in each schemes and the number of weekly hours training involved in each scheme.

Mr. Lang: The Manpower Services Commission has not yet concluded contracts with managing agents for YTS places in 1988-89. Apart from work experience and on-the-job training two-year YTS trainees receive a minimum of 20 weeks off-the-job training and one-year YTS trainees receive a minimum of 13 weeks. In either case, the actual amount will vary according to the needs of individual schemes.

Job Creation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of new jobs he expects to be created in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen in the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Lang: Such estimates are not available. Overall prospects for the Scottish economy appear favourable and this can only be beneficial for employment prospects in the four cities referred to.

Council House Sales

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to bring the Scottish law in relation to the compulory sale of council houses adapted for the disabled into line with the legislation affecting England and Wales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Private Medical Companies (Debts)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the debts owed by private medical companies to *(a)* the National Health Service Scotland and *(b)* the National Health Service Clydesdale area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the debts owed to individual health boards is not held centrally. If the hon. Member wishes to write seeking information from the chairman of the Lanarkshire health board about the matter, I suggest it would be helpful if he could clarify what he means by the term "private medical companies".

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Hone Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in East Lothian by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	74	—	84	—
1984-85	48	−35·1	52	−38·1
1985-86	167	+247·9	172	+230·8
1986-87	350	+109·6	350	+103·5

Mr. Doran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Aberdeen, South constituency by the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information in respect of the Scottish Development Agency is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	136	—	135	—
1984-85	144	+5·9	157	+1·3
1985-86	420	+191·7	433	+175·8
1986-87	281	−33·1	281	−35·1

The constituency is outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	30	—	34	—
1984-85	—	—	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	—
1986-87	47	—	47	—

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms, and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes year on year.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	67	—	76	—
1984-85	79	+17·9	86	+13·2
1985-86	67	−15·2	69	−19·8
1986-87	79	+17·9	79	+14·5

Mr. Eadie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Midlothian constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	135	—	154	—
1984-85	371	+174·8	405	+163·0
1985-86	72	−80·6	74	−81·7
1986-87	165	+129·6	165	+123·0

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Hamilton constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	167	—	190	—
1984-85	39	−76·6	43	−77·4
1985-86	193	+394·9	199	+362·8
1986-87	43	−77·7	43	−78·4

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Kilmarnock and Loudoun constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	67	—	76	—
1984-85	298	+344·8	326	+328·9
1985-86	32	−89·3	33	−89·9
1986-87	225	+603·1	225	+581·8

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the constituency of Falkirk, West by the Scottish Development Agency or the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms, based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information in respect of the Scottish Development Agency is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	154	—	176	—
1984-85	166	+7·8	181	+2·8
1985-86	—	—	—	—
1986-87	—	—	—	—

The constituency is outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Glasgow, Maryhill by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	—	—	—	—
1984-85	55	—	60	—
1985-86	—	—	—	—
1986-87	—	—	—	—

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the constituency of Glasgow, Hillhead by the Scottish Development Agency and in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	24	—	27	—
1984-85	31	+29·2	34	+25·9
1985-86	281	+806·5	289	+750·0
1986-87	675	+140·2	675	+133·6

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the constituency of Fife, Central by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is

available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	154	—	176	—
1984-85	187	+21·4	204	+15·9
1985-86	—	—	—	—
1986-87	146	—	146	—

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Edinburgh Central by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	100	—	114	—
1984-85	180	+80.0	197	+72·8
1985-86	304	+68·9	313	+58·9
1986-87	184	−39·5	184	−41·2

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the total amounts paid to projects in Greenock and Port Glasgow by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	356	—	406	—
1984-85	52	−85·4	57	−86·0
1985-86	158	+203·8	163	+186·0
1986-87	61	−61·4	61	−62·6

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Dunfermline, West constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	303	—	346	—
1984-85	5	−98·3	5	−98·6
1985-86	95	+1,800·0	98	+1,860·0
1986-87	130	+36·8	130	+32·7

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Livingston by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	840	—	958	—
1984-85	18	−97·9	20	−97·9
1985-86	800	+4,344·4	824	+4,020·0
1986-87	1,101	+37·6	1,101	+33·6

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Paisley, South constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	—	—	—	—
1984-85	90	—	98	—
1985-86	12	−86·7	12	−87·8
1986-87	21	+75·0	21	+75·0

Mr. Lambie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the constituency of Cunninghame, South by the Scottish Development Agency or the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information in respect of the Scottish Development Agency is available only from 1983-1984 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	8	—	9	—
1984-85	—	—	—	—
1985-86	210	—	216	—
1986-87	129	−38·6	129	−40·3

The constituency is outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. John Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Monklands, East by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	26	—	30	—
1984-85	49	+88·5	54	+80·0
1985-86	4	−91·8	4	−92·6
1986-87	125	+3025·0	125	+3025·0

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	506	—	577	—
1984-85	257	−49·2	281	−51·3
1985-86	247	−3·9	254	−9·6
1986-87	50	−79·8	50	−80·3

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the constituency of East Kilbride by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms, and *(b)* real terms, based upon 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987):* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	152	—	173	—
1984-85	108	−28·9	118	−31·8
1985-86	72	−33·3	74	−37·3
1986-87	360	+400·0	360	+386·5

Mr. John McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Dundee, East constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices and showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real Terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	5	—	6	—
1984-85	32	+540·0	35	+483·3
1985-86	138	+331·3	142	+305·7
1986-87	120	−13·0	120	−15·5

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amount paid to projects in the Dundee, West constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real Terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	124	—	141	—
1984-85	263	+112·1	287	+103·5
1985-86	409	+55·5	421	+46·7
1986-87	1945	+375·6	1945	+362·0

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amount paid to projects in the Renfrewshire, West and Inverclyde constituency by the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information in respect of the Scottish Development Agency is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	*Percentage change*	*Real terms £000*	*Percentage change*
1983-84	298	—	340	—
1984-85	72	−75·8	79	−76·8
1985-86	107	+48·6	110	+39·2
1986-87	28	−73·8	28	−74·5

The constituency is outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Dumbarton constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	487	—	555	—
1984-85	121	−75·2	132	−76·2
1985-86	53	−56·2	55	−58·3
1986-87	48	−9·4	48	−12·7

Mr. Allen Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amount paid to projects in Paisley, North from the Scottish Development Agency since 1979.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Amount Paid £000
1983-84	230
1984-85	187
1985-86	74
1986-87	537

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	232	—	265	—
1984-85	60	−74·1	66	−75·1
1985-86	96	+60·0	99	+50·0
1986-87	251	+161·5	251	+153·5

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in Dunfermline, East by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	17	—	19	—
1984-85	23	+35·3	25	+31·6
1985-86	57	+147·8	59	+136·0
1986-87	270	+373·7	270	+357·6

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amount paid to projects in the Clydesdale constituency by the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979, in real terms based on 1986-87 prices showing the percentage changes and payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 28 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information in respect of the Scottish Development Agency is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	1986-87 prices £000	Percentage change
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	201	+415·4
1985-86	−23·9	23·9
1986-87	55	−64·1

The constituency is outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Clackmannan constituency by the Scottish Development Agency or the Highlands and Islands Development Board in each year since 1979 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information in respect of the Scottish Development Agency is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	5	—	6	—
1984-85	30	+500·0	33	+450·0
1985-86	147	+390·0	151	+357·6
1986-87	53	−63·9	53	−64·9

The constituency is outwith the Highlands and Islands Development Board area.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year since 1979 in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* As a result of changes in constituency boundaries the information is available only from 1983-84 and relates to all recognised schemes of agency financial assistance. The information is set out in the table.

	Cash terms £000	Percentage change	Real terms £000	Percentage change
1983-84	3	—	3	—
1984-85	—	—	—	—
1985-86	—	—	—	—
1986-87	106	—	106	—

Hospital Beds

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year

since 1979 (i) the number of National Health Services in-patient beds in the Dundee, East constituency and (ii) the number of National Health Services staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: This information is not available centrally on a constituency basis.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Acute Beds

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list by each district health authority the number of acute beds in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 8 December at column *138*.

Mr. J. A. Smith

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects Mr. J. A. Smith of 195 New Cheveley Road, Newmarket, whose treatment has been the subject of correspondence with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, to see an orthopaedic consultant at Newmarket hospital.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that Mr. Smith is being offered an appointment for the week commencing 14 December.

Whipps Cross Hospital

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services for what reason Whipps Cross hospital has been placed on red warning for admissions; what are the implications for services *(a)* now and *(b)* during the rest of the winter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Waltham Forest health authority is responsible for services at Whipps Cross hospital. I am advised that it has recently had to make some restrictions on admission because of increased winter pressure, staff shortages, and a ward closed for the decant of patients for the start of phase I of the redevelopment of the hospital.

NHS (Expenditure)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of the National Health Service in 1957 and in 1986; and what is the change in real terms, after allowing for inflation.

Mr. Newton: Total National Health Service expenditure in Great Britain in 1957-58 was approximately £720 million* and in 1986-87 was £18,920 million. This represents an increase in real terms (compared with general inflation) of 207 per cent.

* This is an estimated figure which has been adjusted to exclude certain local authority health spending which since 1969-70 has not been part of NHS provision.

Family Planning

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to update and reissue the 1974 memorandum of guidance on family planning in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: The principles underlying this memorandum remain relevant for those responsible for family planning provision. We have no plans to revise it.

Primary Health Care (Brochure)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of producing and distributing the brochure on primary health care recently issued by his Department.

Mr. Newton: Production of the brochure and delivery to distribution points cost £77,800. Personal copies were then sent to some 70,000 doctors, dentists, opticians and pharmacists in the United Kingdom. Distribution was arranged locally by family practitioner committees and health boards. Details of these and other incidental costs are not available centrally.

AIDS

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is available to him on the proportion of patients attending sexually transmitted diseases clinics in the area covered by *(a)* the Yorkshire regional health authority and *(b)* the Pontefract district health authority, that have been tested, and have proved HIV positive.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available centrally. However, by 30 September 1987, a total of 218 HIV antibody positive reports had been received by the communicable diseases surveillance centre from the Yorkshire region. More detailed information of the kind requested may be available locally and the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the relevant health authorities.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the current doubling time of AIDS infections amongst heterosexuals.

Mr. Newton: Far too few cases have been reported so far for an estimate to be made of the doubling time in numbers with AIDS. To the end of November 1987, only 43 cases of AIDS thought to have been transmitted through heterosexual contact had been reported in the United Kingdom. Thirty four of these are thought to have acquired the infection overseas. There is no information on the doubling time of infection in heterosexuals at large, although the absolute level of infection in non drug misusing heterosexuals is thought to be very low indeed.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will print in the *Official Report* the text of advice in the light of the threat from AIDS, given by his Department to doctors and dentists exposed to large amounts of saliva in their professional work.

Mr. Newton: Guidance for surgeons, anaesthetists and dentists concerning HIV infection (AIDS Booklet 3) was sent out with a covering note (CMO(86)7) in April 1986. This states:

> *Salivary route.* HTLV III has been isolated from saliva, although it has not been implicated in the transmission of infection for example following kissing. Nevertheless, in view of the theoretical possibility of transmission and because saliva may be contaminated with blood particularly during dental and other surgical procedures within the mouth, for practical purposes the transmission

of HTLV III must be considered a possibility by those exposed to large amounts of saliva during their professional work.

Specific advice reads:

Protective clothing, including gowns and gloves must be worn by those dental personnel directly involved in dental procedures and in view of the aerosols containing blood and saliva that may be generated by low and high speed dental drills, ultrasonic scalers and irrigation/air syringes, the wearing of protective eyewear and masks is essential. High volume evacuation systems must be used and conventional scaling techniques are recommended.

Health Authorities (Chairmen)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of reference laid down by him for each of the chairpersons of health authorities in England; and on what date a change was last made to those terms of reference.

Mr. Newton: Chairmen of health authorities are expected to provide leadership to members and staff so that the highest standards of service are provided to patients within available resources and responsive to local needs as interpreted in the context of national and regional policies.

Health Bodies (Payments)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the basis of reimbursement of incurred expenses, or the payment of fees or salaries to *(a)* chairpersons and *(b)* vice-chairpersons, of regional and district health authorities and *(c)* chairpersons of family practitioner committees, in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Chairmen of regional and district health authorities in England are entitled to receive remuneration of £11,259 per annum. From 1 April 1988 remuneration of £5,000 per annum will be available to chairmen of family practitioner committees. Vice-chairmen are not paid but along with chairmen and other members can claim travel and subsistence allowance in accordance with the National Health Service and English and Welsh National Boards for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (Travelling Allowances, Etc) Determination 1983 at current rates. Hospitality allowances of £1,250 and £1,000 per annum are available to chairmen of regional and district health authorities, respectively. Chairmen of family practitioner committees have an available hospitality allowance of £125 per annum.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the change in the number of beds in *(a)* Yorkshire regional health authority and *(b)* the Pontefract district health authority for each year since 1982, including whatever data are available for 1987.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is given in the table. The number of in-patient cases treated by Yorkshire regional health authority has increased by 15·7 per cent. from 454,013 in 1982 to 525,296 in 1986. The numbers of such cases treated by Pontefract district health authority has also increased by 14·1 per cent. over the same period from 19,945 to 22,765.

Changes in the average daily number of available beds in Yorkshire regional health authority and Pontefract district health authority

	Yorkshire	*Pontefract*
Available beds		
1982	28,488·2	864·5
1983	28,033·6	883·0
1984	27,470·3	904·0
1985	26,793·4	884·9
1986	25,676·2	880·6
Change in numbers of beds		
1982 to 1983	−454·6	18·5
1983 to 1984	−563·3	21·0
1984 to 1985	−676·9	−19·1
1985 to 1986	−1,117·2	−4·3

Nurses

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year over the past 10 years *(a)* the total number of all nurses in the National Health Service, *(b)* the number of trainee nurses joining the National Health Service and *(c)* the number of all nurses leaving the National Health Service, expressed as both a figure and a percentage figure.

Mr. Newton: Information about the total number of nursing and midwifery staff, and the number of trainee nurses joining the National Health Service is given in the table.

England

Year	*Nursing and midwifery staff in post at 30 September WTE*[1,2,3]	*Number of students and pupils entering basic nurse training Year ending 31 March*[4,5]
1977	343,200	33,300
1978	351,000	29,410
1979	358,400	35,370
1980	370,100	32,620
1981	391,800	30,920
1982	397,100	31,800
1983	397,100	29,840
1984	397,500	24,970
1985	401,200	25,530
1986	402,700	23,700

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest one hundred (110) whole time equivalents and include qualified and unqualified staff and learners.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Not adjusted for the reduction in nurses' contractual working hours (from 40 to 37·5 per week) during 1980-81.

[4] Actual figures for England are not available prior to 1984. Figures are therefore assumed to be 95 per cent. of those for England and Wales.

[5] Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

Information about nurses leaving the National Health Service is not available centrally. However, the most commonly accepted estimate for qualified nursing and midwifery staff is 10 per cent. a year. This means that in the year ending 30 September 1986 some 23,500 left the service, but this includes retirements and those leaving to have a family.

Radiotherapy Departments

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has now completed its

review of the policy relating to the centralising of radiotherapy departments within regional health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Department's review of its guidance to health authorities on the organisation of radiotherapy services is nearing completion.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the purchasing power of the basic state retirement pension in 1970, 1985 and at present, expressed in 1987 money.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the DHSS "Abstract Statistics for Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions," a copy of which is in the Library.

Social Services Records (Access)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has begun consultations with a view to making regulations on access to social services records under the Access to Personal Files Act 1987.

Mr. Newton: We are preparing proposals for the regulations on social services records in England and Wales and intend to consult early in the new year.

Heart Bypass Operations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have died while waiting for coronary artery bypass operations in each regional health authority area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: Such information as may be available is not collected centrally.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will increase resources to local social service departments to meet the cost of providing care for those elderly persons who can no longer benefit from medical care but who require constant attention either in nursing homes or in the community itself; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The level of expenditure on social services is for each local authority to decide in the light of its assessment of local needs, its other responsibilities and the overall level of resources available. Local authorities have no power to provide nursing home care. The provision made by the Government for expenditure on personal social services in 1987-88 includes, in addition to allowances for inflation and demography, an extra 1 per cent. (worth £27 million) to boost developments in community care. Sir Roy Griffiths has been asked to review the way in which public funds are used to support community care policy.

Operating Theatres (Report)

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received following publication of the National Audit Office report, HC143, on the use of operating theatres in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: No representations have been received on this report.

School Phobia

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of school phobia were diagnosed in 1986-87; what is his Department's policy towards the treatment of school phobia; if he has any plans to renew that policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: These figures are not collected centrally. If a child is diagnosed as having a school phobia a child psychiatrist or psychologist would be consulted. Any health services provided would then rest on the clinical judgment of the consultant concerned.

Single Payments

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments and at what cost were made by his Department's offices situated in *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Knowsley, *(c)* Sefton, *(d)* St. Helens, *(e)* Wirral, *(f)* Clwyd and *(g)* Gwynedd during 1986.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers of single payments made during the financial years April 1985 to April 1986 and April 1986 to April 1987 in the Department's local offices will be placed in the Library as soon as possible. The total amounts of those payments for each financial year have been placed in the Library.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amount was paid out in single payments through his Department's offices covering Peckham in 1985-86.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to her on 30 November at column *465*. Further information about single payments for each of the Department's offices has now been placed in the Library.

Nursery Nurses

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has had regarding the financial situation of nursery nurses; and what steps he is taking to improve their position.

Mr. Newton: None. The pay of nursery nurses is determined on the advice of the independent Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives and Health Visitors.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of courses of treatment from general dental practitioners during the last 10 years; what were *(a)* the numbers of courses each year, *(b)* the average numbers of courses each year per dentist, *(c)* the numbers of courses in respect of examinations only, *(d)* the average numbers of courses of examination only, per dentist, *(e)* the numbers of occasional courses per year and per dentist and *(f)* the numbers of uncompleted courses per year and the average per dentist.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table. Information is not available on the number of uncompleted courses of treatment.

England

Year	*Number of courses (thousands)*	*Number of courses per dentist*	*Number of courses of examination only (thousands)*	*Number of courses of examination only per dentist*	*Number of occasional courses (thousands)*	*Number of occasional courses per dentist*
1977	26,972	2,319	7,493	644	1,226	105
1978	27,105	2,298	7,795	661	1,032	87
1979	27,165	2,256	7,873	654	1,007	84
1980	28,614	2,324	8,246	670	1,006	81
1981	29,036	2,280	8,375	658	956	75
1982	29,926	2,272	8,752	665	953	72
1983	30,506	2,246	8,659	637	994	73
1984	30,971	2,215	8,644	618	973	70
1985	31,385	2,201	8,565	601	873	61
1986-87	32,103	2,223	7,843	543	601	42

Note: From 1986 data are collected on a financial year basis.

North Tyneside (Population)

Mr. Ted Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to conduct a review of its population figures for the North Tyneside borough council area for the years since 1983, in the light of discrepancies between the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' figures and those calculated by other agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Officials from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and North Tyneside borough council met last August to review the population figures. As a result of that review an adjustment has been agreed and will be incorporated into the mid-1987 population estimates for North Tyneside.

Benefit Offices (Payments)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of payments covering (i) maternity grants, (ii) death grants and (iii) cold weather by each of his Department's offices in *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Knowsley, *(c)* Sefton, *(d)* St. Helens, *(e)* Wirral, *(f)* Clwyd and *(g)* Gwynedd for 1986-87.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information is not available about the cost of payments of maternity grants and death grants in any particular locality. Information about exceptionally cold weather claims made during the winter of 1986-87 for each local office in Great Britain, including the total amount paid, is in the Library.

Ford Estate, Birkenhead

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider opening a local office of his Department on the Ford estate, Birkenhead.

Mr. Portillo: We have no plans to open an office on the Ford estate, Birkenhead.

Claimants (Urgent Payments)

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what instructions concerning advice to claimants have been issued to his Department's staff, when refusing lump sum urgent needs payments for cookers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's staff are instructed to advise claimants of refusal of a single payment for a cooker by the issue of a special form (Form B03D). This gives a general explanation of the reasons for refusal, explains the right of appeal to an independent tribunal and refers to the citizens' advice bureau and local law centre as sources of help and advice in appealing. It also offers a more detailed explanation of the decision if the claimant requests it.

Low Income Workers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *464*, whether the data on low income workers given in the column headed "Reformed System" 1988-89 take into account proposed changes in housing benefit and the proposed 20 per cent. rate contribution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The estimates take account of all of the main features of the social security reforms to be introduced next April.

Social Fund Commissioner

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to the Social Fund Commissioner about the exercise of her functions under the Social Security Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: The Social Fund Commissioner is fully aware of the duties required of her under section 35 of the Social Security Act 1986, and we do not propose to give her further guidance.

Agency Nurses

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list for 1986 and 1987 each agency that has been used to supply nurses for the National Health Service;

(2) if he will give for each nursing agency the payments made by the National Health Service in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Benefit Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* unemployed, *(c)* chronically sick and

disabled, *(d)* lone parents and *(e)* others will be receiving no increase in benefit in April; and how many (i) receive exactly the same cash payments in April 1988 as prior to April 1988 and (ii) suffer cash losses.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information is not available in precisely the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The available information is shown in table 7A of the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits" which was published at the time of the uprating statement on 27 October and a copy of which is in the Library.

Job Training Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether non-dependants on the job training scheme will be treated as unemployed for the purposes of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987.

Mr. Portillo: Yes, the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 allow for the same non-dependant deduction to be applied to a non-dependant on the job training scheme as is applied to an unemployed person.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, with dates and affected DHSS offices, the meteorological stations at which average weekly temperatures have reached the trigger point for exceptionally severe weather payments during November and December; and if he will detail the steps taken to make this information public.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on which areas of the United Kingdom have so far qualified for severe weather payments during December.

Mr. Scott: One weather station, Fort William, recorded an average weekly temperature below 0 deg Celsius during the week beginning 30 November. This weather station is linked to the Department's offices at Fort William and Oban. Arrangements are in hand to publicise through the local media and local advice centres the availability of exceptionally cold weather payments in the areas covered by these local offices.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if, in the light of the current winter's experience, he will reconsider the appropriateness of the current divisional boundaries between and jurisdictional territories of the Inverness and Fort William offices of his Department respectively, in so far as the eligibility to cold weather payments for claimants living within Skye and Lochalsh district is concerned; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if, in the light of the current winter's experience, he will reconsider the appropriateness of the location of the temperature monitoring stations at Kinloss as the trigger point for eligibility to cold weather payments processed through the Inverness office of his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Weather stations have been linked to local office areas in consultation with the Meteorological Office, taking account of factors such as climatological conditions, the reliability of information produced and the speed with which information could be passed on to the Meteorological Office. The Kinloss and Fort William weather stations were chosen to be linked to the Department's local offices of Inverness and Fort William respectively because they were considered to be representative of the climate for the main centres of population in each of these local office areas.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the light of the current winter's experience of the operation of the cold weather payment scheme, he will reconsider *(a)* the siting of temperature monitoring stations, particularly those located on or near the coast, *(b)* the commencement of the qualifying period of seven days from Monday running through until the following Sunday and *(c)* the obligation on eligible claimants to claim such payments by application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: *(a)* Weather stations have been linked to local office areas in consultation with the Meteorological Office, taking account of factors such as climatological conditions, the reliability of information produced and the speed with which information could be passed on to the Meteorological Office.

(b) A fixed seven-day period (Monday to Sunday) was chosen because it is easy to understand and straightforward to operate.

(c) Exceptionally cold weather payments are single payments of supplementary benefit. The normal position is that such payments have to be claimed. For this winter we plan to make it easier for claimants to get help during repeat periods of exceptionally cold weather. We intend to provide that, where a successful claim is made in respect of one period of exceptionally cold weather, that claim will remain valid in respect of subsequent periods of cold weather during the winter. The relevant regulations were laid before the House on 26 November.

We shall be reviewing the exceptionally cold weather provision next year in the light of this winter's experience.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much low and intermediate radioactive waste is produced in National Health Service hospitals in England.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. However, in 1986 approximately 2 cu m of low-level waste from English National Health Service hospitals was disposed of at the disposal site at Drigg. Also 0·01 cu m of intermediate level waste from Cobalt 60 sources was sent for long-term storage at Harwell from hospitals in England and Wales.

Prescriptions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many items were issued free of charge to general practitioner prescription (i) to women aged 60 years or over, (ii) to men aged 65 years or over and (iii) to men aged 60 to 65 years in receipt of supplementary pension or housing benefit supplement in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and, in each case, if he will estimate the cost to public funds.

Mrs. Currie: The number of items received in England by women aged 60 and over and men aged 65 or over in

the last five years for which figures are available and the estimated total cost of these items are as follows. Separate figures for women and men are not available.

Year	Number of Items (millions)	Total Cost (£ million)
1982	112·7	454·0
1983	117·2	511·2
1984	121·0	557·2
1985	125·7	625·1
1986	129·6	683·0

Information on the number and cost of items received by men aged 60 to 65 years in receipt of supplementary benefit or housing benefit supplement is not available, but estimated figures are as follows:

	Number (millions)	Cost (£ million)
1982	1·4	5·5
1983	1·8	8·1
1984	2·1	9·8
1985	2·2	10·9
1986	2·3	12·0

General Practice Finance Corporation (New Schemes)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value of all new schemes taken on by the General Practice Finance Corporation in each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton: The following is the information for new loans and leases in each of the last five years.

Financial Year	[1]Loans £ million	[2]Leases £ million	Total £ million
1982-83	5·0	1·6	6·6
1983-84	12·2	3·3	15·5
1984-85	19·3	4·3	23·6
1985-86	20·3	4·8	25·1
1986-87	23·5	2·5	26·0

[1] Long-term loans taken up.
[2] Lease applications approved in full.

Social Fund

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amount he will allocate to the social fund for his Department's offices covering Peckham.

Mr. Scott: The local offices which serve the hon. Member's constituency are Camberwell area office, Kennington park integrated local office (ILO) and Peckham ILO. Information on their social fund allocations was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81*.

Nurses and Midwives

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the number of funded establishment *(a)* nurses and *(b)* midwives in each district health authority;

(2) how many vacancies for nurses and midwives there are in each (1) district health authority and (2) regional health authority; and what is the ratio of vacancies to funded establishment for nurses and midwives for each (1) district health authority and (2) regional health authority.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally. Some information will, however, become available in the course of next year as a result of the introduction of improvements in National Health Service information systems.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which district health authorities provide child care facilities for pre-school age children of nurses or midwives.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the percentage change in the use of agency *(a)* nurses and *(b)* midwives between 1979 and the latest date to which figures are available;

(2) what is the percentage change in the use of agency *(a)* nurses and *(b)* midwives between the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: There was a 21·4 per cent. increase in the use of agency nurses and a 30·4 per cent. increase in the use of agency midwives in England between September 1979 and September 1986. Between September 1985 and September 1986 the figures were 39 per cent. and 15·4 per cent., respectively.

Nurse Budgets

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much each district health authority is currently either *(a)* overspent or *(b)* underspent on its nurse budget;

(2) what is the total current underspend or overspend on nurse budgets.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost of housing benefits for elderly people as a percentage of the total expenditure on housing benefits *(a)* in Scotland, *(b)* in the Strathclyde area and *(c)* in the Lanarkshire area, for each year since 1974.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Liaison Committee

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal when he will propose to the House the names of members of the Liaison Committee.

Mr. Wakeham: As soon as practicable, once the appropriate consultations are completed.

Lobbying

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will introduce legislation to provide for a register of commercial lobbying organisations, with power for the

House of Commons Commission to provide rules and penalties for those in breach; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. As the Select Committee on Members' Interests noted in its first report, Session 1984-85, such a register would pose formidable problems, not only of definition and enforcement, but also of principle, in so far as it gave registered "lobbyists" preferential access to Parliament.

DEFENCE

Maritime Operations

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the British, Dutch and West German naval staffs' joint draft of the new NATO concept of maritime operations is due to be considered by NATO Defence Ministers;

(2) if he will make a statement on the role being played by the United Kingdom in the drafting of the new NATO concept of maritime operations.

Mr. Ian Stewart: NATO's military authorities are currently carrying out a routine updating of NATO's concept of maritime operations in full consultation with member nations, including the United Kingdom.

Exercises

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British military participation in exercise Caltrop Tyro, held in California from 15 to 18 November; and what were the troop numbers and costs involved.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Caltrop Tyro was a command post exercise (CPX) which took place in California in November to test procedures and inter-operability between units of the British, American, Canadian and Australian armies. Some 150 British service men took part, and the United States Government paid all the costs arising there.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose of the Anglo-American military training exercises held on Pontrilas, Herefordshire, and Blair Atholl, Tayside, in June, with particular reference to the relevance to military activities in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A joint exercise with United States forces took place from 20 to 29 June at a number of locations in the United Kingdom. The exercise was designed to foster the development of joint skills and techniques. The exercise was not linked to current military activities in the Gulf.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the criteria used in deciding the specific dates for exercises Eastern Shield, Capital Guard, Drakes Drum, Autumn Tiger, North Crusade, Western Encounter, Triple Crown and Strong Link; why it was decided not to hold these exercises on a single date; if observers will be present at these exercises, under the Stockholm agreement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the major home defence exercises to be held in Britain in September-October 1988;

(3) how many personnel performing the role of Soviet Spetsnaz troops will participate in the major home defence exercises to be held in September-October 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Between September and November 1988 there are to be nine district military home defence exercises in military districts in Britain. Each will be a separate exercise of at least five days duration, and under the independent command of the appropriate GOC. The timing of these exercises has been arranged to take account of the availability of regular and TA manpower in each district, and also of the need to maximise military home defence training whilst minimising disruption to other activities. The exercises are designed to test progress in military home defence planning since Exercise Brave Defender in 1985. Details of the scenarios are classified.

On current plans, the numbers involved mean that we are not required to notify or invite observers to these exercises under the terms of the Stockholm agreement.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration was given to postponing exercise Purple Warrior following indications of high levels of radiation in south-west Scotland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 3 December 1987 at column *712*.

Royal Navy (Rules of Engagement)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on changes to the Royal Navy's rules of engagement currently under consideration.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to comment on rules of engagement.

Holy Loch (Visits)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all visits on a temporary basis to Holy Loch during the last six months involving United States military personnel or equipment not normally based there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The use of Holy Loch is covered by confidential agreements between the United States and United Kingdom Governments and within those agreements such visits are a matter for the United States Government.

Battlefield Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recommendations on the future role of battlefield nuclear weapons he is currently considering; and from what source they come.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend is not currently considering any recommendations on the future role of battlefield nuclear weapons.

Joint Air Attack Team

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes in Army and Royal Air Force operational practices have resulted from consideration of the United States joint air attack team concept.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the joint air attack tactics concept developed

and introduced by the United States armed forces. This has not led to any changes in the operational practices of the Army or the Royal Air Force.

Directorate of Battle Doctrine

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the work of the directorate of battle doctrine;

(2) how many personnel are currently on the staff of the directorate of battle doctrine;

(3) how many staff from the directorate of battle doctrine are currently on secondment or attachment to the air land forces application agency of headquarters United States Army Training and doctrine command/ headquarters, United States Air Force tactical air command.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The work of the former directorate of battle doctrine is now carried out by the directorate of doctrine (Army). The directorate of doctrine (Army) currently consists of 16 personnel, including clerical support. Its work encompasses the formulation of broad tactical concepts for the Army in the time frame 10 to 25 years ahead. It does not have any staff attached or seconded to the air land forces application agency of headquarters United States Army training and doctrine command or to Headquarters United States Air Force tactical air command.

National Joint Ocean Surveillance Information Centre

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the location, role, re-equipment and financing of the United Kingdom national joint ocean surveillance information centre.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The centre to which the hon. Member refers will be financed from the United Kingdom defence budget. It would not be in the national interest to provide the additional information requested.

Harrier GR5

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Harrier GR5 will be employed in the battlefield air interdiction role; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Harrier GR5 will be employed both in the battlefield air interdiction role and in providing close air support of troops.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current unit cost of the Harrier GR5.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: It is now our practice not to publish unit production costs, but I refer the hon. Member to table 3.2 of volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" (Cm. 101-11).

RAF Molesworth

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the options being considered for future uses of RAF Molesworth following implementation of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our general practice to speculate on possible alternative future uses for military installations until firm decisions have been reached.

Aircraft Interceptions

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many interceptions have been made by Royal Air Force aircraft of *(a)* Soviet military aircraft, *(b)* other military aircraft and *(c)* civilian aircraft in the United Kingdom air defence region in each year since 1979;

(2) on how many occasions since 1979 Soviet military aircraft are known to have penetrated the United Kingdom air defence region.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Royal Air Force aircraft regularly intercept and identify various civil and military aircraft in the United Kingdom air defence region (UKADR). Records of such interceptions are kept only for Soviet military aircraft. Details of penetrations of the UKADR by these aircraft, and their interception by the RAF, are classified. On average, however, Soviet military aircraft are intercepted in the UKADR by the RAF three or four times each week. This number can be much higher during Warsaw pact exercises.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since 1979 Soviet military aircraft are known to have penetrated United Kingdom territorial airspace.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the two Royal Air Force Phantom squadrons assigned to Fleet Air Defence to convert to the Tornado aircraft.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Of the two squadrons of RAF Phantom aircraft previously assigned primarily to the maritime air defence role, one has already converted to Tornado F3 aircraft, and the second is expected to do so within the next two or three years.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes in deployment and operational cycles will result from the replacement of Royal Air Force Phantoms by Tornados in the fleet air defence role.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Exercise Ocean Safari

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purposes of, and lessons learned from, the deployment of Phantom aircraft to Stornoway for exercise Ocean Safari in September.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As the hon. Member will know, RAF Stornoway is designated as a NATO forward operating base for use in times of tension or war. During the recent NATO joint maritime exercise Ocean Safari, Royal Air Force Phantom aircraft deployed to Stornoway to rehearse the activation of the base and to test its facilities. The base activation plans were found to be generally sound, although a few practical deficiencies were identified. Steps are being taken to rectify these.

United States Navy Carrier-based Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what provision has been made for logistic support of United States Navy carrier-based aircraft at airfields in Scotland.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No specific provision is made for logistic support for United States navy carrier-based aircraft at airfields in Scotland in peace time. The 1973 United States/United Kingdom line of communication arrangement provides for logistic support to be supplied to United States forces to enable them to conduct operations in support of NATO in an emergency. The detailed arrangements for this support are confidential between our two Governments.

Royal Artillery Range, Hebrides

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many days in each year since 1979 missile firings on the royal artillery range, Hebrides, were postponed or cancelled due to the presence of air traffic or shipping in the range area.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of any instances of range closure due to air traffic. However, the range was closed for a four-day period due to a protest about EEC fishing regulations by local fishermen.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the impact of the establishment of a new recommended route for oil tankers of more than 10,000 tons gross weight to the west of the Western Isles will have on the frequency of cancellation or postponement of missile firings from the royal artillery range, Hebrides.

Mr. Freeman: The range radar and computer systems are designed to take account of vessels moving through the range area and the movement of oil tankers should not therefore affect range firings.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many days in each year since 1975 the royal artillery range, Hebrides, danger area known as D701A was active;

(2) on how many days in each year since 1975 the royal artillery range, Hebrides, danger area known as D701 was active.

Mr. Freeman: Danger areas D701 and D701A were active for an average of 79 and 22 days respectively in each year since 1977; records are not available for 1975 and 1976.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many firings have been made on the royal artillery range, Hebrides, in each year since 1975, of *(a)* Lance, *(b)* Rapier, *(c)* Blowpipe, *(d)* Sea Eagle, *(e)* Harpoon, *(f)* Sub-Harpoon, *(g)* Martel, *(h)* Sea Wolf, *(i)* ALARM, *(j)* Skyflash, *(k)* Javelin, *(l)* Sea Dart and *(m)* Sparrow missiles.

Mr. Freeman: This information is classified.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* service personnel, *(b)* civilian staff from his Department and *(c)* contractors' personnel are currently employed at the royal artillery range, Hebrides.

Mr. Freeman: Two hundred and ninety-four service men, 196 civilians and 100 contract personnel, including personnel involved in contracted-out services, are employed on the RAF range, Hebrides.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations have been received from owners and operators of civilian vessels, in each year since 1979, concerning continued firing of missiles on the royal artillery range, Hebrides, while vessels were present in the range danger area.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of any such representations. For safety reasons, firing would not take place if vessels were present in the danger area.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the visit to the royal artillery range, Hebrides, of a United States army general in the autumn.

Mr. Freeman: We are not aware of any such visit.

Low-flying Aircraft

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the investigation into damage caused by a low-flying United States Air Force F-111 over Benbecula on 12 September 1983.

Mr. Freeman: As a result of the incident on 12 September 1983 involving an aircraft of the United States air force over Benbecula, a total of just over £14,000 was paid out by way of compensation to local people who made claims against my Department for damage to their property. I am not aware of any outstanding claims relating to this incident.

North Uist (Radar Installation)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the type 92 radar on North Uist is expected to become operational.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The type 92 radar on North Uist is expected to become fully operational shortly and will form part of the improvements to the United Kingdom air defence ground environment.

Western Isles (Installations)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans exist to instal *(a)* satellite communications and *(b)* tropospheric scatter communications facilities in the Western Isles.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A tropospheric scatter system has been installed on North Uist as part of the improvements to the United Kingdom air defence ground environment, and is expected to become fully operational shortly.

Exercise JMC 87/3

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role was played by Royal Air Force Stornoway in exercise JMC 87/3.

Mr. Ian Stewart: None.

Exercise JMC 87/2

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role was played by RAF Stornoway in exercise JMC 87/2.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Civilian aircraft participating in joint maritime course 87/2, a Royal Navy exercise in the north-west approaches, made routine use of the civil facilities at Stornoway airport.

Western Isles (Construction Projects)

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Western Isles on 24 July, *Official Report*, column *594*, he will list all other military construction projects currently planned for the Western Isles.

Mr. Freeman: Works services other than those already recorded in column *594* of the *Official Report* for 24 July 1987 are as follows:

RAF Stornoway
Provision of 10,000 gall. storage tank for de-icing fluid.
Installation of Fire Alarm System and other fire precautions.
Provision of Traffic Lights on the A866.
Provision of facilities for Fire/Crash Rescue crews in ATC Tower.
Additional showers to be installed in Building 214.
Replacement of Stand—By Power Plant.
Improvement of Dining Room facilities.

RAF Benbecula
Provision of Support Accommodation at South Celettraval.
Rebuilding of Station Headquarters.
Upgrading of Electrical Power Supply.

Aird Uig
Provision of small buildings and four aerials for ship to shore and shore to ship and similar communication systems.

Additionally the Army have the following:

South Uist
Zero Length Launch facility for Falconet.
Royal Army Ordnance Corp new build of stores section.
Security Fencing for Range Control Building.
Tempest security measures for Range Control Building.
Modification of Air Conditioning for Range Control Building.
Provision of Loading Ramp at Loch Carnan.
Cable trenching.
Modernisation of practising units hangar.
New building to accommodate volumatic disintegrator.

Benbecula
Provision of control Post at airfield.

AIDS Screening

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his policy to introduce compulsory AIDS screening amongst members of the armed forces.

Mr. Freeman: No. The subject will, however, remain under review.

Veterinary and Equitation Establishment, Melton Mowbray

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost of the Army Veterinary and Equitation Establishment at Melton Mowbray; if he will list the courses, with number and duration and the average attendance for each of the last two years at military establishments at Melton Mowbray; and if he will list the number of student weeks for equitation courses here for each of the last three years as allocated to officers and other ranks and in total.

Mr. Freeman: The annual cost of all functions (both equine and canine) of the RAVC centre, Melton Mowbray, is £2·285 million. Of this, the cost of provision of horse-related training (including farriery) is £367,000. Details of equitation and equitation-related courses held at the centre are given in the table:

Course	*Number held per year*	*Duration weeks*	*Average attendance over last 2 years*
Advanced Military Equitation	1	27½	12
Joint Service Unit Instructor	2	3	7½
Joint Service unit rider/competitor	2 or3	2	9
Military pack transport	As required	3	Total 18 all ranks over last 2 years
RAVC recruit stable management	As required	2	Total 52 soldiers over last 2 years
International Military Equitation Course	1	1	8

A number of student weeks for courses held for each of the last three years as allocated to officers and soldiers is given in the table:

Course	*Officer weeks*	*Soldier weeks*	*Total weeks*	*Officer/ Soldier ratio*
Advanced Military Equitation	247·5	742·5	990	1:3
Joint Service Unit Instructor	39	90	129	1:2·5
Joint Service Unit Rider/Competitor	42	108	150	1:2·5

National Radiological Protection Board (Report)

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to receive the report of the National Radiological Protection Board in regard to the incidence of cancer and leukaemia among those members of Her Majesty's forces who took part in the British nuclear test programme in the Pacific: and when that report will be published.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) on 26 November 1987, at column *281*.The work of the study has not yet been received by the Ministry of Defence.

Army Pay

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the rate of pay for each Army rank frm private soldier through to field marshal for 1 April 1957, 1967, 1977, and 1987.

Mr. Freeman: For most ranks there are many different rates that may be payable, and it is not practicable to list them all. I refer the hon. Member to the following published information.

1957
Service Pay and Pensions. Cmnd 9692 dated February 1956. (Rates of pay were not revised in 1957).
1967
Service Pay and Pensions. Cmnd 2903 dated February 1966. (Rates of Pay were not revised in 1967.)

The rates of pay that were effective on 1 April 1967 for service medical and dental officers have not been published in a Command Paper, but are set out as follows, expressed in annual terms:

	£ s d
Captain	1,697 5 0
After 2 years	1,733 15 0
After 4 years	1,779 7 6
Major	2,117 0 0
After 1 year	2,153 10 0
After 2 years	2,199 2 6
After 3 years	2,235 12 6
After 4 years	2,281 5 0
After 5 years	2,317 15 0
After 6 years	2,354 5 0
After 7 years	2,399 17 6
Lieutenant Colonel	2,628 0 0
After 2 years	2,691 17 6
After 4 years	2,744 12 6
After 6 years	2,810 10 0
After 8 years	2,874 7 6
Colonel	3,212 0 0
After 2 years	3,275 17 6
After 4 years	3,330 12 6
After 6 years	3,394 10 0
Brigadier	3,704 15 0

1977
Review body on Armed Forces pay Fourth Report 1975. Cmnd. 6063 dated may 1975. Supplement to Review Body on Armed Forces Pay Fourth Report 1975. Cmnd 6146 dated July 1975 (concerning medical and dental officers' pay).

Review Body on Top Salaries Sixth Report. Cmnd 5846 dated December 1974.

Basic rates of pay were not increased in 1976 or 1977 but personnel could receive supplements, depending on the level of their basic pay. The arrangements governing the payment of these supplements can be found in the following documents:

Review Body on Armed Forces Pay Fifth Report 1976. Cmnd 6470 dated May 1976.

Supplement to Review Body on Armed Forces Pay Fifth Report 1976. Cmnd 6515 dated July 1976 (concerning Medical and Dental officers' pay).

Review Body on Armed Forces Pay Sixth Report 1977. Cmnd 6801 dated April 1977.

1987

Review Body on Armed Forces Pay Sixteenth Report 1987. Cmnd 126 dated April 1987.

Supplement to Review Body on Armed Forces Pay Sixteenth Report 1987. Cmnd 176 dated July 1987 (concerning Medical and Dental officers' pay).

The rates of pay that were effective on 1 April 1987 for officers of the rank of major general and above have not been published in a Command Paper, but are as follows, expressed in annual terms:

	£
Major General	36,852·54
Lieutenant General	45,347·40
General	64,738·08
Field Marshall	80,688·36

Military Exercises

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will introduce legislation to entitle civilians participating in military exercises to claim compensation in the event of injury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Any civilian who suffers injury, or any loss or damange, as a result of military activities is entitled to claim compensation from my Department under the terms of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. All such claims, including from those taking part in military exercises, are dealt with on their merits and on the basis of any legal liability on the part of my Department.

Exercise Torchlight

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will describe the objectives of the home defence exercise Torchlight, held in April 1986; which parts of the armed forces, Government Departments, and other organisations participated in the exercise; and if he will place a copy of the exercise scenario in the Library.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Torchlight X, which was held in April 1986, was the most recent of a series of biennial conferences on military home defence matters. The audience comprised mainly military staffs and officials from MOD; the police and officials from other Government Departments with an interest in home defence were also represented. Ministers from MOD, the Home Office and other Government Departments also attended. Details of the conference agenda and discussions are classified.

Battlefield Aircraft

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluation he has made of the potential benefits to the Royal Air Force of introducing into service an aeroplane conforming with the British Aerospace concept of a small agile battlefield aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: This is a private venture by British Aerospace and is at a very early stage. My Department will keep in touch with the project as it develops.

Cruise Missiles (Transportation Vehicles)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any proposals to discuss with his United States counterpart the redeployment of the vehicles used to transport cruise missiles for alternative military or civilian uses.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Disposal of launcher vehicles and all their associated equipment are matters for the parties to the treaty.

TRANSPORT

Bus Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received during 1986 and 1987 about the bus services in *(a)* the Greater Glasgow area, *(b)* Birmingham and *(c)* Greater London.

Mr. David Mitchell: Bus policy in Scotland is the responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the

Secretary of State for Scotland. However, I understand that he received a total of 102 representations about bus services in Greater Glasgow during 1986 and 1987, 68 of which related to changes to a single school service. I received 17 representations regarding Birmingham and 440 in respect of Greater London.

British Rail (Western Region)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals from British Rail for further investment in rolling stock in its western region.

Mr. David Mitchell: On 17 November my right hon. Friend announced that he had approved a proposal by British Rail to invest in up to 204 express sprinter vehicles to be operated by the board's provincial sector. I understand that 43 of these vehicles are proposed for western cross-country services. My right hon. Friend and I stand ready to approve any further worthwhile proposals which the board puts to us.

M1 (Subsidence)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals his Department has to deal with the subsidence problems at the southern end of the M1.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are just completing remedial work on the worst area of subsidence between junctions 4 and 3 on the southbound carriageway of the M1. There are a number of areas with minor subsidence which do not warrant immediate attention. We are keeping these under surveillance.

Traffic (Denton)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions rumble strips have been promised by his Department on the M57 to slow down traffic approaching the A57 in Denton; and why they have not yet been provided.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I wrote to the hon. Member in March about the M67 rumble area proposal which was associated with the signal controlled crossing point which the motorway contractors then intended to provide on the A57. They later decided not to provide that crossing.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the bridge over the M66 in Denton to be completed so that Windmill lane, Denton, can be reopened; for when it was originally promised; and if he will publish the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The remaining work at the bridge should be completed early in the new year. We had hoped that Windmill lane would reopen in October but unforeseen ground conditions led to delays in diverting statutory undertakers' apparatus.

Manchester Airport (Rail Link)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to make a decision on the section 56 application for a rail link with terminal 2 of Manchester airport.

Mr. David Mitchell: I will make a decision on this application as soon as the necessary evaluations have been completed. Greater Manchester passenger transport executive and the other parties to the application have that work in hand.

British Rail (Inter-City Routes)

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to which is the most profitable inter-city route at present run by British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: This information is commercially confidential.

Permanent Way Staff (Safety)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will hold urgent talks with the chairman of British Rail on the safety of permanent way staff.

Mr. David Mitchell: The safety of permanent way staff has been the subject of detailed study in recent years by a special working party set up by the Health and Safety Commission's railways industry advisory committee. The working party is chaired by an inspecting officer of railways and the members include representatives of railway management, the railway trade unions, and the TUC. The committee has so far produced two interim reports and the recommendations in these reports have been, or are being, implemented. During each of the 10 years up to 1985, an average of 12·5 men were killed after being struck by trains whilst at work on the line. The figure for 1986 was four and the total for this year so far is eight, including the four men tragically killed at Methley junction. The inquiry which will be held into this accident will examine whether anything else can reasonably be done to protect those who work on or alongside the line.

Roadside Rest and Refreshment Facilities

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has any plans to increase provision of roadside rest and refreshment facilities with suitable hard-standing areas necessary for heavy goods vehicle parking on non-motorway trunk routes;

(2) if he has any plans to increase provision of roadside rest and refreshment facilities on non-motorway trunk routes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 1 July, at column *88*, about the development of new service areas on motorways and other trunk roads.

Informal discussions have already taken place with the Association of County Councils on ways of securing more services on all-purpose trunk roads where they are needed. We intend now to consult all the main local authority associations concerned and representatives of the private sector. Provision of services on all-purpose trunk roads, including services for heavy goods vehicles, is primarily for the private sector within the framework of local planning policies.

Cyclists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to require local authorities to provide cyclists with recognised parking places outside public buildings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Local authorities already have adequate powers to provide parking facilities for cyclists. We publish advice on this topic in local transport note 1/78 — copies of which have been placed in the Library.

London Regional Transport

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is her policy towards the extent to which London Regional Transport's subsidy from London's ratepayers should be replaced by resources from fare increases.

Mr. David Mitchell: The level and distribution of fares is a matter from LRT. To the extent that fare increases reduce the subsidy to LRT, the ratepayer benefits through a reduced levy.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what level the tolls would need to rise on the Severn bridge in order to secure the aggregate revenue specified under schedule 2 to the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965 within 40 years of the opening of the bridge.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Projections of future revenue depend on the assumptions made about the growth of traffic volume and the general level of prices in the next 20 years. On current forecasts tolls would need to rise by about 70 per cent. and be maintained in real terms to achieve the objective in the Act.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange consultations with British Rail on strengthening rail services to take advantage of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board intends to take full advantage of the opportunities which the tunnel will bring. Section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987 requires the board to publish a plan by 31 December 1989 setting out its proposals for international services between various parts of the United Kingdom and the continent. I understand that there will be widespread consultations during the preparation of this plan.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investment he proposes to make in British Rail services to take advantage of the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for the British Railways Board to make proposals for investment in Channel tunnel rail services. I expect to approve any investment that can be expected to earn a proper commercial rate of return.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 15 December 1987

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Single European Market

100. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what preparations his Department is making for the advent of the single European market in 1992; and whether he will establish a unit within his Department to study and report on changes in organisation and policy which may be required.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have recently announced the launching of a national campaign to ensure that British business is aware of the challenge of creating a single Community market and is able to grasp the new opportunities which this will create. The campaign is being organised by a special single market unit within the Department which is working closely with other Government Departments to identify and secure early adoption of the measures needed to remove the remaining barriers.

Petrol

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information his Department has on the price of four-star petrol at the pump on average *(a)* in the conurbations and *(b)* in the small towns and rural areas as at 11 November; what representations he has received from the Petrol Retailers Association on the level of competition in the conurbations and the incidence of petrol retail sites there owned by major oil companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Information on prices in the form requested is not collected by the Department. I understand, however, that certain price information is available in published material such as the *Petroleum Times*.

I have received no recent representations directly from the Petrol Retailers Association, although I understand that the association has made representations to the Director General of Fair Trading. I have received a number of representations from hon. Members and from retailers expressing support for the Petrol Retailers Association's views.

Newspaper Companies (Subsidies)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on other EEC countries subsidies for newspaper companies for *(a)* postage of newspapers, *(b)* telecommunications, *(c)* telexes, *(d)* telegram costs and *(e)* telephone rental charges.

Mr. Alan Clark: No information is available.

BSC Industries

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, prior to bringing forward privatisation legislation, he will discuss with the British Steel Corporation the possibility of increasing the allocation to BSC Industries from current profits, to assist communities such as Sheffield.

Mr. Atkins: BSC (Industry) Ltd. is a subsidiary of the British Steel Corporation, but has been self-supporting since March 1984. The question of its future financial relationship with BSC is a matter for the corporation itself.

Manufacturing Industry

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he plans to take to improve the international competitiveness of British manufacturing industry.

Mr. Atkins: Sustained improvements in competitiveness can be achieved only by industry itself. However, my Department offers a wide range of support and advice to assist in this task. That work is under review, and I hope to make an announcement to the House early in the new year.

Motor Trade Bill

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will introduce a comprehensive motor trade Bill designed to control the problem of the sale of unroadworthy cars and the altering of car mileages.

Mr. Maude: No. However, together with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport I am meeting the Director General of Fair Trading and other interested parties to discuss this problem.

British Steel (Investment)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what are the current investment programmes at each British Steel Corporation plant; and what are the current and projected costs associated with each project;

(2) what are the total investment costs at each of the British Steel Corporation's five integrated plants during the last three years;

(3) what proposals he has received for investment to renew or expand the coke-making capacity at the British Steel Corporation Ravenscraig works.

Mr. Atkins: Capital investment by the British Steel Corporation is a matter for the board of BSC within ceilings agreed with the Government on annual expenditure and individual projects.

Strip Steel

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what is the current loading level for each British Steel Corporation strip mill in Britain;

(2) what occasions British Steel Corporation forecasts of demand for strip products from 1990-91 have been revised since 1985; and what are the current forecast levels.

Mr. Atkins: Those are matters for the board of the corporation.

Steel Imports

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current level of steel imports into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: For the nine months ended September 1987, United Kingdom imports of steel amounted to £1,236·3 million.

Source: Iron and Steel Statistics Bureau: United Kingdom Imports of Iron and Steel, September 1987.

Steel Plants (Closure)

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each steel plant closed since 1967 *(a)* its location, *(b)* the date on which closure procedures were initiated and *(c)* the date of closure.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* This information is not readily available. I shall reply to my hon. Friend in writing as soon as possible and place a copy of the reply in the Library of the House.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total amount of public money spent on the British Steel Corporation from June 1979 to date.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The total net amount of public money provided to the British Steel Corporation since June 1979 is £5,151 million, consisting of subscriptions of capital under section 18 of the Iron and Steel Acts of 1975 and 1982, and regional development grants. No public money has been provided to the corporation since December 1985.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what measures he intends to take to prevent overseas steel and iron companies from buying shares in the proposed privatisation of the British Steel Corporation;

(2) what measures he will take to prevent overseas firms and institutions from buying shares in the proposed privatisation of the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* We shall consider whether there is a case for restricting foreign ownership, but no decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the cost to date of the current British Steel Corporation advertising campaign.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* This is a matter for the board of the corporation.

PRIME MINISTER

Hiscocks House, Brent

Q11. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Hiscocks house on the Stonebridge estate in the London borough of Brent.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Westland plc

Q19. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy, before Her Majesty's Government approve any further public funds for Westland plc, to seek to establish the identity of six nominee companies, with shareholdings in the company, and with addresses in Panama, Uruguay, Spain and Australia; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Religious Education

Q28. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received in favour of compulsory morning assembly in schools, in the form of a short religious service or prayers.

The Prime Minister: I have received a number of representations about religious education and assembly in schools.

Australia

Q45. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to seek to visit Australia.

The Prime Minister: I hope to take up the Australian Prime Minister's invitation to visit Australia during the bicentennial year.

Clifton on Dunsmore

Q123. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Clifton on Dunsmore.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

EC (Food Aid Programme)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the recent report of the Court of Auditors on the EEC's food aid programme; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I wrote to the President of the European Commission on 5 October to express my grave concern over the Court of Auditors' findings. The report is now under discussion in the Council of Ministers.

European Community

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she intends to submit any proposals to the emergency meeting of the European Council in February about the financial crises facing the Common Market; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made on Tuesday 8 December, at columns 167-68, on the outcome of the Copenhagen European Council.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties

in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

NATIONAL FINANCE

BP Shares

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what form he intends to advertise the Bank of England's buy-back proposals for British Petroleum shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Advertisements were placed in the press when details of the scheme were announced, and further publicity will take place, as appropriate, before the scheme closes.

Banking Act

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the powers in section 23 of the Banking Act will be exercised in relation to European Community countries.

Mr. Lawson: The United Kingdom would, of course, fully respect its Community obligations when exercising its discretion to use its powers under section 23 of the Banking Act 1987. The United Kingdom would not use these powers against persons, companies or firms exercising any of their legitimate rights under Community law.

Golden Shares

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the golden shares held by the Government in each of the privatised industries, giving *(a)* the expiry date of each of the shares, and *(b)* the conditions that are attached to each.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The Government hold special shares in the following privatised companies:

Amersham International
BAA
British Aerospace
British Gas
British Telecom
Britoil
Cable and Wireless
Enterprise Oil
Jaguar
Rolls-Royce
Sealink
Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering

In each case, the rights and restrictions attaching to the special share, including the arrangements for its redemption, are defined in the articles of association of the company concerned.

Treasury Stock

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of persons holding 2½ per cent. Treasury stock 1975 issued in 1946-47, and the size of the average holding.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* There are approximately 13,400 registered holdings of 2½ per cent. Treasury stock 1975 or after with an average size of £35,600. It is impossible without undue cost to distinguish between personal and corporate holdings.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost of redemption of 2½ per cent. Treasury stock 1975.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The cost of redemption of 2½ per cent. Treasury stock 1975 or after would be £475 million.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to redeem 2½ per cent. Treasury stock 1975.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* There are no plans to redeem 2½ per cent. Treasury stock 1975 or after.

CIVIL SERVICE

Occupational Health Service

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what progress is being made in the setting up of the Civil Service occupational health service.

Mr. Luce: The Civil Service occupational health service (OHS) was set up on 23 June 1986. Since then much has been done to create an integrated, more efficient and more effective organisation. Substantial economies of scale have been secured and the new service is costing about 7 per cent. less per annum than the organisations it replaced. At the same time it is providing a broader range of services to the whole of the Civil Service, many areas of which now have access for the first time to occupational health care. The OHS will continue to develop and maintain high standards of occupational health in the Civil Service.

THE ARTS

British Library

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for further construction of the new British library building at St. Pancras when building work on the present stage is completed in 1993.

Mr. Luce: I have recently authorised a feasibility study to examine options for the concluding stage of the British Library project, so that a start can be made before the work currently authorised is completed in 1993.

The feasibility study will be carried out by the Property Services Agency, in conjunction with the British Library and the architects who designed the first phase of the building. Their findings and proposals will be reported to me by mid-1988.

The object of the study is to draw up a plan for completing the project in a way which meets the key requirements of the library at the minimum additional cost. Those requirements are to concentrate most of the British Library's London-based collections at one location in a controlled pollution-free environment, with greatly improved facilities for readers and staff. Subject to the outcome of the study, the new building will enable the British Library to vacate most of the 19 sites around London where its stock is currently located, and to unite its major services within a single purpose-built building.

I shall announce further decisions when the feasibility study has been completed.

TRANSPORT

Tourist Signposting

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of tourist signposting in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Progress with introducing the new white on brown tourist signs in England has generally been good. Signs have been approved for over 2,500 attractions. Many of these signs have now been erected. We expect even more signs will be in place before next summer's tourist season. We are continuing to encourage local authorities where progress has not been as good as elsewhere. Signing in other parts of the United Kingdom is the responsibility of the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

M40

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his recent review of road scheme assessment criteria, to ensure that appropriate weight is given to leisure traffic, affects the predictions of traffic expected to travel on the proposed 12-mile two-lane section of the M40 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the recent review of road scheme assessment, the value of time for leisure trips was increased. This would increase the economic benefits of the M40 scheme. It would not affect the traffic predictions which contain both work and leisure trips transferred from existing roads within the M40 corridor and from the M1/M6 corridor.

Newspapers (Subsidies)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information on the subsidies paid for the costs of transporting *(a)* journalists and *(b)* newspapers in other EEC countries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No.

Roads (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will pay an official visit to the Easington constituency to assess conditions on the A1 between Easington and Dishforth and on the A19 between Dishforth and Easington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We know quite a lot about conditions on the A1 and the A19 north of Dishforth.

Written answers on 2 December at columns *577-78* give details of the proposed improvements to the A1 between Dishforth and Scotch Corner and the provision of dual carriageways on the last section of the A19-A168 route north of Dishforth. This latter scheme is included in the contract for the new A1//A168 grade-separated interchange for which tenders have now been invited.

The A1 is a motorway from Scotch Corner to the Easington constituency and the A19 is a dual carriageway from Thirsk northwards. Along these stretches, both roads are considered to be of a satisfactory standard to meet traffic requirements in the forseeable future.

Passenger Statistics (London)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers were carried on an average day in the latest year for which statistics are available on *(a)* the London Underground and *(b)* London buses; what was the comparable figure five years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

Passenger journeys on LRT services

	Daily average (million)	
	Underground	*Bus*
1982	1·4	2·9
1986-87	2·1	3·2

London Regional Transport

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if the objectives for London Regional Transport laid down by the Secretary of State on 20 July 1984 are still in force;

(2) what financial objectives he has determined for London Regional Transport; and what other directions of a general character he has made as to the exercise and performance of the functions of London Regional Transport since 1984.

Mr. David Mitchell: The 1984 objectives cover the financial years 1985-86 to 1987-88. They have not been superseded or supplemented and are still in force.

Green Park Tube (Fire)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the findings of London Regional Transport's internal inquiry into the fire at Green Park tube station in June and as to the extent to which these have been implemented.

Mr. David Mitchell: The incident was reported to the Department in accordance with the statute. It is understood that LRT's internal inquiry report made four recommendations, three of which were adopted.

Motorways (Central Reservations)

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made with reviewing the case for emergency crossing points on the central reservations of motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since June 1985, when the Department issued advice on the treatment of gaps in central reserve safety fences, the number of emergency crossing points (ECPs) has been reduced by 20 per cent., from 1,292 to 1,038. Agreement has been reached with the emergency services to close a further 568 ECPs by the end of March 1989, bringing the overall reduction to 63 per cent. 224 ECPs have been identified as essential, and 246 are still being considered.

Morpeth Derailment

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has reached any conclusions on the

recommendations of the railway inspecting officer's report on the derailment that occurred in June 1984 at Morpeth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The inspecting officer's recommendations have been considered very carefully by the British Railways Board and the Government. Action has been taken by the board on the recommendations which called for changes in operating procedures in order to prevent a recurrence of such an accident. The board is also continuing to work towards eliminating the practice of signing on by telephone, and progress on this is being monitored by the Railway Inspectorate.

The inspecting officer also suggested that powers be introduced to require railway staff to submit to breath, blood or urine tests. There is no evidence that the railways face serious problems of alcohol or drugs abuse. In addition, the board's rule book makes it clear that staff must not report for duty under the influence of alcohol, or of any drug that might impair the proper performance of their duties, and must not consume alcohol or any such drug whilst on duty. The board considers that this continues to provide a better deterrent than could be achieved by taking powers to require railway staff to submit to breath, blood or urine tests. The introduction of testing could imply the acceptability of a certain level of alcohol, by analogy with the breath-alcohol limits set for motorists, which could undermine the board's more stringent disciplinary code. Supervisors are already instructed to call the police in serious cases, and the board reminds staff regularly of their responsibilities and gives advice to managers and supervisors on these matters.

The Government accept the board's conclusions on this question and do not propose to seek powers to breathalyse train crews. Consultation with other transport industries has also confirmed that there is no clear case for the introduction of such powers for staff with similar responsibilities in those industries.

There would be advantage, however, in updating the Railway Regulation Act 1842 in order to provide for increases in penalties for offences involving alcohol on the railways, and to extend the provisions to cover offences involving drugs. This would require primary legislation, which we propose should apply to all railways—British Rail, London Regional Transport, and privately owned concerns. We shall seek a suitable opportunity for such legislation in due course.

London Traffic Control

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he proposes to continue to exercise the London traffic control functions transferred to him by the London Traffic Control System (Transfer) Order 1986.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The London Residuary Body is terminating, with effect from 31 March 1988, the agency agreement under which it carries out certain London traffic control functions and manages the traffic control system unit; and the local authorities have for the time being been unable to agree joint arrangements for running the traffic control system themselves. The corporation of the city of London has agreed to take over the management of the TCSU from the LRB and provide a similar agency service from 1 April 1988. We propose to lay the necessary order early in the new year and to enter into an appropriate agency agreement with the city corporation. We are writing to authorities about the proposed arrangements.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department is currently undertaking into the causes of juvenile crime; and when he intends to publish any results.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office research and planning unit and crime prevention unit have extensive and varied programmes of work, much of which may contribute to further knowledge about juvenile crime. Of particular relevance is a review of research on schools, disruptive behaviour and deliquency, due to be published in February 1988; the report of a study of fruit and video machine playing by 10 to 16-year-olds is also intended for publication early next year.

Firearms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions during each of the past 10 years convictions have been made for abuse of the exemptions under section 14 of the Firearms Act 1968 by persons who have either acquired and misused or acquired and supplied shotguns to third parties not authorised to hold them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information requested is not available.

Independent Broadcasting Authority

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Government appointees are on the board of the Independent Broadcasting Authority; what are the criteria for the selection; and if he will publish the list of appointees in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Renton: The Broadcasting Act 1981 provides for the members of the IBA, including the chairman and deputy chairman, to be appointed by the Home Secretary. The Home Secretary, with a view to enabling the authority to continue to fulfil its responsibility for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting matters, wishes to ensure that the members of the authority combine personal distinction with a wide and balanced range of interests and experience. The present membership of the IBA is:

Lord Thomson of Monifieth, Chairman
Sir Donald Maitland, Deputy Chairman
Mr. G. R. Peregrine, Member for Wales
Professor J. F. Fulton, Member for Northern Ireland
Mr. J. R. Purvis, Member for Scotland
Mr. R. A. Grantham, Member
Mrs. P. Ridley, Member
Professor A. L. Cullen, Member
Sir Anthony Jolliffe, Member
Mr. M. H. Caine, Member
Lady Popplewell, Member
Mr. Ranjit Sondhi, Member.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has issued any guidelines to the Independent Broadcasting Authority concerning the production of politically sensitive material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Broadcasting Act 1981 places a duty on the IBA to satisfy itself, as far as possible, that due impartiality is preserved on the part of the persons providing programmes as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy. For this purpose a series of programmes may be considered as a whole. Relevant guidance is contained in the IBA's "Television Programme Guidelines". It is for the IBA, not the Government, to interpret and enforce its statutory obigations.

Leicestershire Police Force

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present establishment of the Leicestershire police force; and to what extent the force is up to establishment.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The authorised police establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary is 1,733 and there is approval for nine supernumerary police posts. On 31 October 1987, the strength of the force was 1,754, which was 12 above the authorised number because recruitment in that month exceeded wastage.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the establishment of the Leicestershire police force was last altered; what proposals he has recently received to alter that establishment; and what has been his response.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The last change in the authorised establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary was in July 1982 when six additional police posts were approved, bringing the authorised police establishment up to 1,733. We have not recently received any application to vary that establishment.

Cwm Clydach Estate

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of south Wales as to the number of occasions on which police officers have been called to deal with incidents at the Cwm Clydach estate and Glyn Coch Farm, Craig-cefri-parc, West Glamorgan, over the last three years; and what has been the total cost to the police force of dealing with such incidents.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the chief constable of south Wales that since November 1984 the police have been called to five incidents on the Cwm Clydach estate. I further understand that, because the relevant information is not readily available, it is not possible to assess the cost of police attendance at these incidents.

Nationality

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many forms of registration under the British Nationality Act 1981 have been distributed by the immigration service.

Mr. Renton: Fewer than 100. But since the British Nationality Act 1981 came into force on 1 January 1983 about 1 million application forms have been issued by the nationality division.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will launch an advertising campaign giving details of British nationality by registration on national and regional television;

(2) what steps he took to monitor the effectiveness of recent advertisements giving details of British nationality by registration *(a)* in Great Britain and *(b)* in Manchester before his recent advertising campaign about British nationality;

(3) what information was available to him on the circulation of the "Manchester A.M." and "Manchester Advertiser" newspapers amongst different ethnic minority groups *(a)* in Greater Manchester and *(b)* in the inner city wards of the city of Manchester and the wards in the Stretford constituency.

Mr. Renton: We have no plans to initiate further advertising at this late stage. The circulation of local newspapers and the geographical concentration of local ethnic minorities were taken into account in deciding which papers to use for our paid advertising campaigns, but the available information did not distinguish the ethnic minority readership. The response rate in the first round of advertising was assessed in deciding which newspapers to use in the second round.

Rape

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been convicted of rape since 1970; and how many of these persons have been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr. John Patten: Information on court proceedings for offences of rape is published annually in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales: Supplementary Tables Vols 1 and 2" under offence classification 19. The figures include some offences other than under section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 such as aiding and abetting and attempted rape. Figures for proceedings in magistrates' courts and the Crown court are given in tables SI. 1(A) and S2. 1(A): and for the distribution of the lengths of sentences of imprisonment imposed in table S2. 4. Copies are in the Library of the House.

Indeterminate Sentences

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes he intends to seek to make in the law and procedure relating to indeterminate sentences, following the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the Weekes case.

Mr. John Patten: The implications of the judgment of the European Court in the Weekes case are still under consideration.

Trevi Ministers

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the recent meeting of Trevi Ministers in Copenhagen.

Mr. Hurd: A meeting of Trevi Ministers was held in Copenhagen on 9 December under the presidency of the Danish Minister of Justice, Mr. Ninn-Hansen. We discussed developments since our previous meeting in Brussels in April including terrorist incidents in a number of member states and successes against terrorist activity.

We agreed that continued co-operation between countries is the most effective way of countering terrorism and specific successes of such co-operation were reported at the meeting.

A number of initiatives launched during the United Kingdom presidency have come to fruition. The coming into operation of the secure communication system has enabled a more rapid exchange of a variety of information to take place between member states, including the exchange of details of the theft and discovery of arms and explosives—an item which had been agreed in principle at our previous meeting. I reported on a successful conference of Trevi officials held in London in November on the detection of firearms and explosives especially at airports, which enabled the participants to exchange information on research into new techniques and to assess existing techniques. We also agreed an updated assessment of the terrorist threat to Community countries.

In other areas of Trevi activity we approved a detailed agreement for developing the network of drug liaison officers outside the countries of the EC for the benefit of Community countries. This is the result of an initiative taken by the United Kingdom last year. I also reported that the conference in London in October had established an international network of co-operation to prevent and deal with football hooliganism.

Official Secrets Act 1911

Mr. Mates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to seek to reform section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911.

Mr. Hurd: As my right hon. Friends, the Attorney-General and the Prime Minister have told the House, the Government have had work in hand for some time to find effective, enforceable and reasonable provisions to replace section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. This work is continuing and we intend to bring it to a conclusion later this Session. When the work is complete, we shall lay before Parliament a White Paper setting out the Government's proposals for reform of the present law, with a view to early legislation.

Immigration (European Community)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of the Ministers of the European Community concerned with immigration.

Mr. Hurd: The ministers of the states of the European Community concerned with immigration met on 9 December in Copenhagen under the presidency of the Danish Minister of Justice. A representative of the Commission of the European Community attended the meeting. My colleagues and I considered a further report from the ad hoc working group of senior officials which was established last year during the United Kingdom presidency.

The meeting reaffirmed the importance of the co-ordination of the visa policies of member states. It was agreed that from 1 March 1988 nationals of 50 countries would require a visa if they wished to enter any country in the Community. It was also agreed that, as a general principle, it was necessary to make a specific individual assessment of such applicants before issuing a visa. There will be consultation between member states about any proposal to remove a country from this list. The United Kingdom already requires visas of citizens of these 50 countries. The list includes the five countries to which our visa requirement has been extended since September 1986.

Ministers instructed officials to study the possibility of further countries being added during 1988 to this common list of those whose citizens required visas, and to study ways of achieving greater co-ordination of the criteria for the grant of visas. We shall consider again at our next meeting the proposal to draw up a parallel list of countries —notably other European countries which have close links with member states of the Community — from whose citizens visas will not be required.

A major problem facing all member states is the need to deal in a humane and orderly way with applications for asylum from those who apply for asylum in different countries, either at the same time or in sequence. It is necessary to establish clear guidelines to determine which country should examine an application for asylum (the "first country of asylum") both to reduce prolonged periods of uncertainty for applicants and to make it possible to deal more effectively with those applications which clearly fail to meet the requirements of the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees.

The presidency put before the meeting detailed guidelines drawn up by the ad hoc working group which would be used to determine the country responsible for examining and reaching a decision on any given application. Given that EC countries received more than 150,000 applications for asylum in 1986, it is important to devise an orderly system for dealing with them. There was a wide measure of agreement on the suggested guidelines, and Ministers instructed officials to continue their work so that agreement might be reached at our next meeting under the German presidency in the first half of next year. My colleagues and I endorsed proposals for the regular exchange of information and statistics about policy and procedure in considering applications for asylum and also for the exchange of information about the conditions in the country of origin from which those seeking asylum in the Community have come.

All those attending the meeting stressed the value of co-operation between Ministers and officials concerned with immigration, and the United Kingdom will continue to play its full part in this work.

Welsh Language

Sir Anthony Meyer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are any plans to issue Welsh language versions of fixed-penalty notices for road traffic offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The chief constables of the four Welsh police forces have recently completed a review of the practicability of issuing notices in the Welsh language following which arrangements are in hand for Welsh language notices to be offered from early in the new year. I welcome this initiative by the police service in Wales.

Independent Local Radio

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the development of independent local radio.

Mr. Hurd: Our Green Paper "Radio: Choices and Opportunities", published in February, offered the

has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of section 37 of the Shops Act 1950, as amended by the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963, which requires a seat to be provided behind the counter for the use of women employed as shop assistants.

Mr. John Patten: No such representations have been received by either the Home Office or the Department of Employment. I should add that section 37 of the Shops Act 1950 was repealed in 1964 by the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act 1963 except in relation to premises which are in a covered market place.

Guildford and Woolwich Pub Bombings

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress the Avon and Somerset constabulary are making in their inquiries into the new statements presented to him concerning the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that the Avon and Somerset police have encountered certain difficulties in interviewing witnesses and in obtaining access to documents; and that in consequence they have thought it necessary to write to solicitors representing the four convicted persons to express their concern. As a result, the inquiries are, unfortunately, taking longer than had been expected.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Hurd: Staff and associated costs of the Home Office press office in 1987-88 are estimated at £300,000. The estimated costs for 1988-89 will depend on the outcome of a review of the complement.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Metropolitan police on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the latest estimate of staffing and accommodation costs of the directorate of public affairs and spending on recruitment and other advertising and other promotional literature for 1987-88 is £4,836,926. The level of expenditure for 1988-89 has not yet been decided.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children have been refused visas to visit the United Kingdom since the introduction of visa control on five countries in October 1986; and if he will set out his answer in tabular form for each of the five countries;

(2) how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children have been granted visas to visit the United Kingdom from the five countries which became subject to visa control in October 1986, listed in tabular form; in how many cases, in each category shown above, applications were made to extend visits; and in how many cases such extensions were for *(a)* a month, *(b)* two months, *(c)* three months, *(d)* four months, *(e)* five months and *(f)* six months or more.

Mr. Renton *[holding answer 8 December 1987]:* Information on applications for a visa to visit the United Kingdom is given in the following table; separate information on men, women and children is not available centrally. The information available on persons applying for an extension of stay as a visitor cannot comprehensively identify all those applicants who were originally admitted with a visit visa or after the introduction of the visa requirement.

Persons applying for a visa to visit the United Kingdom
Number of persons

	Applications Granted[1]	*Refused initially*
Bangladesh		
October 1986[2] to September 1987	6,730	1,940
India		
October 1986[2] to September 1987	92,080	4,360
Pakistan		
October 1986[2] to September 1987	48,850	6,200
Ghana		
October 1986[3] to September 1987	9,350	2,350
Nigeria		
February[4] to September 1987	34,800	2,530

[1] Including applications granted on appeal.
[2] Including applications for entry clearance in the period 1 to 14 October.
[3] Including applications for entry clearance in the period 1 to 22 October.
[4] Data are not available prior to 1 February 1987, when the visa requirement for Nigerians was introduced.

Anabolic Steroids

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of convictions during the last 10 years for the unlicensed sale of anabolic steroids under the Medicines Act.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

In the last 10 years there have been four convictions under the Medicines Act for the illegal sale or supply of anabolic steroids. One conviction involved three separate charges.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public realtions office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Eggar: The number of staff employed in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office news department and

Overseas Development Administration press office is 19·5. The number employed at this point in 1988 will depend on the workload prevailing at the time.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotion material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: Foreign and Commonwealth Office estimates of expenditure on advertising and other promotional material for 1987-88 are :

	£
FCO Diplomatic Wing	195,000
FCO Aid Wing	351,000
Total	546,000

Detailed decisions on expenditure for 1988-89 have not yet been taken, but the overall figures are expected to be:

	£
FCO Diplomatic Wing	230,000
FCO Aid Wing	352,000
Total	582,000

Expenditure relates mainly to advertising for recruitment, publicity to promote overseas the entitlement of certain British residents overseas to vote in British and European Parliament elections, and general promotional literature.

A disaggregation of these figures to identify the medium used is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: Total expenditure on press and public relations for 1987-88 is estimated as follows:

	£ million
Payment to Central Office of Information for overseas information material and related activities	19·2
Other information services	0·9
Running costs of the Diplomatic Wing Information/ News Departments	2·0
Running costs of Aid Wing Information Department	0·2

Detailed decisions on expenditure for 1988-89 have not yet been taken, but the overall figures are expected to be:

	£ million
Payment to Central Office of Information for overseas information material and related activities	19·0
Other information services	0·9
Running costs of the Diplomatic Wing Information/ News Departments	2·1
Running costs of Aid Wing Information Department	0·3

	£ million	
	1987-88	*1988-89*
Cost of information staff at overseas posts	17·6	18·3
Total	39·9	40·6

Most of this expenditure is incurred in carrying out the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's responsibilities for the projection of Britain's image, and Her Majesty's Government's policies in overseas countries.

Diego Garcia

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the base on Diego Garcia has been used by United Kingdom forces in the Gulf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our practice to comment on operational matters.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether the United States of America used the base at Diego Garcia to reinforce its armed forces in the Gulf prior to August; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether United States minesweeper helicopters are permanently based on Diego Garcia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our usual practice to comment upon details of operations by United States forces.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any United Kingdom minesweeping helicopters are permanently based on Diego Garcia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Royal Navy does not have any minesweeping helicopters.

Falkland Islands (Fisheries)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 December, *Official Report*, column *324*, if he will place in the Library a copy of any relevant documents, papers, requirements and guidelines relating to the issue of fishing licences in the Falkland Islands conservation zone available to the renewable resources assessment group at Imperial college when determining the conservation requirements governing the issue of licences.

Mr. Eggar: I shall arrange to have placed in the Library of the House soon scientific papers relevant to the work of the renewable resources assessment group (RRAG) for the Falkland Islands Government in determining the conservation requirements for the Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone (FICZ). RRAG receives through the Falkland Islands Government daily reports of catches from those vessels licensed to fish in the FICZ. This information is also monitored by the Falkland Islands Government's scientific observers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will now list the United Kingdom holders of licences to fish in Falklands waters in each round since the introduction of the 150 mile fisheries zone around the Falklands in 1986.

Mr. Eggar: A list of United Kingdom companies allocated licences for the 1987 and 1988 seasons for the

Falkland Islands interim conservation and management zone is as follows. Finfish allocations for 1988 have not yet been completed. Where licences have been allocated to joint ventures involving United Kingdom firms, the name of the JV company is shown in brackets.

1987 first season: 1 February-30 June
Marr (Falklands) Limited (StanMarr Limited)
Witte-Boyd Holdings (SWB Fishing Limited)
Caley International Limited (StanCal Limited)
Falconview Limited (Falconview Fisheries Company Limited)
Berkeley Sound Shipping Company (Stankor Limited)
Sasasco (Stanco Limited)
Scofish International Limited (Clipper (Falklands) Limited)
Auscot Limited
Coalite
Fishing Explorer Limited
International Fisheries Investment Limited
SFP Enterprises
South Atlantic Fisheries Limited

1987 second season: 1 July-31 December
Fishing Explorer Limited
International Fisheries Investment Limited
Baomar (UK) Limited

1988 squid licence allocations (season ends 30 June)
Marr (Falklands) Limited (StanMarr Limited)
Witte-Boyd Holdings (SWB Fishing Limited)
Caley International Limited (Stancal)
Berkeley Sound Shipping Company (Stankor)
Auscot Limited (Fortuna Limited)
Seaboard Offshore (Seamount Limited)
Hughes Group
International Fisheries Investment Limited
Fishing Explorer Limited
Coalite

A copy of the Falkland Islands Government's announcement of squid licences for all successful applicants for the first season in 1988 will be placed in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Open University

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the drop-out rate among Open University students for each of the last 10 years, broken down by the year of study and type of course.

Mr. Jackson: The percentage of students finally registering each year who did not take their end of year examinations is shown in the following table.

Drop-out rate (final registration to exams) for each faculty in the undergraduate programme 1977 to 1986

Calendar year	*Arts*	*Social Science*	*School of Education*	*Maths*	*Science*	*Technology*	*[1]P/E*	*[2]U*
1977	21·0	23·8	25·5	32·9	25·4	28·5	30·7	—
1978	20·8	24·9	26·6	31·6	28·4	30·2	36·1	—
1979	23·5	25·5	28·9	33·3	27·9	30·8	38·5	—
1980	24·4	25·9	28·5	32·3	29·8	30·6	35·8	32·3
1981	22·9	24·4	24·7	29·9	26·4	29·2	34·9	34·5
1982	20·3	22·3	24·4	30·5	25·0	26·4	31·9	24·5
1983	19·9	22·2	25·6	27·0	23·7	24·7	32·4	21·5
1984	19·4	20·5	25·2	24·7	22·0	24·8	31·0	22·5
1985	21·0	22·4	24·6	25·6	22·9	25·8	32·8	18·4
1986	21·3	23·4	24·5	27·1	23·9	26·5	27·3	20·7

Notes:
(a) The Open University is a distance teaching institution and therefore its statistics are difficult to relate to those produced by conventional universities.
(b) The drop-out rates for Open University students could be due to non-academic reasons such as financial and family problems.
(c) The figures for 1977 to 1981 are not directly comparable with those of 1982 onwards.
[1] P/E—Post experience courses.
[2] —U type courses which are interdisciplinary/interfaculty.

Workers Educational Association

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the Government's support to the Workers Educational Association is calculated; and if he will make provison to protect this funding in areas where high unemployment affects fee income.

Mr. Jackson: The Department's grant provided for the Workers Educational Association districts in the current academic year totals £2,496,900. This represents the grant allocated initially for 1986-87 increased to take account of anticipated changes in costs. It is allocated to individual districts on the following basis:

(i) a flat sum allocated to each district to contribute to the salary costs of the district secretary and office expenses;

(ii) a special activities fund designed to allocate resources to districts for specific purposes; and

(iii) allocations to each district based on a count of student hours.

The special activities fund arrangements allow for districts to apply for compensation for fee remissions to unemployed students. My right hon. Friend is quite prepared to consider any proposals from the Workers Educational Association for adjusting the funding formula if this is thought to be necessary.

Nursery Schools

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was *(a)* the total public expenditure on nursery schools and classes in each year from 1975 to 1985 and *(b)* the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product for England and Wales for each of these years.

Mr. Dunn: The available information relates to an estimate of total net recurrent expenditure by local education authorities in England on under-fives in

maintained schools from 1976-77 and is shown in the table. Each amount has been expressed as a percentage of the total United Kingdom gross domestic product.

LEA expenditure on under-fives[1]

Year	*Net recurrent expenditure £ million cash*	*Percentage of GDP (rounded to three decimal places)*
1976-77[2]	127	0·098
1977-78	128	0·085
1978-79	146	0·084
1979-80	177	0·085
1980-81	222	0·094
1981-82	241	0·093
1982-83	274	0·096
1983-84	296	0·096
1984-85	331	0·101
1985-86	350	0·097

[1] Information is given for under-fives as a group because separate figures for nursery classes in primary schools is not available.
[2] 1976-77 is the earliest year for which figures are readily available.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of staff employed in the information branch of the Department of Education and Science at 15 December 1987 was 38. Detailed plans for the next financial year remain to be determined.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest figures for estimated spending on advertising and other promotional literature for the current financial year 1987-88 are as follows:

	£
Television	Nil
Radio	Nil
Newspapers	280,000
Other promotional material (publications, videos, exhibitions etc.)	1,459,000

Plans for expenditure in 1988-89 have yet to be finalised.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest estimated expenditure for the current financial year on press and public relations, including staff costs is £2,300,000. Plans for expenditure in 1988-89 have yet to be finalised.

Rock Ferry School, Birkenhead

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Educational and Science what is the standard number of pupils for first year entrance to Rock Ferry school, Birkenhead, under section 15 of the Education Act 1980.

Mr. Dunn: The standard number for Rock Ferry high school is 210 pupils.

European University, Florence

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what contribution was made by the United Kingdom to the European university in Florence in the latest financial year; how many students attended the university; and how many of those students were British.

Mr. Jackson: The contribution made by the United Kingdom Government to the European university institute in the last financial year was £1,059,000. Of the 190 students at the institute in the last academic year, 21 were from the United Kingdom.

CERN

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make a statement on the United Kingdom's membership of CERN.

Mr. Jackson: The report of the CERN review group, chaired by Professor Abragam, has just been received, and is today being presented formally by him to a meeting of the CERN council. The report, a copy of which is being placed in the Library, will now be the subject of detailed analysis prior to a substantive discussion of it, planned for the February meeting of the CERN council. At today's meeting the United Kingdom delegate will explain that the United Kingdom will wish to remain a full and active member of CERN provided that a sound basis for doing so in the future can be established.

ESRF

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to decide on United Kingdom funding of the planned ESRF (synchrotron radiation) facility at Grenoble.

Mr. Jackson: I wrote to the chairman of the ESRF provisional council on 11 December informing him of the United Kingdom's willingness to fund a 10 per cent. share of the construction costs of the proposed European synchrotron radiation facility. Discussions with other prospective partners are continuing.

Agriculture and Food Research Council

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research funds he proposes to distribute to the Agriculture and Food Research Council; and what is his estimate of the total of departmental allocations to the Council.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the allocation of the additional money for science in 1988-89 announced on 3 November. He expects to announce his decision on allocations shortly.

The Agriculture and Food Research Council will also receive funds from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for commissioned work. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has still to confirm the total research that he will be commissioning in 1988-89.

Geological Surveying

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he proposes to implement the recommendations of Sir Clifford Butler's report on geological surveying.

Mr. Jackson: There is nothing further that I can add to my reply to my hon. Friend, and my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 29 October 1987 at column *365*.

National Curriculum Mathematics Working Group (Report)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish the interim report of the national curriculum mathematics working group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am publishing the interim report of the national curriculum mathematics working group today. I am grateful to the group for the work it has done to date, but hope for a more rapid rate of progress over coming months in its further work on attainment targets and programmes of study for mathematics. Copies of the report and of my response are being lodged in the Libraries of both Houses.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on expenditure to be supported by education support grant in 1988-89.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Government intend to support expenditure of £115·5 million in England through education support grant in 1988-89. £81 million of Exchequer grant will be paid in all, and every local education authority will benefit from the programme. Grant will be paid at the rate of 70 per cent. of approved expenditure except for the special extension of the project on records of achievement, where it will be paid at 50 per cent.

Within the overall figure of £115·5 million, £40·5 million of expenditure on schemes of midday supervision will be supported and about £25 million of continuing expenditure on projects began in earlier years of the programme. The amount available for new starts will be just over £50 million, which will be spread across 15 activities. Five of these activities are featuring in the programme for the first time. They are: information technology in schools; a pilot project to broaden the range of languages learnt by pupils in secondary schools as their first foreign language; schemes for the organisation of leisure time activities of vocational benefit to young persons known as learning by achievement; the development of vocational open learning provision, and the provision of equipment for use in the teaching of computer aided engineering on technician courses.

The Department is writing to local education authorities today to inform them of the levels of expenditure which I have approved for activities to be supported in 1988-89. The table sets out for the 15 activities in which new starts are now approved the levels of expenditure to be supported next year and the numbers of authorities for which I have approved projects.

New starts approved for 1988-89

Activity	*Total allocation (£ million cash)*	*Number of LEAs to be supported*
1. IT in Schools[1]	19·0	All
2. Provision of Books and equipment for GCSE examination courses	10·0	All
3. The teaching of mathematics in schools	4·6	All
4. The teaching of science and technology as part of primary education	2·9	56
5. Action to combat the misuse of drugs	2·3	94
6. Computer Aided Engineering[1]	2·2	21
7. Management information in FE Colleges	2·0	31
8. Education for a multi-ethnic society	1·5	50
9. Provision of records of achievement	1·2	7
10. Learning by achievement[1]	1·1	26
11. Support for parents in the teaching of children under five with special educational needs	1·1	35
12. Open Learning[1]	1·0	40
13. The planning, development and co-ordination of provision to meet the educational needs of the unemployed	0·9	26
14. Diversification of first foreign language[1]	0·3	10
15. The development of information technology at FE Establishments	0·2	6
Total	50·3	—

[1] New activities for 1988-89.

ENERGY

Electricity Transmission (Costs)

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response the Central Electricity Generating Board has made to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the efficiency and costs of transmission of electricity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Central Electricity Generating Board has sent me its first response to the report which was published on 26 June this year. Copies of the response have been placed in the Library.

The commission found that the CEGB generally managed its transmission function efficiently in the interests of its customers and in discharge of its statutory duty, but identified several areas of weakness and one major failure. However, the commission did not consider that in respect of any of the matters investigated the board was at the time pursuing a course of conduct which operated against the public interest. The commission recognised the high level of technological competence which the board displayed in the transmission of electricity, but drew attention to the importance of developing an equally high standard of general management, particularly in the absence of competitive pressures.

Accordingly, the commission made a large number of recommendations, mainly aimed at improvements in general management in the area of transmission. The CEGB's response summarises the action which the board plans to take. There were five areas which the commission recommended should have priority:

1. *Clearer definition of Board responsibilities*
The CEGB has explained the collective and individual responsibilities of executive board members. I attach importance, as does the board, to a clear definition of responsibilities at all times.

2. *Future management of the Five Centre Grid Control Project*
The board acknowledges that serious mistakes were made in the original two-tier grid control project; and has taken steps to ensure that the revised five centre project will be carried out efficiently. My Department will wish to keep in touch with the progress of the project.

3. *Year to year changes in transmission plans*
and

4. *Fluctuations in estimated plant and equipment requirements*
The board will be reviewing recent changes and fluctuations to see whether firmer indications of requirements can be given to suppliers. I believe that it is important that there should be an informed relationship between the board and suppliers, though set in the context of maximising the scope for competition. I note that the commission endorsed the CEGB's practice of basing its investment planning and appraisal decisions on the costs and benefits which will accrue to electricity consumers.

5. *Approach to budget setting*
The board accepts the need for a rigorous approach to budget setting. My Department will take a close interest in the board's re-examination of the scope for applying priority-based budgeting to expenditure on transmission.

The commission considered that the board was wrong not to have undertaken a formal assessment of costs and benefits before embarking on reorganisation of its production activities. I attach importance to the action which the board is taking to evaluate and achieve the cost savings which reorganisation has made possible.

The board will be reporting to me next summer on progress achieved in implementing the recommendations.

Government Buildings (Lighting)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy to what extent he has promoted the findings of his energy efficiency demonstration scheme's expanded project file 69 on lighting controls for installation in the Government's main buildings and where the Government are the principal tenant.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My energy efficiency office actively promotes the efficient use and control of lighting in buildings. The Property Services Agency is fully aware of the project referred to by the hon. Member and other advisory material on energy efficient lighting.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Parkinson: The staffing of my Department's press office (including the public inquiry point and support staff) is 11. Staffing levels are presently under review.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: Provisional figures for expenditure by my Department in 1987-88 in the following areas are:

	£ million
(a) Television advertising	Nil
(b) Radio advertising	Nil
(c) Press advertising, including newspapers	1·85
(d) Other promotional material	1·16

This estimate includes £450,000 in respect of publicity in connection with the collection of the second call on British Gas shares. This sum was excluded from that given in the previous answer on 17 July, at column *647* for the sake of consistency with the figures given in that answer for 1986-87.

Detailed decisions on expenditure for 1988-89 have not yet been taken.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Parkinson: The estimated expenditure for 1987-88 is £359,000.

The figures include:

(i) forecast expenditure by the press office:

(ii) staff costs (salaries, accommodation and common services) for all permanent information service and support staff currently in post in the press office, including the public inquiry point.

Staffing levels are currently under review; therefore detailed decisions have not been made for 1988-89.

Opencast Executive

Mr. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many (i) administrative and (ii) productive employees were engaged in the activities of the Opencast Executive in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* England and *(c)* Scotland for each of the years 1980 to 1987; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many sites are *(a)* currently coaled by the Opencast Executive in (i) Wales, (ii) England and (iii) Scotland and *(b)* were so worked in each of the years 1980-1987.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards proposals by the Central Electricity Generating Board to build new nuclear generating capacity, in the context of the overall development of national electricity supplies.

Mr. Parkinson: In August of this year I received an application from the CEGB for my consent to build a pressurised water reactor nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C in Somerset. The CEGB has also informed me that it expects shortly to submit applications for my consent to build new coal-fired power stations at Fawley in Hampshire and at West Burton in Nottinghamshire.

The Government are satisfied that there will be a need for considerable new generating capacity before the end of the century. By then, many existing power stations will have been retired. The days of overcapacity in electricity supply are rapidly coming to an end, and new capacity must be planned now if supplies are to be maintained. Electricity demand is steadily rising as economic activity revives.

Secure supplies of electricity are vital to the nation's well-being. We cannot afford to risk dependency on one source of power alone. There is an obvious need for diversity in the nation's power sources to which nuclear power can make a valuable contribution. It provides independence from the uncertainties of future prices of fossil fuels. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), attached substantial importance to the need for greater fuel diversity in giving his consent in March of this year for the Sizewell B PWR. In the ensuing debate of 11 May the House recognised the important contribution that nuclear energy is making and will continue to make to the strength of the British economy. The proposals to privatise the industry which I shall bring before the House in due course will take the need for diversity fully into account.

The Government are satisfied that the PWR can provide nuclear energy safely. The Sizewell B decision was made only after the most careful and painstaking independent assessment of the issues by the inquiry inspector. In June of this year the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate also completed its assessment of the safety issues for the Sizewell B design with the granting of a nuclear site licence. The safety of that PWR design has been exhaustively examined and found to be acceptable. The NII will, of course, have to continue to be satisfied, through the licensing process, in respect of individual projects and, in particular, with the examination of those safety issues which are site specific in their nature.

However, without further nuclear stations, the nuclear component in our electricity supplies will decline as the existing Magnox stations are retired. The CEGB made it clear at the Sizewell B public inquiry that, in the event of receiving consent for the Sizewell B PWR, it would wish to proceed with a small family of PWRs based on the Sizewell B design. Each future power station application will be considered on its merits. The Hinkley Point C proposal is the first of these and I shall announce, in due course, the details of the public inquiry which will assist me in my decision on the CEGB's application.

Subject to receiving the necessary safety, environmental and other consents, these stations will contribute, along with other generating options, including further coal-fired stations and renewable resources, to meeting the nation's requirement for additional generating capacity.

SCOTLAND

"Prosecuting Sexual Assault"

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to introduce legislation to give effect to the recommendation of his Department's report, "Prosecuting Sexual Assault"; and if he will issue guidance to the courts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) on 28 October 1987, at column *144*.

Prisons (Damage)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the estimated cost of damage caused in the recent prison disturbances in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

	£ thousands
Shotts (26-27 September 1987)	186
Peterhead (28 September to 3 October 1987)	92
Perth (4-6 October 1987)	96
	374

Prisons (Disturbances)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inmates have been charged with offences against prison rules following the recent prison disturbances in Scotland; how many have been found guilty; and what awards have been given.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Charges, or adjudications by governors or visiting committees, for alleged offences under the Prison (Scotland) Rules 1952 do not proceed if the same allegations are subject to independent criminal investigation.

Allegations of offences during recent incidents at Shotts prison (26-27 September), Peterhead (28 September to 3 October) and Perth prison (4-6 October) are the subject of investigation by the police and procurators-fiscal. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the nature or possible outcome of these investigations, or any criminal proceedings which might result.

Scottish Transport Group

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has proposals to privatise the Scottish Transport Group or any of its subsidiary companies during the next two years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on 3 December 1987 at column *669*.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the profit or loss of the Scottish Transport Group and each of its subsidiary companies in each year from 1983-84 and 1986-87; and what is the projected profit or loss for 1987 and 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Transport Group's annual accounts are prepared on a calendar year basis. The profit for the calendar years 1983 to 1986 inclusive is shown on page 28 of the group's annual report and accounts for 1986, a copy of which is available in the Library. Profit figures for each of the group's subsidiary companies for the calendar years to 1986 are contained in the annual reports of the companies, copies of which are deposited with the Registrar of Companies. Projected profits for both the current year and future years are matters of commercial confidence.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the value of all assets held by the Scottish Transport Group and each of its subsidiary companies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The value of all assets held by the Scottish Transport Group is set out in the group's annual report and accounts, a copy of which is available in the Library. Figures for each of its subsidiary companies are contained in the annual accounts of each of the companies, copies of which are deposited with the Registrar of Companies.

Armed Forces (Casualties)

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects detailed guidance relating to armed forces casualties, and to host nation arrangements, as referred to in paragraph 4.4 of the Scottish Home and Health Department's circular SHHD/DGM (1987)41, "Emergency Planning in the National Health Service: Health Service Civil Planning" to become available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of Friday 11 December to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith).

Nursery Schools

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the total public expenditure on nursery schools and classes for each year from 1975 to 1985 and *(b)* the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product of Scotland for each of these years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available on total public expenditure on nursery schools and classes is as follows:

	£ million
1976-77	12·6
1977-78	13·1
1978-79	12·3
1979-80	13·5
1980-81	16·5
1981-82	18·4
1982-83	22·2
1983-84	22·0
1984-85	24·0
1985-86	26·2

Note: Comparable figures for 1975-76 are not available.

The percentage which these sums represent of estimated Scottish GDP is 0·1 for each year.

Nurseries and Playgroups

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the total public expenditure spent on local authority day nurseries, local authority playgroups and grants to the voluntary sector for provision for under-fives for each year from 1975 to 1985 and *(b)* the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of the gross domestic product of Scotland for each of these years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available on expenditure by social work authorities on children's day care services, including payments to voluntary bodies and individuals, is as follows:

	£ million
1975-76	3·0
1976-77	4·0
1977-78	4·1
1978-79	5·0
1979-80	6·0
1980-81	8·2
1981-82	9·1
1982-83	[1]10·2
1983-84	[1]11·0
1984-85	[1]11·6
1985-86	[1]12·4

[1] Estimate.

The percentage which these sums represent of estimated Scottish GDP is 0·04 up to 1979-80, rising to 0·05 thereafter.

Grants are also made by central Government to voluntary social work organisations. However, the exact amounts from such grants which are devoted to provision for under-fives are not available.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Rifkind: At 1 December 1987 the number of staff in the information officer grades employed in the Scottish Information Office was 23. Decisions have yet to be taken on the precise disposition of staff in the Scottish Office for 1988-89.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising,

(b) radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Rifkind: Estimated expenditure by my Department on television, radio, newspaper advertising and promotional material in the current year is £134,500, £58,000, £493,000 and £549,800 respectively.

Detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken, but I expect the overall publicity figure to be £1,353,600.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Rifkind: The estimated running costs of the Scottish Information Office for 1987-88 are £1·7 million. Decisions on the expenditure estimate for 1988-89 have still to be taken.

Rating Reform

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimates he has made of the financial implications for each of the Scottish regions of the introduction of a uniform non-domestic rate.

Mr. Lang: No such estimates have been made. There are no plans to introduce a separate uniform non-domestic rate for Scotland.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether those in receipt of supplementary benefit will pay 20 per cent. of their poll tax liability.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: I am sorry not to have replied to the hon. Member more quickly. The information requested is as follows.

Those receiving income support, which will replace supplementary benefit in April 1988, will receive the maximum rebate of 80 per cent. The levels of income support will be adjusted to take account of the average 20 per cent. minimum contribution.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give his latest estimate of the national average community charge in Scotland at current prices; if he will give the formula for his calculation; and if the rebate system as it applies in Scotland will be based on this figure.

Mr. Lang: I refer to the information contained in my reply to the hon. Member on 1 December, at columns *519-22*. The calculations are based on the replacement of the income from domestic rates in 1987-88. Under the proposed community charge rebate scheme, rebates will be calculated on the basis of the actual personal community charge payable in each local authority area.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the percentage change in National Health Service expenditure for the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 after correcting for *(a)* National Health Service pay and prices deflator and *(b)* demographic deflator; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Forward plans for spending are made on a cash basis and no specific assumptions are made about pay and price movements for individual programmes. Estimates are made of the effect of demographic changes on demand for hospital and community health services but these are not appropriate to the National Health Service as a whole.

As my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 9 December, we plan to spend some £2,393 million on the National Health Service in Scotland next year and to provide a further increase of over £100 million in each of the two following years. These figures reinforce the Government's commitment to the National Health Service and should allow for the continued development and improvement of health services in Scotland over the planning period.

Heroin

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what action his Department is taking in conjunction with police authorities to eliminate the distribution of heroin in Scotland;

(2) what advice he has given to police authorities in relation to the suppression of heroin abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No specific advice has been given to police authorities on the suppression of heroin misuse as this is an operational matter for chief constables. But, as indicated in "Tackling Drug Misuse: a summary of the Government's strategy", a copy of which is in the Library, we regard action to combat drug misuse as commanding a high priority from all the agencies involved.

To support the police in their efforts to curb drug misuse, my right hon. and learned Friend has approved increases in authorised establishments to enable drug units to be formed in all eight Scottish forces. There are now around 100 officers specifically engaged in drugs work in Scottish forces compared to about 30 in 1979. In addition, the strength of the Scottish crime squad was increased by 21 officers in 1986 to allow the formation of drugs wings based in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The rate of specific police grant was increased from 50 to 51 per cent. with effect from 1986-87 in recognition of the demands, including the need to tackle drugs misuse, upon police resources.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths atttributed to heroin abuse have been recorded in each year since 1977.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The international classification diseases categories do not identify whether a death is due to heroin abuse. The following figures show all deaths where heroin was mentioned in the underlying cause.

	Number
1977	—
1978	—
1979	—
1980	4
1981	3
1982	1
1983	5
1984	10
1985	7
1986	5

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reports he has received about recent deaths in the Glasgow area from heroin abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None. I understand that the circumstances surrounding four recent deaths in Glasgow apparently associated with heroin misuse are being investigated by the procurator fiscal in Glasgow who will in due course submit a report to the Crown Office.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he has paid to the Scottish Development Agency in 1987-88; and how much he expects to pay in 1988-89. 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: The Government's contribution to the Scottish Development Agency for 1987-88 is estimated at £94·9 million. Information about the industry programme for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91 will be published in the public expenditure White Paper. Further details will be given in the "Scottish Commentary" and in the annual Supply Estimates.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, he will give the total amounts paid to projects in the Dumbarton constituency by the Scottish Development Agency in each year from 1979 to 1983 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms based on 1986-87 prices, showing the percentage changes in payments between years.

Mr. Lang: This information is not available.

Parole

Sir Hector Monro: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for a review of the parole system in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) on Wednesday 16 December.

General Practitioners (Ancillary Staff)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total cost in the last full year for which figures are available of the 70 per cent. direct reimbursements to unrestricted principals in general practice under the ancillary staff scheme for ancillary staff salaries, and a breakdown of the cost for each health board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At 31 March 1987, the latest date for which this information is available, the details are as follows:

Health Board	£
Ayrshire and Arran	975,518
Borders	288,554
Argyll and Clyde	803,575
Fife	712,729
Greater Glasgow	1,434,337
Highland	725,657
Lanarkshire	888,950
Grampian	1,217,550
Orkney	58,729
Lothian	2,027,388
Tayside	1,047,791
Forth Valley	719,217
Western Isles	136,431
Dumfries and Galloway	330,076
Shetland	65,083
Total	11,431,765

General Practitioners

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total, and a breakdown for each health board, of the number of unrestricted principals in general practice, as at 1 October 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table:

	Unrestricted principals in post
Scotland	3,271
Health Board	
Argyll and Clyde	296
Ayrshire and Arran	238
Borders	69
Dumfries and Galloway	107
Fife	192
Forth Valley	183
Grampian	293
Greater Glasgow	631
Highland	152
Lanarkshire	301
Lothian	494
Orkney	21
Shetland	18
Tayside	249
Western Isles	27

Cold-related Deaths

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of hypothermia and cold-related deaths in each year since 1979 for *(a)* the Tayside region and *(b)* the Dundee district authority area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Deaths mentioning hypothermia: Tayside region and Dundee district 1979 to 1986

Year	*Tayside*	*Dundee*
1979	23	8
1980	20	9
1981	18	8
1982	18	10
1983	17	11
1984	15	5
1985	23	8
1986	20	7

Housing Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers of *(a)* flats and *(b)* houses which are (i) two apartments or less, (ii) three apartments, (iii) four apartments and (iv) five apartments or more, for each of the following *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the Scottish Special Housing

Association, *(c)* new town development corporations, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* other private rented accommodation;

(2) if he will provide the average weekly rents for *(a)* flats and *(b)* houses which are (i) two apartments or less, (ii) three apartments, (iii) four apartments and (iv) five apartments or more, for each of the following *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the Scottish Special Housing Association, *(c)* new town development corporations, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* other private rented accommodation;

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the breakdown of numbers of dwellings and average weekly rents into houses and flats is not collected centrally. Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin HSIU No. 29 "Public Sector Rents in Scotland 1986-87", available in the House Library, contains information on average annual rents by dwelling size.

Rents

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide the average registered rents and change on previous rent for *(a)* housing association tenancies, *(b)* private furnished tenancies and *(c)* private unfurnished tenancies, in a form similar to the table on page 37 of "Scottish Housing Statistics 1986".

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available for 1987 is for the first half year only as follows:

Rent registration: average registered rents and change on previous rents

1987 (January-June)	*Mean registered rent £ per annum*	*Change on mean previous rent per cent.*	*Number of cases*
Housing Associations:			
First Registrations	1,047	40	1,281
Re-registrations	1,052	19	5,535
Private:			
Furnished			
Tenancies	1,821	-22	566
Unfurnished Tenancies:			
First Registrations	1,090	31	427
Re-registrations	838	36	2,878
All registrations	871	39	3,305

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the average weekly household expenditure on rent as a percentage of average weekly earnings of tenants of *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the Scottish Special Housing Association, *(c)* new town development corporations, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* other private rented accommodation;

(2) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the gross average weekly earnings of tenants renting accommodation from *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the Scottish Special Housing Association, *(c)* the new town development corporations, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* other private landlords.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available. Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin HSIU No. 29, "Public Sector Rents in Scotland 1986-87", a copy of which is available in the House Library, contains information comparing local authority average weekly rents with the average gross weekly earnings of a full-time adult manual employee in Scotland.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the estimated numbers of tenants of *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* the Scottish Special Housing Association, *(c)* new town development corporations, *(d)* housing associations and *(e)* other private sector landlords who are in receipt of rent rebates or rent allowances for (i) certificated cases and (ii) standard cases.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Earnings

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the gross average weekly earnings, exclusive of overtime, for *(a)* registered general nurses, *(b)* firemen, *(c)* postmen, *(d)* waiters and waitresses, *(e)* shop assistants, *(f)* ambulancemen, *(g)* agricultural workers and *(h)* construction workers.

Mr. Lang: The following information is available from the results of the new earnings survey:

Average gross weekly earnings (including overtime) of full-time employees on adult rates

Scotland, April 1987	*£ per week*	
	Manual men	*Non-manual men*
Industry:		
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	132·6	—
Construction	176·8	248·3

These results are subject to sampling errors.

The survey cannot provide reliable estimates of the corresponding figures for women, nor for the specific occupations listed.

The new earnings survey reports, available in the Library of the House, provide information for Great Britain as a whole for some of the occupations listed.

Springhill Farm Sewage Station

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals he has received against the proposal to allow consent to make emergency discharges of screened sewage effluent into Tollcross burn from the proposed sewage pumping station at Springhill farm, Baillieton, Glasgow; if he will list all appellants in the *Official Report*; and if he will call in this application.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Two requests for call-in have been received. The appellants are as listed. A decision on whether or not to call in the application will be made early in the new year.

1. Shettleston Community Council.
2. Sandyhills East Community Council.

Sea Transport Services

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for shipping subsidies for sea transport services to Scotland in 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Subject to parliamentary approval of the Estimates, I propose to make available in 1988-89 total

subsidy provision of £11·84 million. The deficit subsidy provision for Caledonian MacBrayne will reduce in line with recent trends in the company's improved performance to £6·54 million. The estimated requirement to continue the fare reduction support for P and O services to Orkney and Shetland is increased to £4·1 million. On the basis of budgets submitted by coastal bulk shippers within the tariff rebate subsidy scheme, the funding requirement next year will be £1·2 million.

The proposed level of subsidy provision reflects the Government's continuing commitment to assisting the essential sea transport services to the west coast islands and the northern isles.

Education Statistics

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the numbers of pupils from Edinburgh, South constituency who obtained places in further education in each year from 1977 to 1987; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for that year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* The information is not readily available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the accounting policies of nationalised industries in the light of the discussions which have taken place on the report, "Accounting for Economic Costs and Changing Prices", published in August 1986.

Mr. Major: Successive Governments have pointed out the desirability of making due allowance for changing prices in company accounts. This is particularly important in businesses where, as in a number of the nationalised industries, assets are long lived and where rates of return based on historic cost are inadequate as measures of economic performance.

The nationalised industries have been at the forefront of the application of current cost accounting. The Government have welcomed this and note that some of the industries that have been privatised, in particular those subject to regulation, have decided to maintain current cost accounts. We have noted that the Director General of Telecommunications has proposed that British Telecommunications should publish information on current cost profits.

When the Government published the report of the advisory group, "Accounting for Economic Costs and Changing Prices" they said that sponsor Departments and the Treasury would discuss the general principles described in the report, their merits and their practical application with individual nationalised industries, the nationalised industries' chairmen's group and other interested parties. Discussions with the individual industries and with the chairmen's group have now taken place. There have also been comments by the accountancy bodies and wider discussions.

These discussions have been at a technical level throughout. The majority of corporations have recognised the need to measure economic costs and have indicated ways in which some of the recommendations in the report to that end need modification for practical application. Suggestions have also been made as to how some of the recommendations might be further developed. The discussions have identified certain problems which require further study. They have shown the conditions under which modified historical cost accounts can be used to measure economic performance. These are that in those accounts the revaluations should cover all assets and be regularly updated, and that revalued assets are consistently treated in both the profit and loss account and balance sheet. The discussions have underlined the importance of the distinction made in the report between industries with a substantial degree of influence over their prices—the "price-makers"; and industries whose prices are determined in competitive markets — the "price-takers". The Government are satisfied with the outcome of the discussions and do not propose to take any immediate action. The discussions have been useful in confirming that the present accounting policies of nationalised industries go a long way towards the objective of providing measures of economic costs and that some further progress is in prospect. Present accounting policies should be maintained and reviewed in a year or two so that they continue to develop in ways which fulfil this objective.

Britoil

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he is giving to exercising his power as a special shareholder in Britoil under article 71B of that company's articles of association.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am currently considering whether any of the circumstances provided for under article 71B of Britoil's articles of association apply in the present situation.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to use Her Majesty's Government's special share in Britoil to prevent any takeover by any other company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: If a takeover bid were made the Government would consider all the circumstances and then decide whether it would be appropriate to use the powers of the special share.

Value Added Tax (Report)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has completed his consideration of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise report of its review of value added tax and other aspects of free zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: I have considered very carefully the Customs' report of the review which was announced in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . . Not Barriers". I have also borne in mind the representations I have received concerning free zone rules. Some of the changes sought by free zone operators would be contrary to European Community legislation and others would be contrary to the interests of fair competition with the rest of the economy.

I have concluded that the existing rules are generally equitable and are soundly based. There is no evidence that they discourage the entrepot trade which the free zones were designed to encourage.

However, I have decided that one change to the present rules is desirable to allow greater flexibility to free zone traders. Where goods manufactured in free zones are removed to the rest of the United Kingdom, import VAT is presently charged on their full value, including the value of United Kingdom materials, labour and overheads. This system of charging import VAT on United Kingdom elements is unique to free zones and was introduced to avoid the need for possibly complex calculations to ascertain the import VAT due on the imported elements alone. I am prepared to accept traders' assurances that such calculations can be made without undue difficulty. I propose to remove the anomaly and allow traders to pay import VAT on the imported elements only. However, traders may continue to pay tax on the full value if they prefer to avoid the need to support a claim to a lower value.

The necessary amendments to the Free Zone Regulations 1984 (SI 1984 No. 1177) will be laid before the House shortly.

Coinage (Consultation)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the results of the public consultation on the coinage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: In July this year the Royal Mint issued a consultation pamphlet "The United Kingdom Coinage". This set out four options for making the coinage lighter. Comments were invited from the general public and from those with special interests such as the blind and elderly, those who handle large amounts of coins, and the manufacturers and users of coin operated machines.

The consultation period ended in September. More than 3,000 replies were received. A majority of those who commented on the options favoured that in which the 5p is replaced by a coin similar to the old sixpence, and the 10p with one similar to the existing 5p. This was option 4 in the pamphlet. Having carefully considered the responses to the consultation, I have decided to introduce new 5p and 10p coins, as in option 4. This will reduce the overall weight of the coinage considerably. It will also complete the change from the pre-decimal coins.

The precise specifications for the new coins will be announced later, after further consultation about the details with the blind and with manufacturers of coin-operated machines. The new 5p will be issued first, probably in 1991 to give plenty of notice of the change, and the 10p will be issued two or three years later. The new coins will be issued with the same designs as the present coins.

On 12 November 1984 I informed the House that I had instructed the Bank of England to cease issuing £1 notes after the end of that year, but that the notes would continue to be legal tender for at least a further year. That further period has long since elapsed, and there are now very few series D £1 notes still in active circulation. Accordingly, the Bank is announcing today that, after 11 March 1988, series D Bank of England £1 notes will cease to be legal tender. This announcement does not affect the status of £1 notes issued by Scottish banks.

Government Manpower

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 October.

Mr. Major: At 1 October 1987 there were 585,070 staff in post in central Government Departments. Of these, 509,133 were non-industrials and 75,937 were industrials.

Rating Reform

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether payment by employers or other of the community charge for occupants of Government homes, ministerial homes, charitable homes, convenants and monasteries will be treated as a taxable benefit and as a taxable expense for those who pay it.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* Where there is an employer-employee relationship a benefit chargeable to income tax will arise for the employee if the employer pays the community charge on his behalf. In other circumstances the tax treatment of the payment of the community charge on behalf of another

person will depend on the particular facts. The employer will normally be able to claim a deduction for the payment in calculating his profits for tax purposes.

Taxation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to reduce the percentage of earnings taken in income tax, national insurance contributions and indirect taxes below the level pertaining in 1978-79.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The Government have already succeeded in reducing the percentage of earnings taken in taxes and national insurance contributions from the levels reached in 1981-82. Those levels reflected the need at that time to give priority to the control of public borrowing. It remains the Government's aim to bring taxes down further when prudent to do so.

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much income tax was repaid to children under 18 years of age as a result of tax claims made on their behalf for the 1985-86 financial year.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of persons paying tax under schedule D for the last 10 years for which information is available.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The information readily available for a full 10-year period covers those who were both liable to tax on their total income and had a source of schedule D case I or II (self-employment) income. Where husband and wife in a taxpaying couple each has a source of schedule D case I or II income, they are counted separately in the table:

Year	*Number of persons (million)*
1976-77	1·9
1977-78	1·9
1978-79	2·0
1979-80	2·0
1980-81	2·0
1981-82	2·1
1982-83	2·2
1983-84	2·2
1984-85	2·3
1985-86	2·4

Profit-related Pay

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many profit-related pay schemes had been submitted for approval to the Inland Revenue under the provisions of section 1 of the Finance (No. 2) Act 1987 as at 30 November.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* By the end of November 363 applications for registration of profit-related pay schemes had been received by the Inland Revenue.

Privatisation

Mr. Doran: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his latest estimate of receipts from the privatisation of state-owned enterprises over each of the next four financial years.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* There is no change to the estimate given in the 1987 Autumn Statement.

British Telecom

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he expects to raise any money from the sale of any British Telecom shares in 1988-89.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* No decisions have yet been taken about individual sales in 1988-89.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the value of his remaining shareholding in British Telecom.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* At market close on 14 December the value of the Government's residual holding of ordinary and preference shares in British Telecom was some £6·65 billion.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the total cost to the Treasury in 1987-88 of mortgage interest tax relief, if such relief were restricted to base rate income tax; and if he will estimate the regional share of mortgage interest tax relief, restricted to base rate income tax, based on the most recent available data from the family expenditure survey.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The cost of mortgage interest relief in 1987-88 is estimated to be about £4¾ billion, of which £330 million relates to the cost of relief at income tax rates in excess of basic rate.

For a regional distribution of mortgage interest relief based on data from the family expenditure survey (FES), I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply which I gave the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 22 July at columns *233-34*. As the sample size for the FES is relatively small, estimates of the regional distribution of mortgage interest relief at basic rate based on the FES would not be significantly different from the distribution of total mortgage interest relief.

DEFENCE

Housing (BAOR)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to provide the additional funds to improve the standards of housing for service men in the British Army on the Rhine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Funds are already provided for the improvement of accommodation for service men in BAOR, and modernisation programmes both for single living accommodation and for married quarters have been running for some years. These are continuing and

although I would wish to provide additional funds to complete them more quickly they must compete with other priorities within the defence budget, and with other demands in the BAOR building programme.

Munster Garrison

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the maintenance and repair of ordnance in the Munster garrison of the British Army of the Rhine is to be carried out under cover and within modern workshops; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The improvement of the maintenance and repair facilities at Waterloo barracks, Munster is presently planned for the mid-1990s. This is part of a long-term programme of work to modernise working conditions in many of those barracks we occupy in BAOR which were not designed for the sophisticated and heavy equipment now in service. The work has to compete with other priorities within the Army budget and this project must in turn compete with other building demands in BAOR. All priorities are kept under regular review, but I do not see any prospect yet for bringing this project forward in the programme.

Service Hospitals

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide in the *Official Report* full lists of *(a)* all Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force hospitals and *(b)* all service establishments which contain in-patient hospital facilities, listing in each case the number of beds established, the number of beds occupied on any recent convenient date, the nursing establishment and the relative number of nurses currently employed.

Mr. Freeman: There are 18 service hospitals:

Navy
RNH Haslar
RNH Plymouth
RNH Gibraltar

Army
QEMH Woolwich
CMH Aldershot
DKMH Catterick
MW Belfast [1]
BMH Berlin
BMH Dharan
BMH Hannover
BMH Hong Kong
BMH Munster
BMH Rinteln

Royal Air Force
PARAF (H) Wroughton
TPOWRAF (H) Ely
PMRAF (H) Halton
RAF (H) Akrotiri
RAF (H) Wegberg

[1] Military wing attached to Musgrave Park civilian hospital.

There are no in-patient hospital facilities at other service establishments. I shall answer shortly with the statistical information required for each hospital.

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many beds in service hospitals facilities are now occupied by National Health Service patients; and what are the present arrangements for funding the care of such patients.

Mr. Freeman: The average daily bed occupancy of NHS in-patients at United Kingdom service hospital facilities of the third quarter 1987 was 649, which included 121 service dependants. NHS patients are currently admitted subject to resources being available and treated without charge to the NHS. Exceptionally ex-service far east prisoners of war are treated on an extra cost basis and, at RAF hospital Ely, NHS patients are treated in 65 reserved beds under a local contract with the district health authority.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988;

(2) what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations offices of the armed forces; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 16 November 1987, at columns *446-47*. No significant change in the number of staff employed by the defence public relations staffs of the Ministry of Defence is envisaged in the next year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by the armed forces on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what is the estimated expenditure in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This information is not held centrally. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the armed forces on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88; *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) gave to him on 17 July 1987, at column *676*. The estimate for 1988-89 is similar to that for 1987-88.

Nuclear Weapons

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy, *Official Report*, 23 November, column *36*, if he will list what information he has as to the specific numbers of both nuclear warheads and launch vehicles to be withdrawn in accordance with the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The INF treaty provides for the withdrawal of 859 US missiles and 283 launchers; and 1,752 Soviet missiles and 845 launchers. While for the

purposes of the treaty all missiles are deemed to carry nuclear warheads, in practice a proportion may be armed with conventional or chemical warheads; and some non-deployed missiles included in these figures may not be equipped with warheads. A full breakdown of the missiles and equipment to be eliminated is contained in the memorandum of understanding on data, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Conventional Forces

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give his latest estimate of the conventional balance of forces between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact, including manpower, tanks, artillery, anti-tank weapons, aircraft, aircraft carriers and submarines.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to annex A of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987," pages 61-66.

Gateway Motor Auctions (Stirling) Ltd.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, mindful of the fraud perpetrated on his Department by Gateway Motor Auctions (Stirling) Ltd. in 1985 and 1986, he has instituted any changes in the monitoring of vehicle disposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Yes, I am aware of the embezzlement by the directors of the company, but it would not be in the public interest to disclose details of changes in the Department's monitoring and auditing arrangements.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations he has made into the accounting procedures applied by his Department in its dealings with Gateway Motor Auctions (Stirling) Limited in 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following an investigation of the circumstances, not yet complete, procedures have been strengthened, and further safeguards are being explored for inclusion in the arrangements when these are renewed in 1988.

Mr. Frank McGrath

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he takes to ensure that Mr. Frank McGrath, assistant director of technical costs in his Department is not in breach of his contract with the Government as a result of his appointment as an instructor of courses run by Lion International, or in breach of any requirement for confidentiality on matters relating to his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: Departmental procedures require staff wishing to publish articles or give lectures to seek prior approval. The text of any material to be published, or lecture notes, are also cleared before hand. Mr. McGrath sought and obtained approval to give a talk, in his own time, at a seminar run by Lion International, in March 1986, and nas given similar talks since then. No breach of contract or confidentiality is involved.

EMPLOYMENT

Food and Agriculture Industries

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the unemployment rate in the food and agriculture sectors of the British economy for each year since 1983.

Mr. Lee: Information on the previous industry of unemployed claimants is not collected.

The information available from the labour force survey does not permit unemployment rates by industry to be calculated on a basis comparable with whole economy unemployment rates, because at least one third of the unemployed did not give a previous industry, mainly because they had not had a job in the previous three years.

Unemployment rates calculated for those recording a previous job in the industries concerned are as follows

	1983 *Per cent.*	*1984* *Per cent.*	*1985* *Per cent.*	*1986* *Per cent.*
Division O: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	5	6	5	6
Classes 41 and 42: Food, Drink and Tobacco	10	9	10	8

Source: Labour Force Surveys, spring each year.

Benefits

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his answers of 9 November, *Official Report*, columns 49-50, relating to unemployment benefit and vacancies; he will institute the collection and collation of information regarding vacancies and applicants for unemployment benefit, in order to identify those claimants available for work in occupations for which vacancies exist.

Mr. Lee: The basic objective of the recent merger between the unemployment benefit service and the jobcentre service is to bring together the work of both organisations to provide a more coherent and effective service for unemployed people. As part of the integration process the new employment service is examining more effective ways of bringing suitable vacancies to the attention of claimants.

Textile and Knitwear Industry

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he is satisfied with the quality and quantity of job training for the textile and knitwear industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department does not collect detailed information on the amount or nature of training

undertaken by individual employers. This reflects the Government's view that responsibility for training rests primarily with industry. Although I am generally satisfied that there is a commitment to training in the textile and knitwear industry, I believe that greater investment is called for if the industry is to be competitive in world markets.

Agricultural Machinery

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to introduce legislation concerning agricultural machinery safety mechanisms.

Mr. Nicholls: There is already legislation on the safety of agricultural machinery. I understand that the European Commission is preparing a proposal for a directive to harmonise the laws of the member states relating to the safety of machines, including those used in agriculture. Meanwhile, I have no plans to introduce further legislation.

Rhymney Benefit Office

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations his Department has received about the closure of the Rhymney benefit office, Mid Glamorgan; and whether he will reconsider the decision to close, in the light of more representations.

Mr. Lee: Representations were received from the hon. Member, Rhymney community council, the Rhymney Valley district council and the Rhymney branch of the Labour party. The decision to close the office was made after careful consideration of all the local circumstances which remain unchanged. I see no reason to reconsider the decision.

Miss Ira Celia Utieyione (Work Permit)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the decision communicated on 3 December 1987 by Karen O'Toole, on behalf of the overseas labour section of the Department of Employment, to Peter Hey of the South Sands hotel, Salcombe, in respect of his application for a work permit for Miss Ira Celia Utieyione, reference SS/8714617, to employ her as an overseas national trainee, in the light of further information contained in a letter from Mr. Hey to the hon. Member for South Hams on 7 December 1987, sent to his Department on 10 December 1987.

Mr. Lee: I shall review the decision and write to my hon. Friend.

Women and Young People

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of regulation 6(1)(vii) to (xi) of the Pottery (Health and Welfare) Special Regulations 1950 which prohibits women and young persons from employment in specified processes which may expose them to clay and silica dust;

(2) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of section 205 of the Public Health Act 1936 for England and Wales and the fifth schedule of the Factories Act 1961 for Scotland, which prohibit the employment of a woman in a factory within four weeks of giving birth;

(3) what representations his Department has received calling for the denunciation of International Labour Organisation convention 45; Underground Work (Women) and European Social Charter article 8(4)*(b)*;

(4) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of section 93 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 which prohibits women and young people from lifting, carrying or moving a load so heavy as likely to cause injury at a mine;

(5) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of section 124(1) of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and section 21(1) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which prohibits the employment of women below ground in mines;

(6) what representations his Department has received since 1977, calling for the repeal of section 4 of the Factories Act 1961, which prohibits the employment of women and young persons in certain processes connected with lead manufacture in factories;

(7) what representations his Department has received since 1977 calling for the repeal of regulations 6(1)(i) to (vi) of the Pottery (Health and Welfare) Special Regulations 1950, which prohibit women and young people from employment in specified processes involving lead.

Mr. Nicholls: No record has been kept. However, these provisions were included in the 1979 Equal Opportunities Commission report "Health and Safety Legislation: Should we distinguish between men and women?"

In addition, the European Commission communication "Protective Legislation for Women in the Member States of the European Community" (COM(87)105 final) drew attention to the fact that much protective legislation was contrary to the equal treatment directive (Council directive 76/207/EEC). The Government have issued a consultative document on "Restrictions on Employment of Young People and the Removal of Sex Discrimination in Legislation" which examines such legislation, suggests possible ways forward and seeks views.

Steel Industry

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish statistics for the number of *(a)* fatal and *(b)* other accidents in the British steel industry since 1977 and any comparable information available to him about Japan.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information for reported accidents to employees in the iron and steel industry in Great Britain is as follows. Comparable figures for Japan are not available.

Reported occupational injuries to employees in the iron and steel industry (Minimum List Heading 311 of Standard Industrial Classification 1968) in Great Britain

	Resulting in:		
	Death	*Major injury*[2]	*Absence from work of over three days*[3]
1977	32	..	11,050
1978	24	..	10,264
1979	27	..	9,183
1980[1]	7	..	5,365
1981	14	318	5,640

	Resulting in:		
	Death	Major injury[2]	Absence from work of over three days[3]
1982	19	247	4,505
1983	7	223	..
1984	15	230	..
1985	7	246	..

.. Not available.

[1] Figures affected by three month national steel strike (January to March).

[2] As defined under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1980.

[3] For 1977-80, as reported to Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate; for 1981-82, resulting in claims for industrial injury benefit.

Figures for 1986-87 are provisional and were collected under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR). This introduced a wider definition of "major injuries" and there are no figures available for the iron and steel industry so that the wider category of "metal manufacturing" is used. The figures under that category are 16 fatalities, 533 major injuries and 3,814 "over three days" injuries.

Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the European Community Labour and Social Affairs Council held in Brussels on 1 December.

Mr. Lee: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council.

We welcome the adoption by the Council of conclusions on action to combat long-term unemployment which arise from the action programme on employment growth (adopted under the British presidency in December 1986). The conclusions suggest a series of specific measures which might be taken by member states towards reducing the levels of long-term unemployment and invite the Commission to present an action programme.

An action programme on the training of young people for adult and working life was adopted. The programme aims to provide all young people in the Community with up to two years vocational training; the Government welcome particularly its emphasis on projects which encourage the development of enterprise.

The Council adopted a resolution on safety, health and hygiene at work which sets valuable guidelines for applying the provisions of article 118A of the treaty of Rome; this is a new article introduced under the Single European Act, which gives the Council power, acting by a qualified majority, to adopt minimum requirements for the health and safety of workers. The Council adopted a common position — the first stage in the co-operation procedure with the European Parliament — on a draft directive to proscribe four specified carcinogens.

Other matters discussed, but not conclusively, included a fresh action programme for the vocational and social integration of people with disabilities, and a draft directive on protection from the risks of exposure to benzene.

WALES

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new provisions have been made by his Department during this past three years to improve dental care for mentally handicapped people in Gwynedd under the all-Wales strategy for mentally handicapped persons; how much money has been provided from strategy resources for each such initiative; and if he will list them, noting the date at which they are expected to be fully operational.

Mr. Grist: Under the all-Wales strategy, all providers of services are expected to promote access for people with a mental handicap to the facilities available to the community at large, including dental care. In addition to the generality of funding we are making available to the Gwynedd health authority, my right hon. Friend is providing on a recurrent basis £24,500 for the authority to employ three whole-time equivalent dental hygienists working solely with people with mental handicaps. For further details about these services the hon. Gentleman might care to contact the general manager of Gwynedd health authority.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales at what frequency during the course of a financial year health authorities in Wales are required to submit their current account expenditure figures to his Department; whether they are also required to compare such actual year to-date expenditure with a calendarised year to-date budget; and whether his Department monitors the performance against budget of these authorities, in global terms or by departmental performance.

Mr. Grist: The Department's role in monitoring is related to the totality of the resources available to each authority. Control and monitoring of individual budgets within the notified allocations is the management responsibility of health authorities.

The Department monitors the financial performance of health authorities through a financial information system designed to provide and update information about cash expenditure in relation to allocated resources. At the start of each financial year, each authority provides the Department with a cumulative monthly profile of its anticipated demands for cash within the totality of its notified cash limit allocations. This is revised on a regular basis to take account of any change to the authority's spending plans, or any adjustment to its notified cash limit. Cumulative cash expenditure returns, submitted on a monthly basis, are then compared with this profile so that any overspend can be identified and early action taken, in consultation with the authority concerned, to recover the situation.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the likely budget overspending in the current financial year of each of the nine health authorities in Wales, respectively, on the basis of the latest information available to him; and if he will identify any additional loan finance which he is making available to each of these authorities to enable them to remain solvent during the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: The information is as follows:

Revenue resources cash overspending/(underspending)[1]

	£ million
Clwyd	0·06
East Dyfed	0·49
Gwent	1·49
Gwynedd	1·49
Mid Glamorgan	1·66
Pembrokeshire	0·20
Powys	(0·07)
South Glamorgan	(0·19)
West Glamorgan	0·29

[1] Based on the monthly returns to the 31 October of actual cash spending against profiles of expected cash spending provided by health authorities.

Health authorities have a duty to contain their expenditure within notified cash limits and I do not therefore expect any authority to overspend in cash terms at the end of the year. In recognition of their financial problems, I have made loans of £1 million available to Gwent and Gwynedd health authorities in the current financial year.

Welsh Office Staff

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, how many persons are employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time in his Department in dealing with health responsibilities; and what were the comparable numbers so engaged in May 1979.

Mr. Grist: The numbers are available only in respect of staff dealing with health and social services responsibilities and are:

	1 May 1979	*1 December 1987*
Full-time	320	257
Part-time	5	19
Total (full-time equivalent)	322½	266½

In addition, staff in the Department's central services divisions provide relevant support services including health statistics.

Regional Aid

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total expenditure in the current financial year on regional policy in Wales; and what is the financial provision for such spending being made for the financial year 1988-89.

Mr. Grist: Estimated expenditure for 1987-88 on regional selective assistance and regional development grants in Wales totals £98 million. Expenditure plans for 1988-89 will be shown in the 1988 public expenditure White Paper and details of the regional selective assistance and regional development grants provision in the Supply Estimates.

Health Authorities (Wage Awards)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each of the nine health authorities in Wales the estimated cost of the absence of central funding of wage awards by his Department over the past two years.

Mr. Grist: The cost of pay awards borne by district health authorities over the past two years in excess of central funding is estimated as follows:

	1986-87 £ million	*1987-88 £ million*
Clwyd	0·453	0·403
East Dyfed	0·292	0·258
Gwent	0·573	0·482
Gwynedd	0·300	0·261
Mid Glamorgan	0·669	0·584
Powys	0·132	0·117
South Glamorgan	0·770	0·659
West Glamorgan	0·454	0·405
Pembrokeshire	0·093	0·091

Note: Estimates based on actual settlements for review bodies' staff (ie medical and dental, nurses and midwives and the professions allied to medicine) and for other staff at 6 per cent. settlement has been assumed for 1986-87 and a 5 per cent. settlement for 1987-88. Firmer estimates for other staff would require detailed information from individual authorities about the staff in post and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Health Authorities (Staff)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each of the health authorities in Wales the number of *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time staff who are employed on administration for the latest date for which figures are available, together with corresponding figures for each of the past seven years.

Mr. Grist: The requested information, which relates to all administrative and clerical staff employed by health authorities in Wales at 30 September each year, is given in the following table.

Administrative and clerical employees of Welsh health authorities

	1987		*1986*		*1985*		*1984*		*1983*		*1982*		*1981*		*1980*	
	Whole time	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*	*Whole time*	*Part time*
Clwyd	629	278	606	284	610	227	591	195	557	173	583	204	590	191	566	170
East Dyfed	461	112	469	99	454	95	461	81	447	82	427	80	545	116	544	111
Pembrokeshire	141	66	140	52	142	49	137	44	123	45	106	38				
Gwent	696	481	692	449	719	405	731	371	698	367	705	330	715	298	695	310
Gwynedd	440	154	444	174	443	150	427	139	387	127	391	118	386	108	386	96
Mid Glamorgan	893	353	890	310	886	290	883	275	879	251	867	254	872	245	865	234
Powys	176	37	156	31	158	31	160	25	166	24	151	29	158	27	149	24
South Glamorgan	1,124	601	1,081	564	1,120	573	1,104	547	1,145	538	1,117	522	1,112	521	1,088	514
West Glamorgan	673	251	654	241	634	206	622	159	621	142	616	123	619	114	609	112

Dyfed (Traffic Volumes)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the increase in traffic volumes in the Dyfed county council area over the past five years; what representations have been made by the council; and if he will make a statement on the finance made available over the past five years and in the settlement year 1988-89 for its transport programme.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on traffic volumes in the Dyfed county council area is not available but I have recently met representatives of Dyfed county council to discuss other highway matters.

Since 1983-84 capital allocations to the county council for expenditure supported by transport supplementary grant have totalled £22·9 million. The 1988-89 TSG settlement for Dyfed amounts to £1·904 million. Since 1985-86 provision for transport expenditure falling outside the TSG criterion has been covered by the overall formula capital allocations to counties for all other services. From 1985-86 for Dyfed these amounted to £28·6 million. For 1988-89 the provision is £11·1 million.

Dyfed (Approved Projects)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what projects of regional or national importance have been approved for Dyfed in each of the past five years and in the year 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: Since 1983 Dyfed county council has received one allocation for a project of regional or national importance (PRNI) of £0·9 million (1987-88—1989-90) in respect of the A4139 route 9 access road to the Pembroke dock enterprise zone. Preseli Pembrokeshire and South Pembrokeshire district councils have received allocations of £0·8 million (1984-85—1985-86) and £1·55 million (1984-85 — 1987-88) respectively for enterprise zones.

In addition, Dyfed county council has received a special project allocation in respect of Haverfordwest college of education of £3·930 million (1987-88—1989-90).

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether Deloitte, Haskins and Sells management consultancy division is being retained to give any further advice or assistance to his Department, or directly to the health authority, following the recent completion of its final report on the financial position of the Gwynedd health authority.

Mr. Grist: I have agreed to the contract with Deloitte, Haskins and Sells being extended to the end of this financial year so that it can provide further support and assistance to Gwynedd health authority in developing its action plan for achieving financial balance.

Steelworkers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will initiate a study of the effects in the Newport area of redundancy and premature retirement on the mental and physical health of steelworkers and their families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No such study is planned.

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the number of persons whom he nominates to each of those public bodies in respect of which he *(a)* has sole responsibility for making all or a majority of appointments and *(b)* has responsibility for making a minority of appointments, or some or all of the appointments, jointly with other Ministers;

(2) when he will be appointing members, or a member, to those public bodies in Wales in respect of which he has responsibility for making all or some appointments himself, or jointly with other Ministers, and in each case how many members he will be appointing and what proportion of his appointees on that body they represent.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

National Museum of Wales

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the industrial department of the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The future of the industry department is linked with that of the Welsh industrial and maritime museum which must be considered in the context of the wider proposals for the Cardiff bay.

Cancer

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the incidence of various forms of cancer in the areas of each general practice in Meirionnydd Nant Conwy in each year since 1957.

Mr. Grist: Data are not available in the form requested. The available information relates to the district of Meirionnydd for the period 1974 to 1983 and is shown in the following table.

	Number	*Average* [1]	*Standardised registration rate (Wales = 100)*
Oesophagus	40	14·6	114
Stomach	145	46·2	109
Colon	157	50·0	126
Rectum	76	24·2	86
Pancreas	46	14·6	90
Lung	233	74·2	88
Female Breast	247	149·7	134
Cervic Uteri	34	20·6	91
Uterus	27	16·4	110
Ovary	37	22·4	111
Prostrate	80	53·7	105
Bladder	45	14·3	68
All leukaemias	45	14·3	124
All malignancies	1,735	552·5	103

[1] Annual registration rate per 100,000 population.

Land Disposal

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications for consent to dispose of land under section 32 of the Housing Act 1985 he has received from each of the housing authorities in Wales; and which of the applications received his consent.

Mr. Grist: This information is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Nursery Schools

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the total public expenditure spent on nursery schools and classes each year from 1975 to 1985 and *(b)* the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of these years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Estimated expenditure on educational provision for all under-fives, whether in nursery or primary schools in Wales, and the relevant percentages of GDP for each year are as follows:

	Expenditure £ million (cash)	*Percentage of GDP*
1976-77	14·8	0·011
1977-78	15·2	0·010
1978-79	16·5	0·009
1979-80	18·3	0·009
1980-81	25·0	0·011
1981-82	26·1	0·010
1982-83	27·4	0·010
1983-84	28·7	0·009
1984-85	29·3	0·009
1985-86	32·3	0·008

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total spending in 1987-88 on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material is £576,500.

For 1988-89 detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken but I expect the overall publicity figure to be about £700,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: The total estimated expenditure on press and public relations in 1987-88 is £1,047,500. This figure includes expenditure on salaries and accommodation for all the information grades and support staff.

The total estimated expenditure on press and public relations in 1988-89 is £1,198,000. The figure includes expenditure on salaries and accommodation for all the information grades and support staff.

Eye Disease

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list area by area in Wales the numbers of treatment for eye diseases recorded in each of the years since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Information for the number of in-patients and day cases treated in the specialty of opthalmology by the NHS, is given in the following table.

Health authority	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Clwyd	1,401	1,539	1,525	1,546	1,743	1,803	1,819
East Dyfed	955	900	839	1,025	1,041	1,153	1,170
Gwent	1,149	1,346	1,073	1,314	1,260	1,060	1,542
Gwynedd	947	887	881	958	878	1,301	1,374
Mid Glamorgan	1,896	2,022	1,900	2,327	2,358	2,333	3,482
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	16	24	36	17
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	1,455	1,713	1,439	1,715	1,860	1,772	1,708
West Glamorgan	951	1,071	983	1,097	1,101	1,210	1,315

As in other areas of NHS activity, these data show that levels of patient throughput have increased significantly in recent years.

Hospital Eye Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners referrals of patients to the hospital eye service there were in each of the years from 1980.

Mr. Grist: Information for the number of patients who were prescribed a pair of glasses by the hospital eye service in Wales is given in the following table. It is not possible to say how many of these patients were referred by their general practitioners.

	Number
1980	14,164
1981	14,508
1982	12,479
1983	12,143
1984	12,333
1985	12,701
1986[1]	11,660

[1] Provisional estimate.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has met the chairman of the University Grants Committee in the last four weeks.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have spoken to him on one occasion.

St. David's Forum

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the participation of senior civil servants of his Department *(a)* on the steering committee of the St. David's forum and *(b)* in the particular meeting of the St. David's forum at the Cliff's hotel, Gwbert-on-Sea, Dyfed, on the weekend of 28-29 November, was with his permission.

Mr. Peter Walker: My predecessor agreed to Welsh Office participation in the forum, which has my continued support.

Privately Owned Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to respond to the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs' report on the condition and repair of privately owned housing in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that the Government's response to the Select Committee report on this subject has been presented to the Committee today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Clwyd Health Authority (Headquarters Extension)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the proposed cost of the planned extension to the headquarters of the Clwyd health authority.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter of operational policy for Clwyd health authority and I suggest that the hon. Gentleman writes to the district general manager.

Cancer Patients, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to enable cancer sufferers in Clwyd to receive treatment in Clwyd as opposed to treatment in Wirral; how many Clwyd patients have been treated in England for cancer for each of the years 1980 to 1987; what consultations he has had with English health authorities and hospital consultants on the prospects of treatment for cancer in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The Welsh Office published in 1988 the report of a comprehensive review of regional services, including radiotherapy and medical oncology, delivered to patients in north Wales. The Department's decisions on the report were announced, following consultation, in 1987. Discussions have been held with officials of Clwyd health authority on the report's recommendations, including the funding of medical oncology in the district. Representatives of the Welsh Office and Clwyd and Gwynedd health authorities are to meet officials of Mersey regional health authority in the new year to discuss the report and in particular the Department's intention to commission a study of options for improving the provisions of cancer services to north Wales patients. Information on the number of Clwyd residents receiving treatment in England for cancer is not readily available.

Children with Special Needs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate extra funds to Clwyd health authority in order to appoint two more speech therapists and two more physiotherapists to deal with children with special needs.

Mr. Grist: The bid submitted by Clwyd district health authority under the joint finance arrangements for the funding of two speech therapists and two physiotherapists is currently under consideration alongside all other joint finance bids. Decisions will be announced in the new year.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will order a review of joint financing in Wales and make available extra funds to authorities in Wales with a view to making urgent improvements to speech therapy provision.

Mr. Grist: The number of whole-time equivalent speech therapists in Wales has doubled since 1979. The determination of staffing levels is the responsibility of district health authorities using their discretionary resources and applications for central funding such as joint finance as appropriate.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will undertake a tour of language units in Clwyd schools to meet parents, teachers and speech therapists to discuss improvements in the staffing provision in speech therapy.

Mr. Grist: No. The determination of appropriate staffing levels in speech therapy is the responsibility of the district health authority.

Lluesty Hospital, Holywell

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate extra cash to Clwyd health authority to avert ward closures at Lluesty hospital, Holywell.

Mr. Grist: It is for the management of Clwyd health authority to provide the most effective service within the resources provided. Any proposal for a substantial permanent variation in service at Lluesty hospital would be subject to the usual consultation arrangements.

Physiotherapy (Clwyd)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will allocate extra cash to Clwyd health authority for physiotherapy provision in Clwyd hospitals, and in particular Mancot community hospital.

Mr. Grist: The only application that the Welsh Office has received from Clwyd health authority for funding physiotherapist posts is a joint finance bid for two posts which is currently under consideration.

Deeside Community Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet representatives of Clwyd health authority with a view to establishing a firm date for the start of the building of Deeside community hospital and to restoring the proposed hospital to its original size and projected cost.

Mr. Grist: No. Our officials have already discussed with representatives of Clwyd district health authority the implications of their capital programme and a further meeting has been arranged for January. Proposals for Deeside community hospital will form a part of that discussion. Responsibility for the funding scale and timing of service developments in Clwyd rests with the health authority.

Welsh Language

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many independent schools in Wales teach Welsh as a second language; and how many pupils attend these classes.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information is not available.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many independent schools in Wales provide education through the medium of Welsh for all or part of the curriculum.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No independent schools in Wales provide education through the medium of Welsh.

Children's Play

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he is taking to encourage the development of children's play in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Following the liquidation of Playboard in March of this year, a panel was set up drawn from the voluntary sector, the Welsh Counties Committee, the Committee of Welsh District Councils and the Sports Council for Wales to advise on the allocation of £50,000 earmarked for expenditure in 1987-88 and on the way forward for children's play in Wales. The panel has recently reported and I have decided that for this financial year I will make the following allocations.

(a) £35,000 will be made available to help equip play resource centres. These centres which provide play equipment such as inflatable castles etc. on loan to groups working in the community. I am seeking bids from voluntary and public bodies to utilise these funds.

(b) £10,000 will be provided to the Wales Play Association to help towards their set-up costs and to undertake a training initiative.

(c) £5,000 will be made available to help establish the organisation to take forward children's play in the longer term.

For the longer term, I have asked the Committee of Welsh District Councils to set up a management committee to act as a host body for the development of children's play in Wales.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much low and intermediate radioactive waste is produced in National Health Service hospitals in Wales.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* Virtually all the waste from the use of radioactive substances in medical practice consists of low or very low-level material, which is disposed of in accordance with licensing conditions and local arrangements. Details of such disposals are kept by district health authorities, but are not held centrally. Any waste not suitable for disposal, including the very small quantities of intermediate-level wate in the form of redundant radioactive sources, is stored and disposed of as appropriate utilising the national disposal service. The amount is included in the national waste inventory published in the annual reports of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, which are available in the Library.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Peter Walker: 18½ under the Director of Information. At present no change is envisaged for 1988.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether all the legislation necessary for the operation of the social fund and the reformed structure of income-related benefits in Northern Ireland after April 1988 is now in place; if he has any plans in the near future to bring forward legislation by Order in Council on matters of social security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The main primary legislation necessary for the operation of the social fund and the reformed structure of income-related benefits in Northern Ireland after April 1988 is already in place; the necessary subordinate legislation will be in place shortly. In addition, it is proposed to make an Order in Council containing social security provisions for Northern Ireland corresponding to those for Great Britain contained in the Social Security Bill.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what advice he is giving to officers administering the social fund in areas in Northern Ireland as to the procedure to be adopted in the event of their exceeding their allocations for grants and loans before the end of a year, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No such advice will be necessary. Each social security office will be expected to contain its payments within the amounts allocated.

Equal Opportunities (Northern Ireland)

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the next report on the monitoring of equal opportunities within the Northern Ireland Civil Service will be published.

Mr. Stanley: The second report of the Northern Ireland Civil Service's equal opportunities unit is being published today and copies have been placed in the Library.

The report shows that there is a continuing increase in both the numbers of women and in the numbers of Roman Catholics within the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Between 1 January 1985 and 1 January 1987, the overall proportion of women increased by 0·4 percentage points to 49·5 per cent. and at the higher grade levels (staff officer equivalent and above) by 2·0 percentage points to 13·1 per cent. The overall proportion of Roman Catholics increased by 1·1 percentage points to 33·7 per cent. and at the higher grades by 1·9 percentage points to 21·5 per cent. The numbers of registered disabled staff (228) declined from the 1985 position of 265 officers and their proportion of total staff fell from 1·2 per cent. to 1 per cent.

The report provides an analysis undertaken on behalf of the Civil Service Commission for Northern Ireland which demonstrates that the service is attracting applicants from all sections of the community. Compared with earlier years, women and Roman Catholics form a greater proportion of staff entering at executive officer level and above; there is an expectation that entrants at this level will progress to the higher reaches of the service.

The report contains an account of the extension of monitoring arrangements to industrial staff and provides a breakdown of the composition of this group.

The report breaks new ground by analysing in detail the various stages of two major recruitment competitions and indicates how this work will be developed. It also contains the first in-depth analysis of an occupational group—the training centre staff of the Department of Economic Development.

As in the first report, the unit describes how it intends to develop its work, building on the comprehensive foundations already laid. I hope that this important report will be widely read and studied. It represents an extremely thorough, comprehensive and open examination of personnel practices within the Northern Ireland Civil Service and provides further evidence of the Government's concern to ensure that fair employment is a reality in Northern Ireland.

Job Release Scheme

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the job release scheme and new workers scheme in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: In line with the action taken to end both those schemes in Great Britain I have decided that both schemes will close in Northern Ireland from 31 January 1988. All existing applications for job release will be considered if a proposed date of early retirement is no later than 31 January 1988 except that applications with a release date of up to 31 March 1988 may be considered in exceptional circumstances. In relation to the new workers scheme applications can be considered under this scheme only if the job to be supported starts on or before 31 January 1988 and all other conditions are met. Applications must be received at the Department of Economic Development within 13 weeks of the date the job started.

Heart Operations

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information is available as to indicate the current waiting lists in Northern Ireland for each category of heart operation at present and at each quarter since December 1983;

(2) what information is available to indicate the number of patients on the waiting list for heart operations since December 1983 who have died before having their operation.

Mr. Needham: The table shows the total waiting list for cardiac surgery at the end of each quarter since December 1983. A recent review of waiting lists means that the figure at 30 September 1987 is not comparable with those at earlier dates. Information is not held centrally on the type of operation required by patients on the waiting list or on the number of patients who die before their operation.

Waiting list for cardiac surgery

	Number
31 December 1983	444
31 March 1984	476
30 June 1984	428
30 September 1984	431
31 December 1984	389
31 March 1985	457
30 June 1985	434
30 September 1985	359
31 December 1985	468
31 March 1986	454
30 June 1986	459
30 September 1986	407
31 December 1986	409
31 March 1987	442
30 June 1987	447
30 September 1987	607

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate by category and by hospital the number of heart operations performed in each quarter since December 1983.

Mr. Needham: The royal Victoria hospital is the only hospital in Northern Ireland which carries out cardiac surgery. The numbers of heart operations notified to the Department through the hospital activity analysis scheme are shown below.

It is estimated that this scheme captures data on 90 per cent. of cases treated at the royal Victoria hospital.

Operations performed during quarter ending

	March 1984	*June 1984*	*September 1984*	*December 1984*	*March 1985*	*June 1985*	*September 1985*	*December 1985*	*March 1986*	*June 1986*	*September 1986*	*December 1986*
Operations affecting Myocardium	36	46	29	28	32	18	12	8	21	45	34	40
Insertion of pacemaker	34	51	43	46	42	48	49	41	34	41	41	38
Heart valve replacement	18	18	10	10	12	10	3	4	12	26	13	12
Operations on Septum within Heart Cavity	10	11	3	2	5	—	1	—	5	12	3	6
Other Heart operations	16	20	4	8	3	9	1	4	13	13	8	9
Total	114	146	89	94	94	85	66	57	85	137	99	105

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to him to indicate average waiting periods for heart surgery in Northern Ireland in relation to those in regions in Britain and elsewhere in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Needham: The table shows the number of patients on the cardiac surgery waiting list at 30 September 1987 by waiting time.

Waiting time	Number
Less than three months	124
Three and less than six months	72
Six and less than 12 months	112
One and less than two years	114
Two and less than three years	54
Three years and over	131
Total	607

Because of regional differences in the designation of cardiac and thoracic surgery, it is not possible to compare the Northern Ireland figures with those for other parts of the United Kingdom or the European Economic Community.

Heart Disease

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to him to indicate the rates of heart disease in Northern Ireland in relation to those in regions in Britain and elsewhere in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Needham: The table shows the age-standardised mortality rates from ischaemic heart disease in 1980 for males and females for those countries for which data were available. These details have been extracted from figures produced by the World Health Organisation and they represent the most recent information available in its data bank.

Age-standardised mortality from ischaemic heart disease in 1980
Rates per 100,000 population aged 40-69 years

Country	Males	Females
United Kingdom		
Northern Ireland	630	191
Scotland	592	208
England and Wales	482	136
Republic of Ireland	499	160
Denmark	392	112
Netherlands	323	78
Federal Republic of Germany	314	75
Belgium	264	72
Italy	212	53
France	137	30

"Change of Heart" Campaign

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the "Change of Heart" campaign.

Mr. Needham: There has been widespread interest throughout the community in the "Change of Heart" programme since it was launched in October 1986. A number of initiatives have been developed involving a wide range of organisations and interests in public services, business, the voluntary sector and the community.

An integral part of the programme is the centrally organised publicity and advertising campaign which supports and complements the work of the numerous people involved in local initiatives.

Initial research suggests that the public are starting to make the necessary changes, in relation to life style factors such as smoking, diet and exercise.

Youth Organisations (Grants)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the amounts paid by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland to the headquarters of voluntary youth organisations during the last three years; if he will give for each organisation getting support, the approximate current membership of these groups; and if he will list the amounts of grants and payments made by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland to youth organisations during the last three years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The available information is as follows:

Name of organisation	Current membership (where known)	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £
Central Voluntary Headquarters Organisations				
Boys' Brigade	24,388	55,185	61,080	64,830
Children's Community Holidays	1,250	26,885	27,765	28,845
Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme	8,000	14,080	14,680	19,535
Girls' Brigade	23,734	47,800	48,470	53,375
Girl Guides	6,526	25,347	33,855	43,480
International Voluntary Service	465	15,500	16,945	23,185
NI Association of Boys' Clubs	14,750	49,015	50,240	52,770
NI Association of Youth Clubs	40,000	149,230	158,318	174,029
NI Scout Council	13,184	58,455	60,510	64,966
Practical Action	—	19,925	23,740	22,352
Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied	1,800	12,641	18,480	25,017
NIAYC—Playboard Unit	—	4,500	32,000	31,350
St. John's Ambulance Brigade	1,120	15,949	11,395	10,735
Standing Conference of Youth Organisations	—	36,210	52,128	91,525
SCOYO Information Unit	—	35,325	36,270	Nil
Share Centre (Discovery '80 Ltd.)	—	Nil	7,125	9,109
Young Farmers' Clubs of Ulster	3,365	38,000	41,140	42,910
YMCA Headquarters	5,900	26,468	20,900	27,434
YMCA Glenriver	—	18,760	16,720	30,400
Smaller headquarter organisations				
Army Cadet Force	1,900	2,018	1,895	1,982
Belfast Girls' Club Union	3,500	9,818	11,579	11,960

Name of organisation	Current membership (where known)	1984-85 £	1985-86 £	1986-87 £
Brian Boru	—	583	2,408	853
Down and Connor	2,500	1,655	15,439	14,503
Catholic boy scouts of Ireland				
Dromore	—	49	172	608
Derryowen	970	4,031	952	1,757
Sperrinvale	—	Nil	653	446
Aileach	—	532	Nil	Nil
Erne	—	1,516	1,923	2,464
British Red Cross	—	608	Nil	Nil
Armagh	1,025	1,560	2,170	4,209
Catholic girl guides of Ireland				
Down and Connor	1,403	3,636	2,872	4,700
Dromore	576	894	1,132	1,058
Derry and Raphoe	1,650	124	660	200
Church Lads' and Church Girls Brigade	—	5,480	3,783	3,797
Church Youth Service Council	—	5,972	10,986	16,275
Corrymeela	—	10,945	12,693	11,144
Down and Connor Youth Council	—	22,130	16,244	11,343
MENCAP (Gateway Club)	—	4,220	3,060	7,698
Guysmere Camp	—	679	957	1,298
Irish Methodist Association of Youth Clubs	3,000	4,359	2,786	3,326
Lisburn Sea Cadets	—	403	410	538
Ocean Youth Club	2,588	5,970	6,225	7,425
Save the Children	—	17,961	13,912	9,305
Voluntary Service Belfast	—	17,776	16,921	17,653
Youth Hostel Association NI	—	9,666	11,357	11,369
NI Youth Workers' Association	—	492	Nil	Nil
Belfast Sea Cadets	—	Nil	1,350	Nil
Northern Ireland Youth Forum	400	27,926	31,600	34,384
Other Grants (Junior Sports etc.)	—	260,963	198,396	159,854

Equal Opportunity Unit

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his response to the proposal from the Northern Ireland Council on Disability for an equal opportunity unit to be established by the council and resourced by the Department of Economic Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* The question is currently under consideration. When a decision is made it will be delivered to the Northern Ireland Council on Disability.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many accidents, with details of fatalities, there have been in each of the last three years' operation of the youth training programme.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer, 15 December 1987]:* Recorded accidents in youth training programme for the last three years are as follows:—

	Number
1985-86	178
1986-87	231
[1] 1987-88	161

[1] To date.

The majority of accidents fall under the following categories *(a)* cuts, *(b)* bruising, *(c)* sprains and *(d)* minor burns. There have been no fatalities.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the destination of youth training programme leavers for each of the last three years; and of those who found employment, how many were with the firm who provided the training.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* Of those leavers from full-time training schemes whose destination was known the following information applies:

	To Employment Per cent.	To Further Education Per cent.	To Unemployment Per cent.
1984-85	55	3	42
1985-86	57	3	40
1986-87	55	4	41

Employer-led partnerships provide training for less than 20 per cent. of full-time YTP trainees. Separate records have not been kept of the number who find jobs with the employer who provided them with full-time training.

Schemes (Relationship)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the relationship between action for community employment and community volunteering schemes, and national schemes, such as UK 2000, neighbourhood emergency action, crime prevention initiatives, and so on.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* Although there is no formal relationship between the action for community employment and community volunteering schemes in Northern Ireland and the national initiatives promoted by Manpower Services Commission

through the community programme in Great Britain, there are nevertheless many similarities and continuing contacts between the respective officials.

Community Care

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his Department's policy towards providing places under each action for community employment and community volunteering scheme for community care activities.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* Sympathetic consideration is given to proposals from sponsors seeking places for community care activities. Approximately 30 per cent. and 66 per cent. respectively of action for community employment and community volunteering scheme places support such activities.

Action for Community Employment

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give further information on the 100-place enterprise scheme under the action for community employment programme and its progress; and how it will be evaluated.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* Since the ACE enterprise pilot scheme was launched in May 1987 60 applications have been received. To date 20 candidates have been selected to participate.

The scheme will be evaluated by departmental economists to assess the degree to which the ACE network can assist ACE workers move into self-employment.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if in relation to the action for community employment and community volunteering schemes, he will give the following information, *(a)* the annual budget for each of the schemes over the years since they started, *(b)* the current number of schemes, the places in each and their geographical distribution across Northern Ireland, *(c)* the number of managing agents in each scheme, the number of places in each managing agency and their location by name of sponsoring agent and address, *(d)* the categories of work undertaken under each scheme, *(e)* the criteria by which applications to be accepted on to the scheme as a sponsor are assessed and *(f)* the criteria by which schemes are evaluated by his Department and the training policy and training budget for each scheme.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

(a)

£ million

	ACE £	*CVS* £
1981-82	1·67	—
1982-83	5·24	—
1983-84	10·6	0·3
1984-85	13·56	0·53
1985-86	17·84	0·5
1986-87	28·54	0·6
1987-88	28·84	0·63

(b) ACE 356 sponsors with 6,411 places approved.
CVS 21 sponsors (including 3 managing agents) with 2,024 volunteers.

Geographical distribution
ACE
District council areas

	Places[2]
Antrim	112
Ards	59
Armagh	118
Ballymena	109
Ballymoney	2
Banbridge	54
Belfast[1]	2,529
Carrickfergus	141
Coleraine	96
Cookstown	111
Craigavon	242
Derry	638
Down	235
Dungannon	402
Fermanagh	135
Larne	110
Limavady	69
Lisburn	148
Magherafelt	102
Moyle	36
Newry and Mourne	541
North Down	111
Omagh	169
Strabane	122

[1] Includes Castlereagh and Newtownabbey.
[2] At 30 November 1987.

CVS
Jobmarket areas[1]

	Places[2]
Antrim	66
Armagh	16
Ballymena	16
Ballymoney	—
Ballynahinch	—
Banbridge	16
Bangor	108
Belfast	995
Carrickfergus	46
Coleraine	62
Cookstown	14
Downpatrick	7
Dungannon	1
Enniskillen	34
Kilkeel	57
Larne	33
Limavady	2
Lisburn	115
Londonderry	160
Lurgan	24
Magherafelt	4
Newcastle	6
Newry	152
Newtownards	37
Omagh	32
Portadown	3
Strabane	18

[1] When the computerisation of records in Community Projects Branch has been completed all statistics will be provided on a District Council basis.
[2] At 31 October 1987.

(c) There are no managing agents in the ACE Scheme. The following managing agents operate within CVS.

	Volunteers
Belfast Managing Agent, Bryson House, Bedford Street, Belfast	91
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, Murray House, Belfast	410
Waterside Churches for Community Needs, 6 Shipquay Street, Londonderry	113

(d) The following are the main categories for work undertaken by each scheme.
Environmental/Conservation
Community Care
Community Arts
Administration/Clerical
(e) Applications are accepted from sponsors who promote projects that satisfy the aims and objectives of the appropriate scheme and who demonstrate to the Department's satisfaction that they have the capability to manage an ACE/CVS project.
(f) Each scheme is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are managed in an effective and efficient manner and that they meet their aims and objectives.

Sponsors in both ACE and CVS are encouraged to develop and implement comprehensive training and development programmes for workers and volunteers. Costs of ACE workers attending approved external training courses are funded at 100 per cent. Within CVS there is a training budget based on £30·00 per full time volunteer per year.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if in relation to action for community employment and community volunteering schemes, he will give *(a)* the criteria by which applications from the waiting list for each scheme are assessed, *(b)* the number of people with a registered disability with places on each scheme, *(c)* the breakdown of males and females on each scheme, *(d)* the breakdown by religious affiliation on each scheme, *(e)* whether the two schemes are subject to the rules of the Fair Employment Agency and *(f)* how he intends to apply the new policy guidelines on fair employment to sponsors of the two schemes and what monitoring arrangements are being set up; and if he will list the sponsoring agents of the community volunteering scheme by name, address and number of volunteer hours, as well as the budget for the community volunteering scheme, broken down into such local areas as is convenient.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

(a) The following are the types of projects which are favoured in assessing applications from the waiting list:
(i) Projects that promote the development of self sustaining employment.
(ii) Projects from areas where the existing level of ACE provision is lower than the local incidence of long term unemployed.
(iii) Projects that provide a service to disadvantaged groups in the community.
(iv) Projects with an emphasis on unskilled work.

(b) In September 1987 there were 32 disabled people in ACE. It is not known how many of these were registered disabled.
Information in the form requested is not readily available for the community volunteering scheme.

(c) ACE: Male 57 per cent. Female 43 per cent.
Information in the form requested is not readily available for the CVS.

(d) Information on the breakdown by religious affiliation of participants in ACE and CVS is not held by the Department.

(e) Sponsors of both ACE and CVS are subject to the provision of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976.

(f) Copies of the new policy guidelines have been issued to all sponsors. Although these guidelines are voluntary the Fair Employment Agency is under a statutory obligation to have regard to the guidelines in considering whether or not equality of opportunity has been provided.

The information about CVS sponsoring agents is as follows:

Name and address and volunteering target hours	*Budget* £
Bryson House, Bedford street, Belfast	
Scheme 1 110,000	76,000
Scheme 2 98,000	45,000
(Managing Agency)	
Belfast Women's Aid, 46 Ulsterville avenue, Belfast 60,000	42,000
Confederation of Community Groups, 2 Bridge street, Newry 40,000	26,000
Extern, 46 University street, Belfast 51,000	36,882
The Flax Trust, Flax street, Belfast 40,000	27,923
Gingerbread, 171 University street, Belfast 30,000	21,793
North Down Volunteer Bureau, 91 High street, Bangor 38,000	25,500
NIACRO, 22 Adelaide street, Belfast 112,000	79,235
NI Women's Aid, 143A University street, Belfast 29,000	10,440
PHAB, 76 University street, Belfast 30,000	18,022
Praxis, 143 University street, Belfast 13,500	8,888
Society of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Patrick's Hall, Barrack street, Coalisland 30,000	21,975
Upper Springfield Family Support Group, 31 Ardonagh parade, Belfast 11 13,500	8,299
Voluntary Services Belfast, 72 Lisburn road, Belfast 155,000	85,000
Voluntary Services Lisburn, 50 Railway street, Lisburn 25,000	13,552
Waterside Churches Committee for Community Needs, 6 Shipquay street, Londonderry	
Scheme 1 57,000	33,500
Scheme 2 11,000	54,500
(Managing Agency)	
Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust, Murray House, Murray street, Belfast 100,000 (Managing Agency)	64,000
Conservation Volunteers, The Pavilion, Ravenhill road, Belfast 12,000	9,125

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS Charges

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to impose charges on any further National Health Services services.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans for legislation to require National Health Service patients in hospitals or visiting a general practitioner to pay for any services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have no such plans.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what the percentage rise in *(a)* prescription charges, *(b)* minimum dental charges and *(c)* maximum dental charges has been between 1979 and the latest date available in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms.

Mr. Newton: Between 1979 and 1987 prescription charges rose by 433 per cent. in cash terms and by 207 per cent. in real terms. The maximum charge for a single course of dental treatment rose by 219 per cent. in cash terms and 84 per cent. in real terms. There is no minimum charge.

Moss Side Special Hospital

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the recorded number of instances of self-mutilation among women patients at Moss Side special hospital, for the previous 12 months;

(2) what are the recorded numbers of instances of the use of seclusion, and the recorded number of hours women patients have been held in seclusion, at Moss Side special hospital, for the previous 12 months.

Mrs. Currie: In the 12 months from 1 December 1986, the recorded number of instances of self-mutilation among women patients at Moss Side hospital was 250. The recorded number of instances of seclusion was 1,573 of which 975 related to women patients. The recorded number of hours spent in seclusion by women patients was 17,302, which included seclusion during the night hours. Eighty per cent. of the total time spent in seclusion by women patients was accounted for by nine of them. There are at present 198 men patients and 86 women patients at Moss Side. Over the past year or so, the hospital has admitted a number of grossly disturbed, delinquent young women who suffer from psychopathic disorder, in many cases associated with mental impairment. Self-mutilation is a behavioural symptom often exhibited by women patients and had been a marked feature of the behaviour of the young women before they were admitted to Moss Side. Slow modification of this behaviour accounts in part for the high use of seclusion among this group. The hospital is trying to minimise the extent of self-mutilation and seclusion among women patients by management of the patient mix and the opening in October this year of an extra ward for women patients.

Operations (Cost)

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the approximate average cost to the National Health Service of the following operations (i) heart transplant, (ii) kidney transplant, (iii) liver transplant, (iv) heart by-pass, (v) heart valve replacement, (vi) hysterectomy, (vii) hip replacement, (viii) knee replacement, (ix) in vitro fertilisation and (x) abortion.

Mrs. Currie: We do not routinely make estimates of the costs of individual operations. Such information as is available for seven of the operations listed is based on special studies. This has, where necessary, been revalued to take account of inflation. Details of treatments and length of stay in hospital may have changed since the studies were done. The figures are therefore only approximate.

	£
Heart transplant	[1]15,000
Kidney transplant	[2]7,400
Coronary artery bypass graft	3,300
Heart valve replacement	5,000
Hysterectomy	[3]1,200
Total hip replacement	3,300
Abortion	170

[1] Including additional costs in the year of operation.
[2] Based on 1981 study.
[3] Based on 1982 study.

Nurses

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses have undertaken advanced training courses which lead to specialisation in fields such as intensive care in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: I regret that information is not available in the form requested prior to 1985. The numbers of registered nurses entering selected specialised post-basic training courses since 1985 are as follows:

Number of nurses entering selected post-basic training courses Year ending 31 March: England

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
General intensive care	649	436	502
Coronary care	71	60	61
Renal care	134	132	140
Operating department nursing	353	272	249
Special intensive care of the newborn	287	278	393

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses were in training in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. However, the number of nurses commencing basic nurse training in each of the past 10 years is as follows:

Intake of students and pupils to basic nurse training year ending 31 March: England

	Students	*Pupils*	*Total*
1978	18,200	11,210	29,410
1979	22,600	12,770	35,370
1980	20,540	12,080	32,620
1981	19,630	11,290	30,920
1982	20,200	11,600	31,800
1983	18,950	10,890	29,840
1984	17,670	7,300	24,970
1985	19,210	6,320	25,530
1986	18,600	5,100	23,700
1987	18,430	4,390	22,820

Notes:

(1) Actual figures for England are not available prior to 1984. Figures are therefore assumed to be 95 per cent. of those for England and Wales.

(2) Figures are rounded to nearest 10.

(3) The decline in the number of pupils undertaking enrolled nurse training is partly due to the uncertainty about the future of such training, whose cessation has been proposed by the UKCC in Project 2000.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial incentives exist to encourage nurses to undertake more advanced nursing training which leads to specialisation in such fields as intensive care.

Mr. Newton: Currently there are specific financial incentives though post-basic training and expertise may improve prospects of promotion. Recently, the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council has reached agreement on new grading definitions for nursing and midwifery staff designed to recognise and reward clinical skills appropriately.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many nurses left the National Health Service other than at retirement age in each of the last five years;

(2) what is the average number of years worked by nurses in the National Health Service.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total level of expenditure on pay for nurses, in cash and constant 1986-87 prices, in each year since 1973.

Mr. Newton: Following is the information requested derived from the annual accounts of health authorities in England and for 1973-74, those of their predecessor hospital authorities:

National Health Service staff salaries and wages: Nurses and midwives

	Per annual accounts £ million	*At 1986-87 prices £ million*
1973-74	416	1,732
1974-75	744	2,596
1975-76	965	2,679
1976-77	1,112	2,728
1977-78	1,206	2,597
1978-79	1,354	2,634
1979-80	1,649	2,745
1980-81	2,294	3,221
1981-82	2,511	3,211
1982-83	2,713	3,236
1983-84	2,828	3,225
1984-85	3,034	3,314
1985-86	3,210	3,307
1986-87	3,495	3,495

Notes:

1. The figures for the earlier years have been expressed at 1986-87 prices by the use of the Gross Domestic Product deflator.
2. The figures for 1973-74 are not comparable to those for later years as prior to National Health Service re-organisation (1 April 1974) responsibility for community health and ambulance services rested with local government authorities.
3. The figures for 1974-75 include an element of estimation being based on an incomplete return from health authorities.
4. Expenditure on non-National Health Service staff (agency, etc.) nurses and midwives is excluded.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what the levels of nursing staff were in *(a)* Sunderland district health authority, *(b)* Durham district health authority and *(c)* Hartlepool district health authority in the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is given in the table.

NHS Nursing and midwifery staff in post[1] at 30 September of each year Whole time equivalent[2]

District Health Authority	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1985*
Sunderland	2,490	2,570	2,520	2,580	2,590
Durham	1,100	1,090	1,110	1,160	1,160
Hartlepool	790	790	780	790	840

Source: DHSS Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

[1] Includes qualified nurses and midwives, learners and unqualified staff. Agency staff are also included.

[2] Figures are independently rounded to nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to set up an inquiry into the health of nurses; what are the present arrangements for monitoring their health; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* It is for employing health authorities in discharging their responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to promote, maintain and improve the health and well-being of all staff. Arrangements for the monitoring of staff health is a matter for individual authorities in the light of local circumstances.

Laboratory Scientific Officers

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will issue an instruction to the official side of the Whitley council to negotiate the pay of laboratory scientific officers in the National Health Service on the same basis as employees engaged in therapy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The pay of most staff engaged in therapy is the subject of recommendations by the pay review bodies, rather than negotiation, and I do not think it would be appropriate to constrain the Whitley Council negotiating arrangements in the way my hon. Friend appears to have in mind. However, I understand that the relevant council will embark on negotiations about a new pay and grading structure for medical laboratory scientific officers in the new year.

Housing Benefit Supplement

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants are receiving housing benefit supplement.

Mr. Portillo: Information on the current number of recipients is not available, but we estimate that during the course of the 1986-87 financial year some 400,000 people received housing benefit supplement.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *759*, he will take steps to collect the available information on the proportions of homosexuals presenting themselves for treatment at sexually transmitted diseases clinics in *(a)* London and *(b)* the rest of England who are found to be HIV positive.

Mr. Newton: There are difficulties in securing accurate information on the proportions of homosexuals presenting

for treatment at genito-urinary medicine clinics who are HIV positive because individuals may not admit to being homosexual or those who do may not agree to be tested for HIV. However, details of all positive HIV tests in England and Wales are reported in confidence to the Communicable Diseases Surveillance Centre. Where available this includes information on the risk behaviour of the individual involved. From next year it is proposed to collect from genito-urinary medicine clinics the numbers of new cases of HIV infection presenting. Clinicians will be asked, where possible, to distinguish those infections which are thought to be homosexually acquired. Details of negative tests are not sought (with the exception of data required for special studies) because of the great deal of work that would be involved.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 4 December, *Official Report*, column *759*, he will list the membership of the group of experts monitoring HIV infection rates; and when he expects them to report on the likely number of AIDS infections in the United Kingdom in 1991.

Mr. Newton: The members of the group which is considering the monitoring and surveillance of HIV infection and AIDS are:

Dr. J. W. G. Smith, (Chairman) Director, Public Health Laboratory Service (PHLS).
Professor M. Adler, Academic Department of Genito-urinary medicine, University College and Middlesex Hospital School of Medicine.
Dr. N. S. Galbraith, Director, PHLS Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.
Professor A. Glynn, Director, Central Public Health Laboratory and Head, PHLS AIDS Co-ordinating Centre.
Professor M. J. R. Healy, Professor of Medical Statistics, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
Professor M. Marmot, Professor of Community Medicine, University College, London.
Dr. D. Reid, Director, Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit.

Observers

Dr. R. G. Covell, Senior Medical Officer, Scottish Home and Health Department.
Dr. D. James, Board Secretary, Medical Division, Medical Research Council.
Ms H. Hillier, Statistician, Department of Health and Social Security.

Secretariat

Dr. G. Greenberg, Senior Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Security.
Mr. J. Griffiths, Senior Executive Office, Department of Health and Social Security.

We hope to receive the group's report early in January 1988. As I said in my earlier reply it is hoped that any improvements that result from the group's recommendations will produce better data on HIV infection and AIDS which can be used as a basis for forecasting numbers of cases in the future.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in how many cases non-haemophiliacs have contracted the AIDS virus following blood transfusions given in or before October 1985.

Mr. Newton: Since October 1985 the national blood transfusion service has screened all blood donations for antibodies to HIV. Before screening could be made available to the service, a small number of patients in the United Kingdom received blood infected with the virus. Eight of these have since developed AIDS, of whom seven have died.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider making to those persons who contracted the AIDS virus, following a blood transfusion given in or before October 1985, payments which are similar to those that will be made to haemophiliacs who contracted the AIDS virus through blood transfusions.

Mr. Newton: The Government have provided special financial help for haemophiliacs infected with HIV in recognition of their wholly exceptional circumstances which I explained to the House in my statement on 16 November. After careful consideration we concluded that this combination of circumstances does not apply to those who have unfortunately become infected with HIV through blood transfusions and that similar financial help is therefore not appropriate.

Consultancy Advice

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the contracts given by his Department to Deloitte Haskins and Sells in relation to management consultancy advice on the work of health authorities in England.

Mrs. Currie: Since January 1984 one such contract has been let by the Department. It concerned the implementation of management budgeting in the community health services sector by Bromley health authority.

Agency Nurses

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the amount spent by district health authorities on agency nurses in each of the last five years.

Mr. Newton: Following is the information derived from the annual accounts of district health authorities in England:—

Expenditure on Non-NHS Staff (Agency, etc.)—Nursing

Year	£
1982-83	31,262,646
1983-84	27,685,596
1984-85	36,912,356
1985-86	46,965,803
1986-87	[1] 64,897,347

[1] Provisional (ie as yet unaudited) figure.

Operating Theatres

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the capital value of all the operating theatres in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not held centrally and any attempt at an estimate would be purely speculative.

NHS (Stolen Property)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the value of property stolen from the National Health Service in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: The annual accounts of health authorities in England incorporate a statement of losses which includes categories as follows:

	Losses of cash due to Theft, Fraud, etc.	Losses of equipment and property in stores and in use due to Theft, Fraud or Arson, etc.
	£	£
1982-83	257,081	609,312
1983-84	96,388	805,292
1984-85	83,896	1,180,604
1985-86	77,470	1,434,764
1986-87[1]	85,935	1,587,207

[1] Provisional (ie as yet unaudited figures).

Sources:
Annual financial accounts of regional and district health authorities and those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. Annual financial accounts of family practitioner committees for 1985-86 and 1986-87. (Prior to 1 April 1985 losses incurred by family practitioner committees were reported with the annual accounts of the district health authorities with which the committees were associated.)

NHS (Security)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is satisfied with security arrangements in National Health Service premises to protect *(a)* National Health Service staff and *(b)* National Health Service property.

Mrs. Currie: A number of steps have been taken to improve standards of security in the National Health Service. Comprehensive guidance in the form of a security manual has been issued to the Health Service. All district health authorities have developed security strategies based on this guidance, tailored to meet the requirements of their individual localities. These strategies have been approved by regional health authorities which are responsible for monitoring their effectiveness.

The Department's advisory committee on violence to staff, under the chairmanship of my noble Friend, is currently considering the question of acts of violence against staff including those working in the National Health Service. The committee hopes to report to my right hon. Friend by early spring.

Stricter accounting procedures have been introduced to improve the identification of sources of losses. We are satisfied that this range of initiatives has already helped to raise the general level of security in the Health Service and will continue to do so.

Waiting Lists

Ms. Harriet Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out, region by region, the total in-patient waiting list in each district, showing the percentage change from the figures for 30 March 1986.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of patients on the in-patient waiting list at 31 March for years 1986 and 1987 showing the percentage change

District Health Authority	1986	1987	Percentage change
Northern Regional Health Authority	35,711	37,334	4·5
Hartlepool	1,405	1,661	18·2
North Tees	810	930	14·8
South Tees	6,149	5,519	−10·2
East Cumbria	3,018	3,796	25·8
South Cumbria	1,357	1,217	−10·3
West Cumbria	1,349	1,396	3·5
Darlington	2,214	2,397	8·3
Durham	820	1,032	25·9
North West Durham	664	683	2·9
South West Durham	498	831	66·9
Northumberland	1,861	1,668	−10·4
Gateshead	1,155	1,412	22·3
Newcastle	8,632	9,363	8·5
North Tyneside	1,207	1,043	−13·6
South Tyneside	682	727	6·6
Sunderland	3,890	3,659	−5·9
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	45,440	47,643	4·8
Hull	6,627	6,911	4·3
East Yorkshire	1,108	1,429	29·0
Grimsby	1,245	1,400	12·4
Scunthorpe	2,030	2,832	39·5
Northallerton	419	699	66·8
York	2,689	2,575	−4·2
Scarborough	1,611	1,724	7·0
Harrogate	1,799	2,059	14·5
Bradford	6,411	7,172	11·9
Airedale	2,649	2,100	−20·7
Calderdale	986	996	1·0
Huddersfield	2,697	2,175	−19·4
Dewsbury	661	429	−35·1
Leeds Western	4,397	4,758	8·2
Leeds Eastern	5,663	6,064	7·1
Wakefield	2,269	2,241	−1·2
Pontefract	2,179	2,079	−4·6
Trent Regional Health Authority	61,877	57,711	−6·7
North Derbyshire	2,633	2,520	−4·3
South Derbyshire	6,507	4,991	−23·3
Leicestershire	7,962	8,278	4·0
North Lincolnshire	3,158	2,819	−10·7
South Lincolnshire	3,948	4,190	6·1
Bassetlaw	809	535	−33·9
Central Nottinghamshire	5,425	4,955	−8·7
Nottingham	8,215	6,625	−19·4
Barnsley	2,463	2,600	5·6
Doncaster	4,641	4,686	1·0
Rotherham	4,213	4,461	5·9
Sheffield	11,903	11,051	−7·2
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	27,352	28,015	2·4
Cambridge	5,196	4,945	−4·8
Peterborough	3,239	4,176	28·9
West Suffolk	2,641	2,762	4·6
East Suffolk	3,071	3,381	10·1
Norwich	6,915	6,377	−7·8
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	3,524	3,364	−4·5
West Norfolk and Wisbech	1,926	2,088	8·4
Huntingdon	840	922	9·8
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	43,806	44,007	0·5
North Bedfordshire	2,255	2,421	7·4
South Bedfordshire	2,177	2,415	10·9
North Hertfordshire	2,895	3,267	12·8
East Hertfordshire	1,456	1,325	−9·0
North West Hertfordshire	1,848	1,544	−16·5
South West Hertfordshire	1,956	2,136	9·2
Barnet	4,186	3,545	−15·3
Harrow	1,176	1,168	−0·7
Hillingdon	7,648	7,867	2·9
Hounslow and Spelthorne	5,173	5,863	13·3

District Health Authority	1986	1987	Percentage change
Ealing	2,219	1,504	−32·2
Brent	2,010	1,903	−5·3
Paddington and North Kensington	3,111	3,459	11·2
Riverside	5,696	5,590	−1·9
North East Thames Regional Health Authority[1]	71,934		
Basildon and Thurrock	6,044	6,541	8·2
Mid Essex	3,610	4,672	29·4
North East Essex	4,413	3,296	−25·3
West Essex	5,012	4,645	−7·3
Southend	3,177	3,788	19·2
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	6,640	6,488	−2·3
Hampstead[1]	2,073		
Bloomsbury	14,405	13,446	−6·7
Islington	2,410	2,826	17·3
City and Hackney	6,071	7,140	17·6
Newham	1,117	1,638	46·6
Tower Hamlets	6,808	7,865	15·5
Enfield	2,915	3,074	5·5
Haringey	1,225	1,004	−18·0
Redbridge	1,673	2,392	43·0
Waltham Forest	4,341	4,504	3·8
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	53,394	60,168	12·7
Brighton	3,915	4,022	2·7
Eastbourne	2,685	3,298	22·8
Hastings	2,530	2,882	13·9
South East Kent	2,658	2,564	−3·5
Canterbury and Thanet	4,588	4,889	6·6
Dartford and Gravesham	4,414	4,846	9·8
Maidstone	2,157	2,461	14·1
Medway	2,105	3,393	61·2
Tunbridge Wells	4,949	4,566	−7·7
Bexley	1,532	1,953	27·5
Greenwich	2,632	2,687	2·1
Bromley	1,900	2,242	18·0
West Lambeth	6,405	8,111	26·6
Camberwell	2,681	2,913	8·7
Lewisham and North Southwark	8,243	9,341	13·3
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	36,993	36,148	−2·3
North West Surrey	2,989	2,915	−2·5
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	4,760	4,763	0·1
South West Surrey	3,210	3,005	−6·4
Mid Surrey	2,327	2,157	−7·3
East Surrey	1,601	2,327	45·3
Chichester	2,420	2,464	1·8
Mid Downs	2,233	2,288	2·5
Worthing	3,455	3,058	−11·5
Croydon	2,350	2,518	7·1
Kingston and Esher	2,576	2,418	−6·1
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	3,325	2,521	−24·2
Wandsworth	2,649	2,768	4·5
Merton and Sutton	3,098	2,946	−4·9
Wessex Regional Health Authority	43,078	43,482	0·9
East Dorset	5,290	5,424	2·5
West Dorset	2,264	2,057	−9·1
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	6,247	7,644	22·4
Southampton and South West Hampshire	8,492	8,217	−3·2
Winchester	2,341	2,880	23·0
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	3,589	2,411	−32·8
Salisbury	4,489	4,717	5·1
Swindon	3,063	3,194	4·3
Bath	5,449	5,570	2·2
Isle of Wight	1,854	1,368	−26·2
Oxford Regional Health Authority	32,776	32,742	−0·1
East Berkshire	7,470	7,905	5·8
West Berkshire	4,593	3,999	−12·9
Aylesbury Vale	3,813	3,300	−13·5
Wycombe	1,033	1,333	29·0
Milton Keynes	2,121	2,614	23·2
Kettering	2,790	3,546	27·1
Northampton	5,164	4,144	−19·8
Oxfordshire	5,792	5,901	1·9
South Western Regional Health Authority	42,931	43,159	0·5
Bristol and Weston	7,944	8,213	3·4
Frenchay	3,506	3,458	−1·4
Southmead	2,214	1,415	−36·1
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	4,689	4,434	−5·4
Exeter	4,719	4,737	0·4
North Devon	1,358	1,693	24·7
Plymouth	5,281	5,800	9·8
Torbay	1,781	1,602	−10·1
Cheltenham	2,189	2,157	−1·5
Gloucester	4,346	4,214	−3·0
Somerset	4,904	5,436	10·8
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	78,549	79,761	1·5
Bromsgrove and Redditch	2,219	2,052	−7·5
Herefordshire	2,656	2,945	10·9
Kidderminster and District	1,298	1,585	22·1
Worcester and District	3,449	3,477	0·8
Shropshire	7,696	8,842	14·9
Mid Staffordshire	1,706	1,648	−3·4
North Staffordshire	9,023	9,058	0·4
South East Staffordshire	2,374	2,679	12·8
Rugby	528	659	24·8
North Warwickshire	1,833	2,576	40·5
South Warwickshire	3,366	2,631	−21·8
Central Birmingham	5,346	5,427	1·5
East Birmingham	3,367	2,865	−14·9
North Birmingham	2,267	1,300	−42·7
South Birmingham	7,291	7,569	3·8
West Birmingham	3,479	4,699	35·1
Coventry	6,091	4,813	−21·0
Dudley	4,244	3,889	−8·4
Sandwell	1,399	1,927	37·7
Solihull	1,967	1,578	−19·8
Walsall	2,856	2,740	−4·1
Wolverhampton	4,094	4,802	17·3
Mersey Regional Health Authority	30,779	29,147	−5·3
Chester	1,805	2,759	52·9
Crewe	4,695	3,512	−25·2
Halton	319	141	−55·8
Macclesfield	1,159	760	−34·4
Warrington	2,672	1,864	−30·2
Liverpool	8,321	7,704	−7·4
St. Helens and Knowsley	3,868	4,074	5·3
Southport and Formby	1,145	1,360	18·8
South Sefton	3,657	3,409	−6·8
Wirral	3,138	3,564	13·6
North Western Regional Health Authority	60,242	63,881	6·0
Lancaster	2,100	2,312	10·1

District Health Authority	*1986*	*1987*	*Percentage change*
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	4,524	4,546	0·5
Preston	4,725	4,586	−2·9
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	2,042	2,404	17·7
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,540	2,148	−15·4
West Lancashire	1,984	2,495	25·8
Chorley and South Ribble	764	770	0·8
Bolton	2,828	3,138	11·0
Bury	735	731	−0·5
North Manchester	2,753	2,528	−8·2
Central Manchester	5,436	6,543	20·4
South Manchester	6,012	6,408	6·6
Oldham	4,381	4,925	12·4
Rochdale	3,033	2,933	−3·3
Salford	4,156	5,101	22·7
Stockport	4,713	4,668	−1·0
Tameside and Glossop	1,639	1,645	0·4
Trafford	1,522	1,542	1·3
Wigan	4,355	4,458	2·4

[1] No regional total given for North East Thames for March 1987 as figures for Hampstead Health Authority were not available.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether district health authorities are required to know the cost of care per patient by specialty in order to make valid bids for a share of funds allocated under the national waiting lists initiative.

Mr. Newton: When proposing projects for support from the 1987-88 waiting list fund health authorities gave the numbers of additional patients who could be treated for the funding requested. In most cases this was the marginal cost of treating additional patients and was less than either the full or average cost of patient care for the treatments planned. This approach will be adopted for projects funded in 1988-89.

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the current waiting lists for *(a)* examinations, *(b)* operations and *(c)* beds in each specialty in each hospital in (i) the Crewe, (ii) the Chester and (iii) the Halton health districts; and what were the comparable figures at a convenient date in each of the last eight years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The available information is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list at 31 December—NHS hospitals

Hospital/specialties	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Chester District Health Authority					
Chester Royal Infirmary					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	2,516	1,658	1,455	1,895	2,164
General surgery	924	472	525	824	973
Ear, nose and throat	412	150	96	147	48
Trauma and orthopaedic	921	484	410	321	342
Ophthalmology	234	260	113	139	278
Oral surgery	24	19	91	67	121
Orthodontics	1	0	0	0	0
Gynaecology	0	273	220	397	402
Other specialties:					
Total	0	0	0	0	0
All specialties—Total	2,516	1,658	1,455	1,895	2,164
Chester City Hospital					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	507	0	0	0	0
Gynaecology	507	0	0	0	0
Other specialties:					
Total	9	4	2	0	0
Geriatrics	9	4	2	0	0
All specialties—Total	516	4	2	0	0
The Countess of Cheshire Hospital (formerly the West Cheshire Hospital)					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	0	0	0	0	0
Other specialties:					
Total	71	21	27	32	21
Mental illness	60	16	21	29	20
Psychogeriatric	0	5	0	0	0
Geriatrics	11	0	3	0	0
Adolescent psychiatry	0	0	3	3	1
All specialties—Total	71	21	27	32	21
Crewe District Health Authority					
Leighton Hospital					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	5,333	4,805	5,438	6,349	4,008
General Surgery	2,456	2,237	2,593	2,833	1,509
Ear, nose and throat	865	709	654	912	191
Trauma and orthopaedic	279	267	336	402	333

Hospital/specialties	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Ophthalmology	198	193	158	204	217
Urology	436	430	606	755	665
Oral surgery	241	292	348	374	297
Gynaecology	858	677	743	869	796
Other specialties:					
Total	0	3	2	60	1
Psychogeriatric	0	3	2	2	0
Anaesthetics	0	0	0	5	0
General medicine	0	0	0	12	1
Dermatology	0	0	0	41	0
All specialties—Total	5,333	4,808	5,440	6,409	4,009
Cranage Hall Hospital					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	17	25	26	30	0
Oral surgery	17	25	26	30	0
Other specialties:					
Total	15	15	15	15	2
Mental handicap	15	15	15	15	2
All specialties—Total	32	40	41	45	2
Halton District Health Authority					
Crossley Hospital					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	0	0	0	0	0
Other specialties:					
Total	4	4	0	0	0
Geriatrics	0	4	0	0	0
Mental illness	4	0	0	0	0
All specialties—Total	4	4	0	0	0
Dutton Hospital					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	0	0	0	0	0
Other specialties:					
Total	0	0	1	0	0
Geriatrics	0	0	1	0	0
All specialties—Total	0	0	1	0	0
Halton General Hospital					
Surgical specialties:					
Total	0	0	0	95	187
General surgery	0	0	0	95	153
Urology	0	0	0	0	34
Other specialties:					
Total	0	0	0	4	1
General medicine	0	0	0	2	1
Geriatrics	0	0	0	2	0
All specialties—Total	0	0	0	99	188

Hospital Closures

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list the hospitals *(a)* approved for total closure and *(b)* approved for partial closure for each district health authority since April 1985;

(2) if he will list the hospitals *(a)* totally closed and *(b)* partially closed since April 1985 for each district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The hospitals approved for *(a)* complete closure and *(b)* partial closure between April 1985 and December 1986, the latest date for which statistics are currently available, are as listed. It should be noted that closure plans may be modified, delayed or even dropped after approval is obtained; our routinely collected statistics record approved and not actual closures.

Hospitals approved for complete closure April 1985 to December 1985

Health authority	*Hospital*	*Date*
Northern		
Northumberland	Castle Hills	November 1985
Yorkshire		
Leeds Eastern	Marguerite Hepton	May 1985
Leeds Western	Grassington	May 1985
York	Naburn	May 1985
Airedale	Wharfedale Childrens	September 1985
North West Thames		
South Bedfordshire	Priory	May 1985
South East Thames		
Greenwich	Dreadnought Seamans	November 1985
Brighton	Sussex Throat and Ear	November 1985
South West Thames		
North West Surrey	Rowley Bristow	October 1985
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	Westmoor House	June 1985

Health authority	Hospital	Date
Wessex		
Isle of Wight	Longford	April 1985
South Western		
Gloucester	Horton Road	June 1985
Southmead	Elizabeth Blackwell House	December 1985
West Midlands		
South Warwickshire	Monroe Devis Maternity Home	June 1985
Kidderminster and District	Lea	November 1985
North Warwick	Colchester Holiday Home	September 1985
Mersey		
Southport and Formby	Sunnyside	April 1985
North Western		
Trafford	Ashton on Mersey Hospital	September 1985
Special Health Authorities	National Brompton	July 1985

Hospitals approved for complete closure in 1986

Health authority	Hospital	Date
Northern		
Gateshead	Normans Riding	January 1986
South West Durham	Holywood Hall	January 1986
North Tyneside	Moor Park	May 1986
Northumberland	Silverton House	August 1986
Yorkshire		
East Yorkshire	Northfield, Driffield	July 1986
	Westerlands	November 1986
Scunthorpe	Westfield	July 1986
Scarborough	St. Thomas'	January 1986
Bradford	Bradford Childrens	July 1986
Wakefield	County	June 1986
Trent		
North Derbyshire	Ridgeway	April 1986
	Dronfield	April 1986
South Derbyshire	Rykneld Hospital	July 1986
	Queen Mary	September 1986
	Etwall Hospital	October 1986
East Anglian		
West Norfolk and Wisbech	St. James	Closed September 1986
North West Thames		
NW Herts	Tenterden House	November 1986
Barnet	Hendon District	April 1986
Paddington and North Kensington	St. Mary's Harrow Road	August 1986
Riverside	Banstead	September 1986
North East Thames		
NE Essex	Brunswick House	Agreed 1986
Redbridge	Dagenham Hospital	Agreed 1986
Tower Hamlet	Bethnal Green	May 1986
South East Thames		
Lewisham N and S	New Cross Hospital	December 1986
Bromley	Lennard	May 1986
	Beckenham	June 1986
Greenwich	St. Nicholas	January 1986
South West Thames		
Croydon	Queens	March 1986
	St. Mary's	March 1986
Wessex		
Winchester	Victoria	October 1986
	St. Johns Hospital	October 1986
Bath	Claverton Down	January 1986
	Greenways Maternity Hospital	September 1986
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	King Georges	January 1986
South Western		
Bristol and Weston	Eastern House	December 1986
Cornwall and Scilly	Loreto House	December 1986
North Western		
Chorley and South Ribble	Heath Charnock	February 1986
Burnley Pendle and Rossendale	Marsden Hospital	September 1986
North Manchester	Delaunays Hospital	September 1986

Hospitals approved for partial closure April 1985 to December 1985

Health Authority	Hospital	Date
Northern		
East Cumbria	Workington Infirmary	June 1985
East Anglian		
Norwich	St. Andrews	Closed November 1985
North West Thames		
Harrow	Harrow	April 1985
Victoria	Westminster	May 1985
North East Thames		
Haringey	North Middlesex	May 1985
West Midlands		
Walsall	General (Sister Dora)	May 1985
	St. Margarets	December 1985
South Western		
Frenchay	Crossham Memorial	July 1985

Hospitals approved for partial closure in 1986

Health Authority	Hospital	Date
Northern		
North Tees	North Tees General	March 1986
Yorkshire		
East Yorkshire	Avenue Hospital, Bridlington	April 1986
	Ward 2, Castle Hill	Early 1986
	Bempton Lane, Bridlington	December 1986
Trent		
Southern Derbyshire	*Pasture:* The Grange Children's Unit	April 1986
	Pasture: Beech House	July 1986
	Masson Ward	July 1986
Leicestershire	Market Harborough and District	June 1986
	Rutland Memorial	June 1986
	St. Mary, Melton Mowbray	June 1986
	Ashby-de-la-Zouch and District	June 1986
East Anglian		
Norwich	Hales	Closed March 1986
North West Thames		
Riverside	St. Stephens	May 1986
	Charing Cross	November 1986
North East Thames		
Basildon and Thurrock	Orsett	
South East Thames		
Tunbridge Wells	Sevenoaks Hospital	December 1986
Lewisham	Lewisham Unit Children Obstetrics	
Bromley	Beckenham Hospital	June 1986
South West Thames		
Wandsworth	St. James Hospital	September 1986
Oxford		
Kettering	Isebrook Paediatric	September 1986

Health Authority	Hospital	Date
West Midlands		
Shropshire	Cross Houses Hospital	November 1986
	Deermoss Hospital	November 1986
	Ludlow	November 1986

Hospital Beds

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, region by region, the percentage change in average available daily beds for each district health authority for the years 1979-80 and 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie: The available information for the years 1979 and 1986 is given in the table. Over the same period the number of in-patient and day cases treated rose from nearly 6 million to nearly 7½ million, an increase of about 25 per cent.

Average available beds for the year 1979 and 1986 showing percentage change

District Health Authority	1979	1986	Percentage change
Northern Regional Health Authority	23,305·3	23,239·6	−8·2
Hartlepool	592·3	638·7	7·8
North Tees	956·1	937·3	−2·0
South Tees	2,282·3	1,877·3	−17·7
East Cumbria[1]	—	1,501·4	—
South Cumbria[1]	—	841·2	—
West Cumbria	1,113·1	964·9	−13·3
Darlington	1,309·9	1,155·7	−11·8
Durham	1,191·7	1,107·0	−7·1
North West Durham	717·0	603·6	−15·8
South West Durham	1,921·2	1,640·2	−14·6
Northumberland	3,995·8	3,481·7	−12·9
Gateshead	1,368·2	1,353·1	−1·1
Newcastle	3,479·2	3,363·2	−3·3
North Tyneside	719·0	694·3	−3·4
South Tyneside	770·7	806·9	4·7
Sunderland	2,426·3	2,273·1	−6·3
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	29,945·6	25,676·2	−14·3
Hull	2,145·4	1,861·8	−13·2
East Yorkshire	2,184·0	1,676·0	−23·3
Grimsby	797·1	970·0	21·7
Scunthorpe	992·5	920·7	−7·2
Northallerton	437·1	404·7	−7·4
York[1]	—	2,277·8	—
Scarborough	688·8	650·0	−5·6
Harrogate[1]	—	955·0	—
Bradford	2,721·4	2,480·0	−8·9
Airedale	1,528·2	1,311·5	−14·2
Calderdale	1,370·2	1,214·2	−11·4
Huddersfield	2,625·0	1,903·1	−27·5
Dewsbury	776·8	732·8	−5·7
Leeds Western[1]	—	2,969·1	—
Leeds Eastern[1]	—	2,494·8	—
Wakefield	2,606·9	1,974·1	−24·3
Pontefract	853·5	880·6	3·2
Trent Regional Health Authority	31,711·7	28,902·1	−8·9
North Derbyshire	1,721·8	1,746·7	1·4
Southern Derbyshire	4,208·4	3,438·0	−18·3
Leicestershire	5,140·2	5,000·8	−2·7
North Lincolnshire	2,814·6	2,001·5	−28·9
South Lincolnshire	1,893·9	1,803·0	−4·8
Bassetlaw	403·0	478·0	18·6
Central Nottinghamshire	1,997·2	1,718·4	−14·0
Nottingham	4,197·7	3,794·2	−9·6
Barnsley	962·1	1,126·6	17·1
Doncaster[1]	—	1,847·3	—
Rotherham[1]	—	1,270·6	—
Sheffield	5,233·3	4,677·0	−10·6
East Anglian Regional Health Authority	13,093·6	12,451·9	−4·9
Cambridge[1]	—	1,827·7	—
Peterborough	1,121·7	1,144·7	2·1
West Suffolk[1]	—	1,255·8	—
East Suffolk[1]	—	2,429·0	—
Norwich	3,927·5	3,452·5	−12·1
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	852·2	1,054·1	23·7
West Norfolk and Wisbech	830·2	837·5	0·9
Huntington[1]	—	450·6	—
North West Thames Regional Health Authority[2]	27,904·5	22,904·7	−17·9
North Bedfordshire	1,232·6	1,183·3	−4·0
South Bedfordshire	1,653·2	1,524·1	−7·8
North Hertfordshire	848·6	803·7	−5·3
East Hertfordshire	828·5	734·8	−11·3
North West Hertfordshire	3,288·2	4,283·7	30·3
South West Hertfordshire	2,384·9	788·3	−66·9
Barnet	2,840·7	2,324·0	−18·2
Harrow	908·1	886·3	−2·4
Hillingdon	1,627·5	1,329·1	−18·3
Hounslow and Spelthorne[1]	—	1,356·3	—
Ealing	1,708·9	1,509·2	−11·7
Brent	2,315·9	1,882·9	−18·7
Paddington and North Kensington	1,364·7	1,208·4	−11·5
Riverside	5,255·6	3,090·6	−41·2
North East Thames Regional Health Authority[2]	29,442·8	25,982·0	−11·8
Basildon and Thurrock	1,892·7	1,911·2	1·0
Mid Essex	1,281·8	1,352·0	5·5
North East Essex	3,381·3	2,469·3	−27·0
West Essex	1,256·2	1,201·3	− 4·4
Southend	1,937·0	1,690·3	−12·7
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	3,283·2	2,764·8	−15·8
Hampstead[1]		1,818·3	—
Bloomsbury[1]		1,971·0	—
Islington[1]		865·8	—
City & Hackney[1]		1,685·8	—
Newham	940·6	876·1	− 6·9
Tower Hamlets[1]		1,289·6	—
Enfield	1,223·8	1,055·2	−14·5
Haringey	1,235·8	1,071·9	−13·3
Redbridge	1,654·8	1,552·8	− 6·2
Waltham Forest	3,310·7	2,406·6	−27·3
South East Thames Regional Authority[2]	28,407·9	23,095·6	−18·7
Brighton	1,896·2	1,653·8	−12·8
Eastbourne	1,714·4	1,326·5	−22·6
Hastings	1,064·3	895·4	−15·9
South East Kent	1,003·5	1,076·8	7·3
Canterbury and Thanet	2,925·6	2,202·4	−24·7
Dartford and Gravesham	2,645·8	1,855·5	−29·9
Maidstone	1,740·5	1,489·4	−14·4
Medway	991·2	1,058·2	6·8
Tunbridge Wells	2,418·6	1,902·4	−21·3
Bexley	1,653·2	1,386·3	−16·1
Greenwich	1,776·9	1,333·6	−24·9
Bromley	2,590·8	1,887·0	−27·2
West Lambeth[1]		1,887·1	—
Camberwell	1,432·3	1,231·7	−14·0
Lewisham and North Southwark	2,335·5	1,909·5	−18·2

District Health Authority	1979	1986	Percentage change
South West Thames Regional Health Authority[2]	26,242·0	21,141·4	−19·4
North West Surrey	2,138·4	1,620·9	−24·2
West Surrey and North East Hants	1,742·8	1,627·4	−6·6
South West Surrey	857·3	922·0	7·5
Mid Surrey	2,900·6	2,150·6	−25·9
East Surrey	2,775·7	1,957·4	−29·5
Chichester	1,254·8	1,134·7	−9·6
Mid Downs	1,575·9	1,623·4	3·0
Worthing	933·0	1,002·1	7·4
Croydon	3,191·8	2,396·5	−24·9
Kingston and Esher[1]	—	1,377·6	—
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton[1]	—	859·5	—
Wandsworth	2,870·9	2,234·3	−22·2
Merton and Sutton	2,687·1	2,235·0	−16·8
Wessex Regional Health Authority	19,021·2	17,169·5	−9·7
East Dorset	2,126·2	2,274·2	7·0
West Dorset	1,704·0	1,499·9	−12·0
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	3,057·5	2,656·6	−13·1
Southampton and South West Hampshire	3,112·4	2,859·6	−8·1
Winchester	920·9	842·8	−8·5
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	1,633·7	1,414·9	−13·4
Salisbury	999·4	1,012·7	1·3
Swindon	1,477·6	1,280·0	−13·4
West Wiltshire and Bath	3,043·5	2,645·0	−13·1
Isle of Wight	946·0	683·8	−27·7
Oxford Regional Health Authority	13,664·4	12,216·3	−10·6
East Berkshire	1,773·3	1,537·1	−13·3
West Berkshire	2,987·4	2,335·6	−21·8
Aylesbury Vale[1]	—	1,421·6	—
Wycombe	777·7	739·9	−4·9
Milton Keynes[1]	—	470·3	—
Kettering	849·3	919·4	8·3
Northampton	2,116·2	1,841·4	−13·0
Oxfordshire	3,288·4	2,951·0	−10·3
South Western Regional Health Authority	24,456·3	21,258·6	−13·1
Bristol and Weston	2,275·9	1,989·0	−12·6
Frenchay	2,968·4	2,430·6	−18·1
Southmead	2,175·3	1,602·2	−26·3
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	2,670·2	2,410·3	−9·7
Exeter[1]	—	2,740·9	—
North Devon	604·6	673·6	11·4
Plymouth	2,241·3	2,163·3	−3·5
Torbay[1]	—	1,177·5	—
Cheltenham[1]	—	968·4	—
Gloucester[1]	—	1,981·8	—
Somerset	3,477·7	3,121·0	−10·3
West Midlands Regional Health Authority	36,263·3	32,286·1	−11·0
Bromsgrove and Redditch	1,226·8	916·7	−25·3
Herefordshire	1,174·2	924·7	−21·2
Kidderminister and District	1,313·0	1,025·4	−21·9
Worcester and District	1,683·6	1,294·7	−23·1
Shropshire	2,602·5	2,381·9	−8·5
Mid Staffordshire	1,371·9	1,297·6	−5·4
North Staffordshire	3,491·6	3,296·1	−5·6
South East Staffordshire	1,513·8	1,785·8	18·0
Rugby	327·1	332·7	1·7
North Warwickshire[1]	—	1,109·3	—
South Warwickshire[1]	—	1,706·7	—
Central Birmingham[1]	—	1,738·9	—
East Birmingham	966·2	914·1	−5·4
North Birmingham	1,879·4	1,130·1	−39·9
South Birmingham[1]	—	2,165·8	—
West Birmingham[1]	—	1,982·1	—
Coventry	1,871·3	1,809·5	−3·3
Dudley	1,491·8	1,570·8	5·3
Sandwell	747·2	860·4	15·1
Solihull[1]	—	1,040·0	—
Walsall	1,761·9	1,514·4	−14·0
Wolverhampton	1,542·6	1,488·4	−3·5
Mersey Regional Health Authority	21,981·5	17,959·0	−18·3
Chester	2,030·5	1,672·3	−17·6
Crewe[1]	—	1,620·6	—
Halton	452·0	430·4	−4·8
Macclesfield[1]	—	1,527·1	—
Warrington	2,991·0	2,433·7	−18·6
Liverpool	4,023·7	3,238·9	−19·5
St. Helens and Knowsley[1]	—	2,305·0	—
Southport and Formby	1,323·7	1,123·7	−15·1
South Sefton	1,755·1	1,650·8	−5·9
Wirral	2,789·4	1,956·5	−29·9
North Western Regional Health Authority	30,811·5	28,405·7	−7·8
Lancaster	2,644·8	2,105·6	−20·4
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	1,563·5	1,730·3	10·7
Preston[1]	—	2,059·7	—
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	2,824·6	2,508·9	−11·2
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	2,591·1	2,302·5	−11·1
West Lancashire	885·5	790·2	−10·8
Chorley and South Ribble[1]	—	345·3	—
Bolton	1,360·8	1,250·7	−8·1
Bury	716·2	816·2	14·0
North Manchester	2,040·8	1,691·9	−17·1
Central Manchester	1,136·6	1,246·2	9·6
South Manchester	2,407·6	2,186·7	−9·2
Oldham	1,044·9	1,004·4	−3·9
Rochdale	953·1	843·2	−11·5
Salford	3,097·6	2,665·5	−13·9
Stockport	1,677·1	1,741·3	3·8
Tameside and Glossop	868·9	956·8	10·1
Trafford	835·9	747·4	−10·6
Wigan	1,478·5	1,412·9	−4·4
Directly Administered Hospitals[2]	3,418·6	3,025·1	−11·5
The Hospitals for Sick Children	517·4	402·2	−22·3
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases	356·5	337·9	−5·2
Moorfields Eye Hospital	207·7	151·7	−27·0
Bethlem and Royal Maudsley Hospitals	471·9	511·3	8·3
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	602·9	423·2	−29·8
Royal Marsden Hospital	360·7	354·2	−1·8
Hammersmith and Queen Charlottes	277·5	844·6	204·4
Eastman Dental Hospital	0·0	0·0	—
England	361,670·2	315,713·8	−12·7

[1] Comparable figures for 1979 not readily available because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982 or because of subsequent inter DHA movement of hospitals.

[2] Figures for 1979 not comparable with those given for 1986 because of NHS restructuring on 1 April 1982.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice he has given to health authorities about closing any more beds in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Smoking

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what financial support he gave to World Non-Smokers Day on 17 November.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the Froggatt committee report on smoking and health.

Mrs. Currie: The independent scientific committee on smoking and health is expected to present its fourth report to Ministers around the turn of the year. A decision on publication will be taken after it has been received.

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the cost to public funds of National No-Smoking Day 1988.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that the Health Education Authority will spend approximately £80,000 including the costs of evaluating the results. I hope to lend my personal support to No-Smoking Day 1988 as smoking is the single most important risk factor in lung cancer and other preventable diseases.

Solihull Hospital

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make an official visit to Solihull hospital in order to discuss prospects for the new district general hospital.

Mrs. Currie: We have no plans to do so. As my hon. Friend will be aware, the management of major new schemes in the capital building programme is the responsibility of the regional health authority. I understand however that building work on the new hospital is due to start in July 1991.

Residential Care

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each of the last five years, what was the amount paid for residential care through regulation 9 payments, and what has been the percentage change since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The information held centrally is not in the form requested. The table sets out the position since 1979. 1986 is the most recent year for which information is available.

Supplementary Benefit for people in residential care and nursing homes—Total expenditure[1]

Year	Expenditure £ million
1979	10
1980	18
1981	23
1982	39
1983	104
1984	200
1985[2]	
1986[3]	
Residential Care Homes	330 459
Nursing Homes	129

[1] *Source.* DHSS annual statistical inquiry.
[2] There are no figures for 1985 because for operational reasons there was no inquiry in that year.
[3] Until 1986 it has not been possible to identify separately expenditure on people in residential care homes and nursing homes.
Note.—The percentage change in expenditure since 1979 is 45·80 per cent.

District Nurses (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district nurses served the Easington constituency in the years 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: Information by constituency is not available. Figures in the table refer to Durham district health authority within whose boundary Easington falls.

District nursing staff in post in Durham district health authority[1] *at 30 September*
Whole time equivalent[2]

Year	Number
1982	64
1983	70
1984	77
1985	79
1986	75

Source: DHSS annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] Includes district nurse practical work teachers, SRN, SSEN and SEN assisting district nurses, dual posts and bank district nurses. Excludes DN (District Nurse) students and unqualified nursing staff.
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest whole-time equivalent.

Chiropodists (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many chiropodists were practising in the Easington constituency during the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mrs. Currie: Information by constituency is not available. Figures in the table refer to Durham district health authority within whose boundary Easington falls.

NHS chiropodists in post-Durham district health authority[1] *at 30 September each year*
whole time equivalents[2]

Year	Number
1982	[3]21
1983	6
1984	7
1985	7
1986	8

Source: DHSS Manual census of NHS non-medical manpower.
[1] Excludes helpers.
[2] Figures are independently rounded to nearest whole-time equivalent.
[3] In 1982 Durham district health authority provided chiropody services to neighbouring district health authorities.

Care in the Community (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional funding he intends to make available for care in the community within the district council area of Easington.

Mr. Newton: The provision of care in the community is the responsibility of local authority social services and health authorities, and it is for them to decide upon the level of funding in the light of their individual circumstances and priorities.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many mentally handicapped children have been taken into either voluntary or statutory care under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969; and in what proportion of these or both of the parents is mentally handicapped, over the most recent period for which figures are available;

(2) in how many cases, when one or both parents are mentally handicapped, children have been taken into care at birth, or subsequently, and for what reason, over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

National Insurance Credits

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in what circumstances persons may be registered as unemployed for the purpose of receiving national insurance contribution credits, but without drawing unemployment benefit; and how many are currently within this category.

Mr. Scott: On 14 May 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 433,071 persons registered as unemployed and not receiving unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit but receiving national insurance contribution credits. The reasons for unemployment benefit not being paid are shown in the table.

	Number
Unemployment benefit exhausted	200,353
Contribution deficiency	65,389
Title to benefit not yet determined	[1]140,042
Waiting days not completed	[1]4,656
Other reasons	22,631
Total	433,071

[1] Some of these claimants will be found to qualify for unemployment benefit.

NHS Employees

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the most recent convenient date the number of posts *(a)* established and *(b)* filled in each region for the following groups of National Health Service employees (i) medical laboratory scientific officers, (ii) speech therapists, (iii) occupational therapists, (iv) clinical physicists, (v) clinical biochemists and (vi) clinical psychologists.

Mr. Newton: Figures for staff in post are shown in the table. Information on established posts is not collected centrally.

Whole time equivalent[1]

Region	*Medical laboratory scienfitic officer*	[2]*Speech therapists*	[2]*Occupational therapists*	*Clinical physicists*	*Clinical biochemists*	*Clinical psychologists*
Northern	930	160	180	70	60	100
Yorkshire	1,090	150	290	50	70	120
Trent	1,260	250	460	90	60	120
East Anglian	560	110	240	20	30	70
North West Thames	1,010	210	330	40	90	130
North East Thames	1,450	230	320	110	150	150
South East Thames	1,150	210	310	60	100	150
South West Thames	790	170	290	30	70	110
Wessex	760	130	280	50	60	70
Oxford	700	140	260	20	30	60
South Western	780	170	360	60	50	130
West Midlands	1,610	250	380	70	170	160
Mersey	810	100	210	20	30	70
North Western	1,410	220	370	60	140	180
England Total[3]	14,620	2,510	4,330	770	1,180	1,620

Source: DHSS—Annual census of NHS non-medical manpower.

[1] Figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.

[2] Excludes Helpers.

[3] Includes London Post Graduate Special Health Authorities staff.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total savings in 1988-89 from uprating the illustrative figures for personal allowances in income support set out in the technical annex of the White Paper "The Reform of Social Security" Cmnd. 9091, by 4·5 to 5 per cent. instead of 6·5 to 7 per cent., after excluding the compensation for the payment of 20 per cent. rates.

Mr. Scott: It would have cost an additional £156 million in public expenditure to set the rates for 1988-89 at the levels suggested.

Mr. Allen McKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the effect on a married couple with two children at primary school and a gross income of £100 per week with rent and rates of £43 per week, of *(a)* the loss of income due to the non-indexing of child benefit to inflation in each year from 1985 to 1988, *(b)* changes in housing benefit, *(c)* changes from family income supplement to family credit and *(d)* the abolition of free school meals.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Comparisons must be somewhat hypothetical, since assumptions must be made for how the current scheme would have been carried forward, had it not been replaced from April 1988. Assuming, for this atypical example, that the main assumptions are similar to those used in the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income Related Benefits" published at the same time as the uprating statement on 27 October and that, of the £43 specified for rent and rate payments, £33·20 is for rent, £8·02 is for local authority rates and £1·78 is for water rates, the answer is as follows. The loss in net disposable income from the child benefit uprating in November 1985 (expressed at current prices), was 44p per week. For the July 1986 upratings this figure fell to 37p a week, and in April 1987 it fell further to 33p per week. No loss of net income arises from child benefit in April 1988 because the family credit structure provides automatic compensation and, in cash equivalent terms, replacing family income supplement and free school meals by family credit raises disposable income for such a family by £5·95. Reform of the housing benefit scheme would reduce such a family's rate rebate by £4·94 and rent rebate by £7·62.

Single Payments

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were in constant 1979 prices, the total amounts of single payments made by his Department in each of the years between 1979 and 1986 inclusive.

Mr. Scott: The expenditure on single payments for the years 1979-80 to 1986-87 is as follows:

United Kingdom cost at 1979 prices[1]

Year (ending April)	*£ million*
1979-80	40
1980-81	40
1981-82	44
1982-83	70
1983-84	114
1984-85	158
1985-86	207
1986-87	198

[1] Based on the Gross Domestic Product Deflator.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what single payments were made at *(a)* Cowdenbeath, *(b)* Dunfermline and *(c)* Kirkcaldy offices of his Department in 1986-87; and to what value.

Mr. Portillo: Information concerning the amount spent on single payments made at each of the Department's local offices has been placed in the Library. Information concerning the number of single payments made at *(a)* Cowdenbeath, *(b)* Dunfermline and *(c)* Kirkcaldy is given in the table:

Number of single payments for the period April 1986 to April 1987

Office	*Number*
(a) Cowdenbeath	6,179
(b) Dunfermline	6,982
(c) Kirkcaldy	12,118

Note: The figures are provisional and subject to amendment.

Defibrillators

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government, and what advice it has given to ambulance authorities, concerning the supply of defibrillators to all emergency ambulance vehicles maintained by public funds.

Mrs. Currie: We have endorsed the training of emergency ambulance crews in advanced techniques, which includes the use of defibrillators. Our policy guidance is set out in a circular to health authorities (DA(84)12), a copy of which is in the Library.

The extent to which advanced training is given is for those health authorities responsible for managing ambulance services to decide, taking into account local circumstances and the types and locations of health service facilities in the area.

Acute Services

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the spending per patient by specialty in the acute sector for each of the district health authorities in the north-west region, and for Brighton, Bournemouth and Southport and Formby district health authorities during the financial years 1981-82 to 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie: The information requested is not available centrally. District health authorities' spending by specialty will, however, be identifiable in their annual financial returns from financial year 1987-88. Health authorities are expected to submit the returns for that year to the Department by the end of June 1988.

Blackpool District (Funding)

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each of the last five financial years, the percentage relationship between the actual level of funding received for both capital and revenue expenditure by the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre district health authority and the level of funding indicated by the national resource allocation working party formula.

Mr. Newton: The resource allocation working party formula is used to determine regions' resource targets. The allocation of resources to districts is a matter for regions, which follow the same principles as the national formula, but take account of local needs and circumstances in determining district resource targets. Allocations year by year need to be sensitive to local service plans and allow for a manageable pace of change.

My hon. Friend may like to contact the chairman of North Western regional health authority for information about the allocation of resources to the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre district health authority.

Statistical Reports

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the titles and a brief description of the statistical reports and returns made by the Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde, Brighton, Bournemouth, and Southport and Formby district health authorities to their regional health authority during the financial year 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not available centrally. Prior to this financial year, 1987-88, regional health authorities did not send statistical reports from their districts to the Department.

National Performance Indicators

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the national performance indicators for the hospital service for the financial year 1986-87 will be published.

Mr. Newton: A national set of performance indicators for 1986-87 will be issued to all health authorities in England in February 1988.

Mrs. C. James

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made with regard to the claim of Mrs. C. James, of Birmingham B23, regarding damage caused to her home by acid leaking from the battery-operated wheelchair supplied by his Department's contractors; why Mrs. James has not been kept informed about such progress; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The matter to which the hon. Member refers is the responsibility of the Disablement Services Authority. However, I understand that the authority has now written to Mrs. James to find out the cost of the damage caused so that compensation may be paid.

Military Hospitals

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent action he has taken to obtain provision of additional beds in military hospitals for National Health Service patients; and if he will make a statement listing any factors which he has found to have inhibited such provision.

Mr. Newton: We have encouraged health authorities, when circulating information to general practitioners about waiting times in National Health Service hospitals, to include, as appropriate, information about waiting time for service hospitals. Some health authorities are negotiating contracts with a military hospital for treatment of waiting list cases using funds from the £25 million national waiting list fund. This is an approach we intend to develop further for projects supported from the £30 million fund for 1988-89. For most National Health Service patients treatment in a service hospital would entail considerable travel. Many patients would prefer to be treated closer to home and family. Others require pre-operative tests or post-operative checks.

Birmingham Hospitals

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many beds at the children's hospital, Birmingham, and the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, are at present not available for use.

Mrs. Currie: The Department does not routinely monitor the availability of beds on a day-to-day basis.

The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of Central Birmingham health authority for the information he seeks.

Mr. David Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of beds available for patients *(a)* at the children's hospital, Birmingham, and *(b)* at the Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham, in September 1986 and at the latest available date.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member the precise information he has requested. The latest available information is given in the table.

Average daily number of available beds at 31 December 1985 and 1986

	1985	*1986*
Children's hospital, Birmingham	190·8	193·2
Queen Elizabeth hospital, Birmingham	519·0	524·9

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Moore: My Department has no section which can be separately identified as public relations. Functions commonly associated with public relations and those of the press office are carried out by information officers as part of their duties in the Department's information division.

On 1 December 1987 the information division employed 68 permanent staff of whom 29 were information officers.

Anticipated figures for permanent staff in 1988 are identical.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of the Health Education Authority; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mrs. Currie: The section of the Health Education Authority's public affairs division responsible for advertising, promotions and press relations has an establishment of 11. Seven of the posts are currently filled and I understand that the remaining posts are expected to be filled over the next few months.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by the Health Education Authority on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: The information is as follows:

	£
Television	2,650,000
Radio	
Newspaper	865,000
Posters and other promotional material	656,500

The authority is presently considering its use of media for 1988-89.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by the Health Education Authority on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mrs. Currie: The Health Education Authority plans to spend about £5·1 million on publicity and promotional activity in 1987-88, including £3 million on AIDS public education. The operational plans for 1988-89 are presently under consideration but the authority expects to spend at least this amount in 1988-89.

Swiss Cheese

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how much Swiss Vacherin Mont d'Or cheese was withdrawn from sale in the United Kingdom following his warning on 25 November.

Mrs. Currie: The system put into operation in the event of a food hazard such as this involves contact with all local authority environmental health departments and the revelant trade interests so as to get the food removed from sale. Central and local publicity was aimed at advising members of the public to return any of the Swiss Vacherin Mont d'Or cheese which they had already bought.

We do not routinely collect information on the results but past experience shows the system to be fully effective and there is no suggestion that it was not so in this case.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the percentage change in National Health Service expenditure for the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 after correcting for *(a)* National Health Service pay and prices and *(b)* demographic factors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department does not make forward projections for National Health Service specific pay and price changes. Demographic pressures can be calculated for hospital and community health services but cannot be meaningfully applied to the National Health Service as a whole.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what temperatures were recorded at Turnhouse in the week ended 17 December for the purposes of calculating eligibility for severe weather payments.

Mr. Scott: The Department receives information from the Meteorological Office in respect of fixed seven-day periods beginning each Monday. The latest week for which we have received temperature data is week ending 13 December. The information for Edinburgh airport (Turnhouse) is as follows:

	Temperature (C)
Monday	1·4
Tuesday	−1·6
Wednesday	0·0
Thursday	1·5
Friday	2·6
Saturday	−0·4
Sunday	−0·4
Weekly average	−0·1

Bradford Royal Infirmary

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) on how many occasions in each month during the current year women were turned away from the baby unit at Bradford Royal infirmary due to lack of facilities and transferred to the regional neonatal units in Leeds;

(2) what are the shortages of staff and ventilators at Bradford Royal infirmary; how many babies are transferred to the regional neonatal units in Leeds on average throughout each month due to these or other shortages; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Bradford and Leeds both provide neonatal intensive care facilities. It is normal practice for patients to be referred to Leeds when the Bradford unit is full and vice versa. Bradford's capacity has occasionally been affected by recruitment problems. The number of ventilators at Bradford is sufficient to meet normal demand. I understand that to date, this year, seven patients have been transferred from Bradford to Leeds. In the same period, Bradford has accepted 18 patients from outside the district, including some from Leeds. The hon. Member may wish to seek more detailed information from the chairman of Bradford health authority.

Maternity Pay

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received calling for amendments to the statutory maternity pay scheme.

Mr. Portillo: None since the scheme started in April 1987, although a number of representations and inquiries have been received questioning the application of statutory maternity pay in specific circumstances.

Cancer Research

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about his Department's funding of cancer research being carried out by Quest at the Middlesex hospital.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has recently received a number of applications for funding of research with the objective of automating cervical cancer screening, and expects to receive several more in the near future. I propose to convene an ad hoc expert panel, to be chaired by the Chief Scientist, Professor F. O'Grady, to advise Ministers and to recommend those applications which should be supported.

One of the applications received was from Dr. A. M. Sincock for the funding of a project entitled "The

screening of cervical neoplasia by quantitative assay of a hydrolysed DNA component present in the nuclei of cells exfoliated from the cervix uteri". Dr. Sincock's application has been considered by external referees who gave qualified support. In the light of this reaction, the relatively large number and cost of other applications with the same objective, and because Dr. Sincock is already funded by Quest for a Test until June 1988, no decision on funding has been taken. The application will be considered by the ad hoc expert panel and a decision on funding made as soon as possible.

Chester District Health Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make extra funds available to the Chester district health authority to fund the short-term programme; what ward closures took place in the Chester district in the current financial year; when a consultant urologist appointment will take place; how many Clwyd patients are treated and seen in Chester district premises annually, expressed by percentage and number for each of the years since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: As the allocation of resources to the Chester health authority is the responsibility of the Mersey regional health authority, the hon. Member may wish to contact the regional chairman for information about the funding of Chester's short-term programme.

The information the hon. Member seeks about ward closures in Chester in the current financial year and with regard to the appointment of a consultant urologist is not available centrally. As the Chester health authority is responsible for the management and development of local hospital services, the hon. Member may wish to contact the district chairman on these issues.

Centrally held information on Clwyd residents treated in Chester hospitals is based on the results of the non-maternity hospital in-patient inquiry and given in the following table. 1985 is the latest available year; figures prior to 1982 are not comparable due to reorganisation of the NHS.

Estimated total number (and percentages) of in-patients discharged (including deaths in hospitals) non-psychiatric, non-maternity hospitals, by selected district of residence, Chester DHA, 1982-1985

	[1]1982	1983	1984	1985
Estimated number of in-patient cases treated in Chester DHA	19,660	22,610	22,420	22,430
Of which, those resident in:				
Chester DHA				
Number	13,130	15,450	15,710	15,470
Percentage	66·8	68·3	70·1	69·0
Clywd HA				
Number	4,300	4,820	4,500	4,580
Percentage	21·3	21·3	20·1	20·4

[1] Hospital activity depressed in 1982 due to widespread industrial action.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of people employed in the care of mentally handicapped people by area health authorities in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 1 December 1987]:* The number of doctors and nursing staff (excluding agency staff) in post in mental handicap areas of work at 30 September in England are as follows. Details of other staff employed in the care of mentally handicapped people are not available.

Whole-time equivalent[1]

Year	*Total*[2]
1979	26,300
1980	27,400
1981	30,400
1982	30,500
1983	30,500
1984	31,000
1985	32,200
1986	33,000

Source: DHSS Annual censuses of NHS medical and non-medical manpower.

Notes: Figures for nursing staff for 1979 and 1980 have been estimated, since figures are not available by area of work on an exactly consistent basis with those for later years. Figures have not been adjusted for the change in nurses' working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

[1] Figures are rounded to nearest one hundred (100) whole-time equivalents.

[2] Includes all permanent paid, honorary and locum medical staff.

The figures shown cover health authority staff working in hospitals and in the community. For example, there were 230 whole-time equivalent community mental handicap nurses in 1981 (the first year in which they were separately identified) and 1,100 in 1986. The number of residents in National Health Service mental handicap hospitals and community units was 45,600 in 1979 and 34,200 in 1986.

Hospitals (Bed Occupancy)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the bed-occupancy rates in each specialty in each hospital in *(a)* the Crewe, *(b)* the Chester and *(c)* the Halton health districts in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* A table giving the information my hon. Friend seeks has now been placed in the Library.

A variety of reasons may lead to variations in occupancy. These include the need to have beds available for emergencies, unexpectedly early discharges and unpredictable admissions (for example in maternity cases).

The health services information steering goup recommended in its first report that bed use data should

include all patients using a ward in a 24-hour period and that aggregated bed occupancy statistics should not be used alone as an indicator of efficient bed use. A more useful measure of bed utilisation is patient throughout per available bed and this has been included for information.

Health Districts (Operations)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many operations were performed in each specialty in *(a)* the Crewe, *(b)* the Chester and *(c)* the Halton health districts in each of the last eight years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The information which I can give my hon. Friend without incurring disproportionate costs is in the table.

District Health Authority	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
In-patient cases treated in the surgical acute specialties in NHS hospitals					
Chester	11,590	13,971	13,807	13,001	13,303
Crewe	12,855	14,735	13,963	13,737	13,917
Halton	0	0	0	993	2,907
Day cases treated in the surgical acute specialties in NHS hospitals					
Chester	3,472	5,042	5,210	5,773	5,623
Crewe	2,408	3,038	3,506	4,522	5,635
Halton	0	0	0	800	2,128

Health Districts (Patient Treatment)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients were treated in each specialty in *(a)* the Crewe, *(b)* the Chester and *(c)* the Halton health districts in each of the last eight years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* A table giving the available information has now been placed in the Library. Because of National Health Service restructuring in 1982, earlier figures are not directly comparable.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is able to estimate the total first year savings arising from the April 1988 changes to the existing housing benefit scheme, and to isolate the individual savings achieved by (i) requiring all households to meet at least 20 per cent. of their rates bill, (ii) the increase in the taper on rent to 65 per cent. on net income, (iii) the phasing out of help with high, fixed fuel charges, (iv) the abolition of extra help with partial heating, (v) the increased rates contribution expected from non-dependants not in full-time work and (vi) any other separately identifiable saving; and if he will publish the figures in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 3 December 1987]:* The total savings from the April 1988 changes to the housing benefit scheme are currently estimated to be £650 million; £500 million of this is a saving on rate rebates and £150 million on rent rebates and allowances. These figures are based on the estimated cost of the new scheme compared with the estimated cost of extending the current scheme into 1988-89. We estimate that some two thirds of the total saving is a result of the requirement for households to pay a minimum of 20 per cent. of their rates bill, but this saving should be seen in the context of the compensation being provided under the income support scheme and reflected in housing benefit and family credit.

It is not possible to give a further breakdown of the savings figures in precise terms as they were largely derived from a computer model that encompassed all the major changes in structure and associated changes in other benefits. This could be rerun only at disproportionate cost. Modelling work the Department has already done, however, would indicate that the figure includes a saving of approximately £80 million from the new capital rule and £46 million from increasing the rent taper from 60 per cent. to 65 per cent.

Gloucester Health Authority

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses, midwives, doctors, professional medical staff, administrative officers and ancillary workers were employed by the Gloucester health authority for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what was the average yearly salary for each of these groups of Health Service employees for the same period.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 7 December 1987]:* Such information as is available centrally is shown in the tables.

Figures for all staff groups for Gloucester district health authority, which formed part of the Gloucester area health authority before the National Health Service reorganisation in 1982, are not available centrally. From 1982 we have figures for all doctors and dentists employed in the district health authority except for senior registrars and consultants, whose contracts are held by the regional health authority and cannot be identified centrally. There will therefore be more doctors and dentists actually working in the Gloucester district health authority than are accounted for in table 1.

It should be noted that it is likely that data for 1982 were effected by the April 1982 reorganisation.

Average yearly salary details for staff employed by the Gloucester health authority in the various staff groups are shown in table 2. Again details are not available centrally prior to 1982 due to the NHS reorganisation.

Table 1

NHS directly employed staff in post—Gloucester District Health Authority at 30 September

Whole-time equivalent[1]

Staff	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Nursing[2]	2,220	2,220	2,230	2,280	2,290
Midwifery[2]	100	110	130	130	130
Medical and Dental[3]	170	130	130	130	130
Administrative and Clerical	530	590	600	570	580
Ancillary	900	860	780	770	740

Source: DHSS Annual Censuses of NHS Medical and Non-Medical Manpower.

[1] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.

[2] Includes agency staff.

[3] Includes permanent paid, honorary and locum staff. Excludes Senior Registrars and Consultants.

Table 2

Average Yearly Salary—Gloucester HA

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Admin	4,746	5,024	5,250	5,486	5,732	6,070
Nursing and Midwifery	5,363	6,060	6,457	6,766	7,132	7,731
Doctors excluding consultants	11,000	11,929	12,675	13,354	14,687	15,727
PAMs and P & T	5,875	6,462	6,977	7,415	7,869	8,491
Ancillary	3,337	3,702	3,910	4,119	4,327	4,588

Greenwich Health District (Casualty Service)

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on recent closures and restrictions of services at the accident and emergency departments of the Brook and Greenwich district hospitals resulting from the shortages of beds and suitably qualified medical staff; and what steps he has taken to ensure that there is an adequate casualty service covering the Greenwich health district.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* There have been no closures or restrictions at the Brook hospital accident and emergency department since 10 September or at Greenwich district general hospital accident and emergency department since 24 September. A local major accident occurred on 29 October and in order to ensure that facilities would be free to meet that exceptional demand the accident and emergency department at the Brook hospital was closed to other patients at the time as part of the hospital's normal procedure in such circumstances. The provision of a casualty service in Greenwich is the responsibility of the Greenwich health authority and I have received no evidence that it is inadequate.

Incontinence Pads

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the letter from Mary Arnold, chairperson of Coventry Council for the Disabled, on the supply of incontinence pads, sent to him on 3 November.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* I wrote on 14 December.

Prescriptions

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount paid in general practitioner prescription charges in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The total amount paid by patients in prescription charges in England in the last five years for which figures are available is as follows:

Financial year	*Amount (£ million)*
1982-83	102·79
1983-84	110·04
1984-85	120·75
1985-86	127·76
1986-87	147·88

Heart Campaign

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which food retailers have associated themselves with the "Look After Your Heart" campaign, sponsored by his Department.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 16 December 1987]:* The following food retailing organisations have associated themselves with the campaign during its first seven months by way of promotional activity directed at the public:

J. H. Dewhurst Ltd., Butchers
Tesco Stores Ltd.

In addition, more than 50 industrial and commercial companies have undertaken to carry forward the campaign's objectives with their employees. These include the following associated with food retailing:

Boots plc
Marks and Spencer plc
Oxford and Swindon Co-Operative Society
Whitbread and Co. plc

Care in the Community

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will provide funds for local authorities to employ more trained paramedical staff for the care in the community programme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he gives financial help to local authorities who wish to provide telephone installation costs to elderly persons living alone.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* Local authority personal social services are funded mainly by local rates, income from fees and charges and central Government block grant via the rate support grant system. Block grant is not tied to specific services and it is for local authorities themselves to decide how to spend their resources in the light of local circumstances, needs and plans.

Expenditure by local authorities on telephone installations for elderly and disabled people was £7·364 million in 1985-86, a real terms increase of 8·6 per cent. over the amount spent in 1978-79. Separate information is not collected about expenditure on paramedical staff.

Chief Adjudication Officer

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the recommendations made in the second report of the chief adjudication officer which affect his Department the action which has been taken to implement them.

Mr. Portillo: A Departmental response to the recommendations in a report of the chief adjudication officer is made following publication of the report. The contents of that response are normally published in the next report of the chief adjudication officer. I have, however, placed a copy of the departmental response to the second report in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pollution

12. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate what proportion of the recent fall in the fish harvest from the North sea is due to the current levels of pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Scientific studies by my Department indicate that pollution has a negligible effect on North sea fish catches.

68. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to control pollution arising from agricultural activities.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 19 November at column *652*.

Olive Oil

13. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards proposals to limit expenditure on olive oil under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. MacGregor: As my hon. Friend will be aware, the Government are pressing for effective stabilisers to apply to all major CAP regimes; and for existing stabilisers, including that on olive oil, to be strengthened where appropriate.

Pigmeat

15. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will review the veterinary conditions pertaining to the importing of pigmeat; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Veterinary conditions pertaining to the import of pigmeat and pigmeat products are laid down by European Community directives. These are reviewed in the light of the disease situation within the Community and in third countries.

Confectionery Industry

16. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when was the last time he met the president of the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance; and what issues affecting the United Kingdom confectionery industry were raised.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend the Minister met the president of the Biscuit, Cake, Chocolate and Confectionery Alliance on 22 July 1987 when a wide range of commodity issues affecting the industry was discussed.

Pesticides

17. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has had in the European Community about the levels of pesticide residues in food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since the Council of Agriculture Ministers adopted directive setting maximum residue levels for certain pesticides in cereals and products of animal origin in June last year, discussions have continued at official level on further proposals for amendments to the fruit and vegetable directives. Last week the Council had its first discussion of the progress made and will return to the subject early next year.

29. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he received in 1986 in relation to the effects of agricultural pesticides.

Mr. Donald Thompson: During 1986 I received approximately 200 letters concerning agricultural pesticides which covered a wide range of issues, including legislation, residues, controls on use and aerial application.

73. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is considering new measures on the control and use of pesticides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: After consultation with the Advisory Committee on Pesticides (ACP), and following the timetable set down in the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986, a variety of new controls will take effect in Great Britain from 1 January 1988. These include the following requirements:

(a) on users of pesticides that they observe the conditions of approval of each pesticide, in particular in relation to the permitted use and crop, the maximum dose rate, harvest and other intervals, operator protection including clothing, and environmental safeguards;

(b) on suppliers of pesticides to farmers and growers, to show through certification their understanding of crop protection and related health and environmental questions;

(c) on suppliers to the amenity horticulture industry, similar relevant qualifications.

The implications of these new controls for the industries concerned have been the subject of detailed consultation. My noble Friend Baroness Trumpington announced on 30 October interim arrangements governing the application of pesticides to minor crops, and guidance on the use of low-volume spraying techniques will be given following the next meeting of the ACP in February 1988.

Further requirements on the training and certification of pesticide operators in agriculture, horticulture and forestry come into force on 1 January 1989 and I am concerned that employers and employees take full advantage of the training facilities now available.

Storm Damage

18. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will next be meeting the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the effects of the recent hurricane.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans for any further meeting on this matter.

26. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the impact of the recent weather on the harvest.

Mr. MacGregor: I am very much aware that some farmers in many parts of the country, particularly on the east coast, have had a bad harvest because of the very difficult weather conditions during the summer and autumn.

It is not possible to make an estimate of the direct impact of this as the effect will vary from farmer to farmer. But overall our present estimate is that the harvest will total 21·6 million tonnes. Even with this figure there will be a substantial surplus of feed grain of between 7 million and 8 million tonnes including intervention stores.

53. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received from smallholders who have large trees lying on their ground as to the resources which they may claim to assist them in their removal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have received no such representations although I am aware of the difficulties this is causing in some cases. Individual smallholders can contact MAFF offices to see if help is available under the farm and countryside initiative in their particular circumstances.

Sheepmeat

19. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the ceiling on headage payments as proposed in the European Commission's review of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: I am opposed to the proposal to limit ewe premium payments to the first 500 ewes in each lowland flock and first 1,000 ewes in each LFA flock.

24. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the effect in Britain's less-favoured areas of the European Commission's proposals for the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: The proposal to phase out the variable premium would remove the assurance of the guide price for those LFA producers who sell finished lambs and it would also affect the price they receive for stores. But the annual ewe premium would be set at a higher level so increasing its benefit to LFA producers; and clawback on exports would end so enabling the industry as a whole to benefit increasingly from the export market which already takes 20 per cent. of our output. The proposal to limit ewe premium to the first 1,000 ewes in each flock in the LFAs would have an adverse impact on larger sheep flocks.

76. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on British sheepmeat exports.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Our sheepmeat exports are encouragingly strong. Exports in 1986 amounted to some 72,000 tonnes, valued at £133 million and accounting for over 20 per cent. of home production. A further increase is forecast for 1987.

77. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the sheepmeat regime proposals.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong).

Hill Land Compensatory Allowances

20. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans for increasing the hill land compensatory allowances in the near future.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 9 December.

Food (Radioactivity)

21. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review the adequacy of the arrangements for monitoring for radioactivity in foodstuffs to protect human health in the event of another nuclear accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram).

28. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had and what agreements he has made in the European Community about radioactivity levels in foodstuffs.

Mr. Gummer: Discussions on emergency intervention levels to be applied in the event of a nuclear accident took place in the Council of Foreign Ministers on 14 December when a common position was reached (subject to confirmation of Italian support) on a framework Community regulation.

The result of the agreement is that the Community will now have in place a system for regulating imports and intra-Community trade in a coherent and pre-determined way in the event of any future nuclear emergency. A

decision was also taken to renew the existing post-Chernobyl controls on food imported from third countries.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

22. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the number of environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: A host of organisations, representing the whole spectrum of countryside interests, have welcomed the speed with which the Government have increased the number of environmentally sensitive areas.

47. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farms are presently operating under the environmentally sensitive area scheme.

Mr. Gummer: In the nine months following the launch of the first environmentally sensitive areas over 1,600 applications were received by the Ministry and its counterparts in Wales and Scotland.

55. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what increase in resources has been made available to the environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: Earlier this year the Government announced that their annual budget for environmentally sensitive areas would be doubled to approximately £12 million.

63. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the response by farmers in environmentally sensitive areas to the scheme.

Mr. Gummer: In the eight environmentally sensitive areas in England, Wales and Scotland we have received over 1,600 applications and formal inquiries covering 60,000 hectares or 150,000 acres.

32. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the operation of environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: The first eight environmentally sensitive areas were successfully launched earlier this year. On 30 November my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I laid before Parliament orders which will extend two of these areas and create a further six from 1 January 1988.

40. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the total area covered by environmentally sensitive areas in England and Wales once all those presently proposed are in operation.

Mr. Gummer: The total land area covered by the existing and proposed areas in England and Wales is estimated at approximately 470,000 hectares or 1,800 square miles.

Rural Employment

23. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to protect employment in rural communities.

Mr. MacGregor: As envisaged in the farming and rural enterprise package announced on 10 March, the Government are pursuing a number of new initiatives which will assist rural employment. So far as my own Department is concerned, I am introducing the farm diversification grant scheme and the farm woodland scheme, both of which will encourage on-farm business activity.

Food Prices

25. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the increase in food prices in the last year; and what was the comparable figure over the same period 10 years ago.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figures from the retail prices index indicate that in the 12 months to October 1987 food prices increased by 3 per cent. This compares with an increase of 13·6 per cent. in food prices in the period from October 1976 to October 1977.

78. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the increase in food prices since 1979, and what was the comparable rise in prices generally.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Between May 1979 and November 1987 the annual rate of increase in food prices was 5·7 per cent. while the rate for retail prices as a whole was 7·8 per cent. These increases can be compared with those of 16·4 per cent. and 15·4 per cent. respectively during the period in office of the last Labour Administration. These figures reflect the success of the Government's policies.

Research and Development

27. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the procedures for reviewing research and development in agriculture, fisheries and food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are regular reviews of all areas of R and D work, which draw on advice from research consultative committees consisting of representatives both from the industries concerned and from the scientific community. These report to a priorities board, under an independent chairman, which then advises Ministers.

64. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which organisations will be consulted about the review of research and development in agriculture, fisheries and food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The normal review procedures outlined in my reply to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Mcleish) on 19 November at column *656*, involve consultation with a wide range of organisations and individuals in the areas concerned. The additional examination of "near market" work is part of the more general process of policy formation and will not involve any formal consultation outside agriculture Departments, though we shall be seeking views on an informal basis.

Farm Woodland Scheme

30. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are his proposed rates of payment for the farm woodland scheme.

Mr. Gummer: The proposed rates of payment under the farm woodland scheme are as follows:

£190 per hectare a year in the lowlands;
£150 per hectare a year in the disadvantaged areas, which are sometimes known as the new less-favoured areas and
£100 per hectare a year in the severely disadvantaged areas, which are sometimes known as the original less-favoured areas.

These will apply to arable land and improved grassland up to 10 years old.

Up to 3,000 hectares of more marginal agricultural land will also be eligible during the three-year experimental period at a rate of £30 per hectare a year.

34. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in developing a scheme to encourage farmers to plant woodlands on their farms.

Mr. Gummer: We issued a consultation document on the farm woodland scheme earlier this year. The Farm Land and Rural Development Bill which provides enabling powers for this scheme was introduced in another place on 21 October and the Government announced details of their revised proposals for the scheme on Second Reading of the Bill. The details were also set out in Ministry press notice No. 336/87, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Farmers (Diversification)

31. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures will be taken to encourage farmers to diversify their enterprises.

Mr. Gummer: A scheme to offer capital grants for farm diversification was laid before the House on 18 November. I understand that it was debated in Committee this morning. Those grants will be available from 1 January 1988. In addition, associated grants for enterprise feasibility studies and initial marketing costs will be introduced later next year under powers being sought in the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill which reached Report stage in another place today.

61. **Mr. Neale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further measures have been taken to assist farmers to diversify their enterprises.

Mr. Gummer: Under the powers in the Agricultural Training Board Act 1987, which my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) has introduced as a private Member's Bill, the Agricultural Training Board has recently set up a number of training courses designed to help farmers' diversification possibilities.

I also refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter).

Fisheries Protection

33. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many fishing vessels have been boarded by personnel of the fisheries protection service so far in the current year; how many vessels were boarded in 1986; of these, how many were foreign vessels; and how many skippers were proceeded against and convicted in English and Welsh courts for illegal fishing as a result of these boardings.

Mr. Gummer: During 1986 a total of 1,458 vessels were boarded in the waters of England and Wales by personnel of the fisheries protection service, of which 938 were foreign vessels. To date 33 convictions have resulted from these boardings and a further three prosecutions are pending.

So far in 1987 a total of 1,437 vessels have been boarded, of which 920 were foreign vessels. To date 33 convictions have resulted from these boardings and a further 23 prosecutions are pending.

Food Aid

35. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes to meet European Economic Community Agriculture Ministers to discuss the Commission's free food scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 14 December.

Cereals

36. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to publish proposals to reduce cereal production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 8 December 1987, at column *126*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory).

51. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes to have discussions with the National Farmers Union on the question of cereal surpluses in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: My colleagues and I frequently meet members of the National Farmers Union and discuss a wide range of issues, including cereals surpluses.

Fish Farms

37. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department is in a position to estimate the annual production figures for fish farms over the next three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The development of fish farm output must depend upon market conditions. However, we estimate that annual production from the farming of fish (principally salmon and trout) in the United Kingdom could rise by about 10,000 tonnes a year, exceeding 60,000 tonnes by 1990. Most of the increase will be in salmon production.

58. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to encourage research and development programmes designed to promote fish farming in species other than salmon, trout and shellfish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The fisheries Departments and the Sea Fish Industry Authority (with funding from the Highlands and Islands Development Board) are engaged in research into, and development of, the cultivation of other species of fish, particularly halibut and Dover sole.

Skimmed Milk Powder

38. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present level of skimmed milk powder intervention stocks in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At 31 October 1987 accepted intervention stocks of skimmed milk powder totalled 5,897 tonnes. At the same date in 1986 the equivalent figure was 34,119 tonnes.

Tied Accommodation

39. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has figures for the numbers of agricultural workers in tied accommodation for the last three years.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Proportions of hired adult workers working full-time in agriculture in England and Wales with a tied house or cottage are estimated to be as follows for the latest three years.

	Percentages	
	Men	*Women*
1984	44·7	13·6
1985	43·4	9·7
1986	42·5	14·8

Source: Wages and Employment Enquiry.

Agricultural Production

41. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the reduction in agricultural production which will result from the proposals so far published by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: A number of my recent proposals have implications for land use and the level of production on farms. The farm woodland scheme, for which powers are being sought in the Farm Land and Rural Development Bill at present before Parliament, and the extensification scheme, on which I published a consultation document on 8 December, will both provide opportunities for farmers to reorientate their businesses to reduce production. Information on which to base estimates of the actual effects on production will not be available until we know the number of farmers willing to take part in the schemes and the area and productive potential of the farmland concerned. I shall be studying this as part of ongoing monitoring of the schemes when they are being implemented in practice.

Intervention Stocks

42. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present level of butter and beef intervention stocks in the United Kingdom.

49. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much beef was in intervention stores in the United Kingdom at the latest available date.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A note setting out the volume of intervention stocks in the United Kingdom on the latest available dates, which includes figures for butter and beef, is deposited in the Library of the House and is updated monthly.

Mr. Madel: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount of grain currently held in intervention in the United Kingdom; and what is his estimate of what it will be by 30 June 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A note setting out the volume of intervention stocks in the United Kingdom on the latest available dates, which includes figures for cereals, is deposited in the Library of the House and is updated monthly. It is not possible to make a precise estimate of the intervention stocks of cereals at 30 June 1988 but they are likely to be substantially below their level at the start of this season.

Milk Output

43. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to have discussions about milk output with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the Minister gave to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) today.

Creameries (Milk Supplies)

44. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions officials of his Department have recently held with the National Farmers Union, the National Farmers Union (Scotland) and cheese producers regarding the adequacy of supplies of milk to creameries throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Officials of my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland have been in close touch with the respective Milk Marketing Boards, cheese producers and the National Farmers Union of Scotland about the milk supply situation.

56. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has had any discussions with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board about any new arrangements to supply milk to cheese-making plants presently without supplies.

Mr. McGregor: As I said during the debate on the common agricultural policy on 24 November, my noble Friend Lord Sanderson and I have discussed this issue with individual marketing boards to see whether a solution can be found and I am now hopeful of the outcome.

Wheat

45. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of the United Kingdom wheat harvest for 1987.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department now estimates the 1987 wheat harvest in the United Kingdom to be 12 million tonnes.

Budgetary Stabilisers

46. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in implementing the European Commission's proposals for budgetary stabilisers in further commodity regimes.

54. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the Council of Ministers will next consider the implementation of budgetary stabilisers recommended by the European Commission.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friends to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin).

66. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on implications for less-favoured areas of the stabiliser agreements now being sought within the European Economic Community.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Commission's proposals on agricultural stabilisers do not differentiate between less-favoured areas and other parts of the European Community. The strengthening of budgetary discipline in the CAP is in the interests of farmers generally.

70. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated saving to the European Economic Community budget in 1988-89 of the agriculture stabilisers package.

Mr. MacGregor: The intention of stabilisers is to strengthen budgetary discipline in the agricultural sector. In general, the proposals involve price cuts or other adjustments to the support arrangements linked to increased levels of production or intervention. Negotiations on the details of the stabiliser arrangements, for example the production levels at which action would be triggered, are still continuing and therefore it is not possible to say at this stage what the effects of the stabilisers will be. The Government's aim in the negotiations is to agree measures which will genuinely restrain expenditure and produce substantial savings in spending.

Wheat, Barley and Oats

48. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of wheat, barley and oats production he projects for the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Given the significance of the weather for cereals yields, it is not possible to produce a reliable forecast of United Kingdom cereals production before the harvest.

Dairy Industry

50. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to meet representatives of the farming unions to discuss the state of the dairy industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I have frequent meetings with representatives of farming organisations, although at present I have no plans to discuss this specific topic with them.

62. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has recently received concerning the future of the dairy industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I receive numerous representations on this topic.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail the assistance given to dairy farmers since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Government's policy has been to provide the industry with a firmer long-term foundation by matching production more closely with the needs of the market. This is, of course, particularly true in the dairy sector, where the surplus problem has been the most serious.

Massive resources were devoted to the allocation of quotas and to cushioning the effects on the most vulnerable producers—for example by means of a £50 million outgoers scheme, and the restoration of quota cutbacks to those with low levels of production. In Community negotiations the Government secured and have successfully fought to maintain flexibility through the formula B system and regional compensation. The reductions in quota agreed last December were accompanied by generous compensation to producers. At this year's price fixing the Government secured the continuation of quota leasing.

At a domestic level ADAS has helped farmers develop production and business management strategies to meet the reduced output requirements under quotas. The Government are supporting a number of projects in research centres which are of direct relevance to the problems of the dairy industry, and efforts have been made to maximise the clarity and flexibility of the mechanisms for the transfer of milk quotas. Dairy products are among those promoted by Food from Britain and my Department is currently considering with the industry a diary product programme under EC regulation 355/77.

Details of the current level of public spending on support of the dairy industry will be set out in the annual review White Paper to be published shortly. In 1986/7, spending on direct market support in the dairy sector represented nearly £100 per cow.

The dairy industry's own enterprise, and the Government's commitment to it, have contributed to improved farm incomes in real terms over the last two years.

Food (Colouring Matter)

52. **Mr. Michael Morris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Food Advisory Committee's final report on the colouring matter in foods regulations 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Regulations were laid before Parliament on 3 December (SI 1987/1987) implementing the Food Advisory Committee's recommendations to ban the use of any added colours (except three vitamin sources) in foods prepared specially for babies and young children, to delete yellow 2G from the permitted list of colours and to prohibit the use of methyl violet for marking rinds of citrus fruits.

We are still considering the other recommendations in the report in the light of public comments received on them. I shall make a further announcement when we have come to a conclusion on this.

NFU (Derbyshire)

57. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to meet representatives of Derbyshire National Farmers Union.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My noble Friend Baroness Trumpington has recently accepted an invitation to visit members of the Derbyshire National Farmers Union.

Farm Workers (Wages)

59. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is yet in a position to provide the information requested by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 24 November, *Official Report*, column *225*, relating to the powers of agriculture wages boards to require employers to pay contributions towards the pensions of farm workers as part of the minimum wages conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I wrote to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on 10 December 1987.

Matters concerning the Agricultural Wages Board for Scotland are for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. The Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales has the powers to set such terms and conditions of employment as it thinks fit which, I am advised, could include the setting up of a pension fund. However, the exercise of its discretionary powers is entirely a matter for the board itself. The Government have no statutory powers of direction over its activities.

Share Fishermen

60. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from share fishermen on their net income levels.

Mr. Gummer: In 1984 my Department received correspondence about share fishermen and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) instigated an Adjournment debate on July 1984, at columns 852-60. There have been no recent representations.

Light Dues

65. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the impact of light dues on the fishing industry.

Mr. Gummer: Further to the reply I gave my hon. Friend on Thursday 2 July, at column *156*, the extension of the liability to pay light dues to fishing vessels will ensure the maintenance of the Racal Decca navigator system, which is so important to skippers, not only as a navigational aid but also in locating the fishing grounds. And fishermen will save money because the cost of navigator receivers, which were previously only available for hire, has been reduced substantially this year.

Food Industry (Internal Market)

67. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received regarding the implications for the British food industry of the completion of the internal market.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The United Kingdom food and drink industries keep me regularly informed of their views on all aspects of the food law harmonisation issues arising from the EC proposals for completing the internal market by 1992.

Food Labelling

69. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to receive the Food Advisory Committee report on the review of labelling claims on food products.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Food Advisory Committee is not carrying out any general review of labelling claims on food products. I have recently received advice on the use of the word "natural" and other similar claims in food labelling and I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory). The Food Advisory Committee is also considering whether there should be further controls over nutrition claims in food labelling and I hope to receive its advice shortly.

Council of Ministers

71. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last attended a meeting of the European Community's Council of Fisheries Ministers; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell).

Fish

72. **Mr. Dobson:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is in a position to estimate the level of the human consumption of fresh fish and frozen fish-products over the next two years in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Data from the Sea Fish Industry Authority show that overall demand for fresh fish and processed fish products is generally buoyant, and is likely to remain so.

Single European Market

74. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he is making within the areas of his responsibility in preparation for the advent of the single European market in 1992.

Mr. MacGregor: Ministers and officials of my Department are constantly in touch with the agriculture, fisheries and food industries on topics of current concern and on prospective future developments, including the progressive removal of remaining trade barriers within the Community. On 24 November at column *152*, my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade announced plans for a campaign to increase awareness of the implications of the single market. This campaign will be aimed at all relevant sectors of British business, including those for which I am responsible.

ALURE

79. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the Association of District Councils about encouraging the ALURE package.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State met the Association of District Councils yesterday to discuss the farm woodland scheme. We have also involved the association and some individual district councils in the consultations we have undertaken on the various ALURE initiatives.

Caterers

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what responses he has had to the draft advice for caterers issued by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The draft guidelines for caterers referred to by my hon. Friend are intended to encourage caterers to provide information to assist consumers follow the recommendations of the COMA report to reduce consumption of fat. Four responses have been received to date. We shall be following up these proposals with the organisations concerned.

Straw Burning

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on straw burning by farmers during the 1987 harvest season.

Mr. Gummer: Fewer incidents of careless or inconsiderate burning of straw and stubble were reported to my Department following this year's harvest than in 1986. I welcome this further improvement, which suggests that most farmers have observed the local byelaws and the NFU code of practice to which my Department has drawn attention in successive publicity campaigns.

I am also encouraged by the results of this year's straw survey which have just emerged. These show that much less straw is now disposed of by burning compared to the position in the early 1980s and confirm the trend towards incorporation.

Waste Straw

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on current developments in the utilisation of waste straw for industrial purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My Department takes a keen interest in the prospects for the increased utilisation of surplus straw as a fuel and in the manufacture of compost, animal feed and straw board, where significant quantities are already used. We are also interested in the possible development of new outlets such as paper manufacture.

In order to encourage investment in these areas my Department has asked the EC Commission to consider their inclusion within the cereals programme for England and Wales under regulation 355/77, which provides for FEOGA grants for marketing and processing projects.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figures for estimated advertising expenditure by my Department in 1987-88 are as follows:

	£
Television	nil
Radio	nil
Newspapers	12,000
Other	
ADAS exhibition/ video	267,000
Campaigns	368,000

As regards 1988-89, detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken but we expect the overall publicity figure to be about £800,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Based on the latest MINIM returns, estimated expenditure by my Department on press liaison and information policy will be £700,000 in 1987-88. A similar sum is likely to be required in 1988-89.

Sheep

14. **Mr. Allen MacKay:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has as to whether sheep with radioactivity levels above the level of 1,000 bq/kg entered the food chain from north Yorkshire following the Chernobyl accident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am satisfied from the monitoring that we have done both in 1986 and more recently that it is extremely unlikely that any sheep showing radioactivity above 1,000 bq/kg has entered the food chain.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many *(a)* ewes and *(b)* lambs in the restricted area of Cumbria, were monitored and released unmarked each month since the apricot marking scheme was introduced;

(2) how many *(a)* ewes and *(b)* lambs in the restricted area of Cumbria, were marked apricot and released for each month since the initiation of the new scheme;

(3) how many *(a)* ewes and *(b)* lambs in the restricted area of Cumbria, were green-sprayed in each month since the introduction of the new scheme in the current year;

(4) how many monitored lambs were blue-painted and released during each calendar month in the restricted area of Cumbria from 18 August 1986;

(5) how many non-monitored lambs were blue-painted and released during each calendar month in the restricted area of Cumbria from 18 August 1986;

(6) how many non-monitored sheep, in the restricted area of Cumbria other than lambs, were blue-painted and released for *(a)* further fattening and *(b)* breeding, broken down into categories of ewe, shearling and tup;

(7) how many monitored sheep, in the restricted area of Cumbria, other than lambs, were blue-painted and released for *(a)* further fattening and *(b)* breeding, broken down into categories of ewe, shearing and tup;

(8) how many non-monitored gimmer lambs in the restricted area of Cumbria were red-painted for away wintering to return for breeding;

(9) how many monitored gimmer lambs in the restricted area of Cumbria were red-painted for away wintering to return for breeding;

(10) how many non-monitored sheep, in the restricted area of Cumbria, other than gimmers, were red-painted and released for *(a)* fattening or *(b)* breeding, broken down into categories of ewe, shearling or tup;

(11) how many monitored sheep, in the restricted area of Cumbria, other than gimmers, were red-painted and released for *(a)* fattening or *(b)* breeding, broken down into categories of ewe, shearling or tup;

(12) how many sheep were monitored for radioactivity under the mark and release scheme in England in each month since 1 September 1986;

(13) how many sheep were monitored for radioactivity and sprayed green in England in each month since 1 September 1986;

(14) how many sheep were monitored for radioactivity and not marked and thus released in England in each month since 1 September 1986;

(15) how many red an blue-marked sheep were released for slaughter into the food chain in England during each week of January, February and March;

(16) how many apricot-marked sheep were released for slaughter into the food chain each month after 25 May in England.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information sought is not always available in the manner requested. Relevant information in my Department's possession is set out in the table.

(a) Ewes and lambs monitored and released unmarked from Cumbria restricted area since apricot marking scheme introduced on 22 December 1986:

Month	*Ewes*	*Lambs*	*Total*
Part December 1986	—	—	633
January 1987	—	—	2,363
February	—	—	1,505
March	—	—	2,598
April	—	—	1,186
May	2,598	67	2,665
June	2,689	500	3,189
July	160	653	813
August	926	1,693	2,619
September	2,142	9,689	11,831
October	6,881	16,097	22,978
Novevaber	3,498	12,607	16,105
Part December	158	506	664

Notes:

(i) Early records do not differentiate between ewes and lambs.

(ii) A further 4,315 lambs-at-foot were moved off without monitoring because mother ewes found to be below Government action level.

(b) Ewes and lambs marked apricot and released from Cumbria restricted area after apricot marking began on 22 December 1986:

Month	*Ewes*	*Lambs*
Part December 1986	—	—
January 1987	—	—
February	—	—
March	—	—
April	—	—
May	—	—
June	20	8
July[1]	—	—

[1] Apricot marking ended on 26 July 1987.

(c) Ewes and lambs marked green on leaving Cumbria restricted area after green marking began on 27 July 1987:

Month	*Ewes*	*Lambs*
Part July 1987	—	—
August 1987	66	110
September 1987[1]	34	485

[1] Green marking ended on 27 September 1987.

(d) Monitored lambs marked blue and released from Cumbria restricted area from 18 August 1986:

Month	*Lambs*
Part August 1986	—
September 1986	[1]267
October 1986	[1]1,352
November 1986	[1]356
December 1986	[1]144
Part September 1987	—
October 1987	195
November 1987	50
Part December 1987	1

[1] Figures will also include ewes since early records do not differentiate between ewes and lambs.

Note: Blue marking ceased on 21 December 1986 and re-commenced on 28 September 1987.

(e) Non-monitored lambs marked blue and released from Cumbria restricted area from 18 August 1986:

Month	*Lambs*
Part August 1986	—
September 1986	[1]968
October 1986	[1]2,421
November 1986	[1]396
December 1986	—
Part September 1987	—
October 1987	—
November 1987	—
Part December 1987	—

[1] Figures will also include ewes since early records do not differentiate between ewes and lambs.

Note: Blue marking ceased on 21 December 1986 and re-commenced on 28 September 1987.

(f) Non-monitored sheep, other than lambs, blue painted and released for (i) further fattening and (ii) breeding broken down into categories of ewe, shearling and tup.

Information not available in form requested.

(g) Monitored sheep, other than lambs, blue painted and released for (i) further fattening and (ii) breeding broken down into categories of ewe, shearling and tup.

Information not available in form requested.

(h) Non-monitored breeding sheep from Cumbria restricted area red painted.

	Sheep
1986	9,773
[1]1987	7,253

[1]To date.

Notes:

(i) Records do not indentify gimmers separately.

(ii) Red marked sheep may go for away wintering and return or be sold for breeding.

(i) Monitored gimmer lambs from Cumbria restricted area red painted for away wintering to return for breeding.

	Lambs
1986	[1]2,240
1987	[1]697

[1] Figures will also include some ewes since early records do not differentiate between ewes and lambs.
Note: Records do not differentiate between those wintering and those sold.

(j) Non monitored sheep, other than gimmers, red painted and released for (i) fattening and (ii) breeding broken down into categories of ewe, shearling and tup.

Information not available in form requested.

(k) Monitored sheep, other than gimmers, red painted and released for (i) fattening and (ii) breeding broken down into categories of ewe, shearling and tup.

Information not available in form requested.

(l) Sheep monitored for radioactivity on leaving Cumbria restricted area under mark and release scheme since 1 September 1986

	Sheep
September 1986	5,157
October 1986	14,931
November 1986	11,543
December 1986	2,303
January 1987	2,388
February 1987	1,505
March 1987	2,599
April 1987	1,186
May 1987	2,670
June 1987	3,244
July 1987	795
August 1987	2,745
September 1987	12,741
October 1987	24,767
November 1987	16,445
December 1987 (part)	670

Note: Figures include some sheep monitored but retained on farm.

(m) Sheep monitored for radioactivity and marked green on leaving Cumbria restricted area since 1 September 1986

	Sheep
September 1986	—
July 1987	—
August 1987	176
September 1987	519

Note: Green marking ceased on 30 September 1986 ond was re-introduced between 27 July and 27 September 1987.

(n) Sheep monitored for radioactivity and released un-marked from Cumbria restricted area after 1 September 1986

	Sheep
September 1986	4,846
October 1986	11,010
November 1986	10,420
December 1986	2,100
January 1987	2,368
February 1987	1,505
March 1987	2,598
April 1987	1,186
May 1987	[1]2,665
June 1987	[2]3,189
July 1987	795
August 1987	2,565
September 1987	11,831
October 1987	22,978
November 1987	16,105
December 1987	664

[1] Plus 2,463 lambs at foot—not monitored.
[2] Plus 1,852 lambs at foot—not monitored.

(o) Red and Blue marked sheep released for slaughter into food chain in England during January, February and March 1987: Animals re-monitored and identified as eligible for slaughter by Ministry ear-tag

Week beginning	Red	Blue
1 January (part week)	—	418
5 January week)	—	3,762
12 January	—	1,455
19 January	—	1,974
26 January	—	2,105
2 February	—	1,276
9 February	—	1,072
16 February	—	716
23 February	—	99
2 March	—	[1]
9 March	3	—
16 March	—	—
23 March	—	—
30 March (part week)	—	—

[1] All remaining blue marked sheep released from slaughter restrictions on 27 February 1987.—is not possible to say how many of these will have been in England.

(p) Apricot marked sheep released for slaughter into food chain in England from 25 May 1987.

No apricot-marked sheep were re-monitored and identified as eligible for slaughter by Ministry ear-tag in England but all apricot marked sheep were released from slaughter restrictions on 28 September 1987. It is not possible to say how many of these will have been in England.

Note: Some of the dates given in the above tables are those when the information was recorded centrally and may not accord exactly with the date when the animals were monitored or moved.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep were monitored for radioactivity in each month in England since 1 September 1986 for experimental purposes.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There is a flock of some 100 sheep in Cumbria which we have monitored continuously for experimental purposes to detect any month by month variations in levels of radiocaesium. In addition, under contract to us, both the National Radiological Protection Board and the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology have carried out similar activity on several other smaller groups of sheep.

Milk

Dr. Godman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will raise in the Council of Agriculture Ministers the question of milk quotas with a view to *(a)* releasing the Scottish Milk Marketing Board area from the 5·5 per cent. temporary suspension of milk quota, *(b)* the introduction of a temporary measure to effect a small re-allocation of United Kingdom milk quota to the Scottish Milk Marketing Board area and *(c)* the release of part of the European Economic Community reserve milk quota, on a non-intervention basis, to the cheese producers of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The shortages of milk for cheesemaking which have occurred in parts of the United Kingdom primarily reflect problems relating to pricing, marketing and distribution rather than to quota levels. I and my noble Friend Lord Sanderson have discussed this issue with individual marketing boards and I am now hopeful of the outcome.

Dolphins and Pilot Whales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will consider imposing trade sanctions against Denmark in protest at the slaughter of dolphins and pilot whales in the Faroe Islands;

(2) if he will make representations to the Danish Government regarding the slaughter of pilot whales and dolphins in the Faroe Islands.

Mr. Gummer: The Danish Government are fully aware of the United Kingdom's view on this issue, after my statement of our view on whaling at the International whaling Commission's annual conference in June. At meetings of the IWC the United Kingdom has already taken the lead, with the support of other countries, in securing the detailed examination by the commission's working group on humane killing of the conditions under which the Faroese pilot whale hunt is conducted. As a result of the United Kingdom initiative the commission agreed a statement urging Denmark, which has responsibility for the international relations of the Faroe Islands, to encourage the Faroese authorities to modify those hunt practices giving rise to particular concern and to adopt more humane procedures. At the most recent IWC meeting in June, we registered our continuing concern and the IWC formulated a further statement calling for action by the Danes. A response is awaited. I raised this matter direct with the Danish Fisheries Minister when I saw him in Copenhagen last month.

The Government do not consider that trade sanctions would be an appropriate means of influencing the Faroese attitude on this matter. We shall continue to work with like-minded countries through the IWC as the most appropriate forum through which to seek progress.

Green Pound

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has as to the effect on *(a)* the beef sector, *(b)* the dairy sector and *(c)* the sheep sector of devaluations in the green pound and interest rate changes since December 1986.

Mr. MacGregor: Since December 1986, green pound devaluations have raised basic support prices by 11·8 per cent. in the beef sector, 4·7 per cent. in the dairy sector and 2·7 per cent. in the sheep sector. The effect on agricultural sectors of the 2½ per cent. decline in interest rates compared with December 1986 will be generally beneficial, but the effect on individual farmers will depend on their particular circumstances.

Beef

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail measures taken by Her Majesty's Government to assist the beef sector since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: At successive price fixings, in the face of almost unanimous opposition from the member states and the European Commission, we have successfully defended the beef variable premium scheme, which is currently worth £120 million per year to United Kingdom producers. At the December 1986 Council we secured the premium for a further two years, as well as taking steps to restrict intervention. Successive devaluations of the green pound have increased the value of the maximum rate of variable premium from 8·74p per live kg in December 1984 to 10·04p per live kg now and thus improved producers' returns.

The specialist beef sector has been further helped by increases in the suckler cow premium. This was doubled in 1984 from £12·37 to £24·74 a head, and was increased by a further 35 per cent. to £33·40 earlier this year, the maximum permitted under Community rules for the current year. It is now worth £37 million per year.

The annual value of hill livestock compensatory allowances paid to beef producers in the United Kingdom's less favoured areas increased from £38·9 million in 1984 to some £50 million this year. Beef enterprises also benefited by about £11 million from the special aid paid out in 1985 to help those livestock producers most seriously affected by the exceptionally bad weather.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Charles Morrison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has received from the Farm Animal Welfare Council on the welfare implications of using bovine somatotropin to increase milk production.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The chairman of the council, Professor Sir Richard Harrison, wrote the following letter to my right hon. Friend the Minister on 26 October:

Dear Minister

Mr. Jopling wrote to me on 27 April requesting the Council's advice by the end of September on the welfare implications of using bovine somatotropin to increase milk production.

The investigation was undertaken by a small Working Group of members whose recommendations have been endorsed by the full Council. As Mr. Jopling recognised the time available to us was limited and I must point out that it has not proved possible to carry out as searching and wide-ranging an investigation as we would have wished. Those whom we consulted were under similar constraints due to the tight timetable.

Before drawing up our recommendations, we considered confidential data from the pharmaceutical companies actively engaged in work on BST. We also received written submissions from the Farmers Unions, MMB, BVA and RCVS and animal welfare organisations. Oral evidence was taken from researchers who are conducting trials on the use of BST and from representatives of the National Office of Animal Health (NOAH). The Group also visited two farms where BST is being tested under commercial conditions, and had discussions with the farmers and their respective veterinary surgeons.

The following factors were examined: metabolic stress; administration of BST and its consequences; the occurrence and frequency of disease; reproductive efficiency; and ways in which husbandry might have to be modified, including nutritional implications.

We have concluded that, on the basis of the existing experimental work, including the continuing trials being carried out at the AFRC Institute for Grassland and Animal Production (IGAP) and on the farms visited, there is, at present, no evidence of any welfare problems arising from the use of BST in the short term. There are, however, areas of uncertainty which could have welfare implications where additional scientific information may be required in order to take a more considered opinion.

These areas are as follows:

(a) the time of administration to high yielding cows;

(b) the effect of BST on long-term reproductive efficiency;

(c) responses of cows differing in body composition and on differing levels of energy and protein nutrition, to BST;

(d) the effect of BST on potential skeletal problems in heifers;
(e) all aspects of performance of calves born from treated animals;
(f) the effect which exogenous growth hormone may have on the ability of the animal to produce endogenous growth hormone, and thus on subsequent unsupplemented performance;
(g) the use of BST over a number of lactations in the same animal.

The Council believes that results of such research work will need to be carefully considered before the longer term effects of using BST can be properly evaluated.

If this further research provides satisfactory answers to these questions then there would be no fundamental objections on welfare grounds to the use of BST. However, if it shows that there is a genuine welfare problem, the Government will need to consider making regulations under the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968.

In addition there appear to be a number of potential welfare abuses which could arise from:

(a) use of BST to exploit over-stretched cull cows by extending lactation;
(b) lack of appropriate facilities for injection on some farms;
(c) administration of BST without adequate veterinary supervision;
(d) administration of BST to cows whose milk yield was depressed by reason of undiagnosed disease or metabolic disorders;
(e) inadequacy of nutritional levels in some systems.

The Council therefore recommends that guidelines for the commercial administration of BST, including monitoring of herd performance and health, should be drawn up in conjunction with the RCVS and that its use should be subject to veterinary supervision. This of course assumes that no welfare problems are revealed which necessitate more fundamental controls.

I am copying this letter to the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

Yours sincerely
Richard Harrison

Lamb Exports

Mr. Charles Morrison: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what decisions have been reached on the exemption from the European Community clawback tax on British exports of lamb to third countries.

Mr. MacGregor: I am pleased to report that, following the representations we have been making on behalf of the industry, the Community has adopted a new regulation, recently published in the Official Journal, which extends the exemption on clawback of variable premium on Great Britain exports for a further year from 4 January 1988. This is an important measure which will help maintain and expand our lamb and mutton exports.

The picture on exports is encouraging all round. Taking third country and Community markets together, we now export over 20 per cent. of our lamb and mutton production, worth some £133 million in 1986. An increase is forecast for 1987.

I attach high priority to ensuring that we sustain and improve further our exports.

Equines (Tethering)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans the Government have to introduce restrictions on the tethering of horses, ponies and donkeys.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

There are no such plans. It is already an offence under the Protection of Animals Act 1911 to cause unnecessary suffering to a domestic or captive animal. It is also an offence under the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960 to abandon a domestic or captive animal in circumstances likely to cause unnecessary suffering.

TRANSPORT

Sprinter Trains

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to whether any losses arising from the most recent contract for sprinter trains awarded by British Rail will be taken into account when the contract for the sale of British Rail Engineering workshops is negotiated or finalised.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board does not expect BREL to make a loss on this order.

Lorries (Noise)

Mr. Boswell To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what current regulations apply to noise emission by heavy lorries; what changes are planned; and whether he will make a statement on current compliance and available technology to meet these requirements.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The noise limit for the heaviest lorries first used since 1 October 1983 is 88dB(A). A new limit for these vehicles of 84dB(A) will apply to all lorries type approved on or after 1 October 1989, and to all lorries first used on or after 1 April 1991. To aid the development of lorries capable of meeting the new limit, the Government and industry have collaborated on a programme of research and development (QHV90) which is due to be completed next year.

Greater Manchester Light Rapid Transit System

Mr. Alfred Morris To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a decision has now been reached on the financing of a light rapid transit system for Greater Manchester; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am considering a report by the Department's financial advisers and comments from the passenger transport authority and passenger transport executive. I shall advise the House of my decision as soon as possible.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Mr. Channon: The number of staff currently employed in press and public relations in the Department of Transport is 17.

The number planned to be employed at this point in 1988 is 18.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Mr. Channon: The estimated spending by the Department of Transport for 1987-88 is as follows:

	£ million
Television advertising	2·31
Radio advertising	0·05
Press advertising	0·14
other promotional material	3·01
Total	5·51

Detailed decisions have not yet been taken on expenditure by media for 1988-89, but the overall publicity figure is expected to be £5 million.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Channon: The latest estimate for expenditure on press and public relations for 1987-88 is £373,000. The planned level of expenditure for next year is £400,000 at current prices. These figures cover the overall cost of running the press office function calculated using Her Majesty's Treasury ready reckoner for staff and other costs.

London Underground (Safety)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many statutory notices the railways inspectorate has issued to London Underground under the Health and Safey etc. Act 1974, and any other legislation, respectively, in the current year and the two preceding years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The only statutory notices served have been under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act. The figures are 1987 — 1; 1986 — Nil; 1985 — 1. In addition, a notice was served in 1985 to a contractor working at an underground station.

Public Transport (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times, in an official capacity, he has *(a)* travelled on and *(b)* visited the buildings of (i) London Underground and (ii) London Buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I make such visits from time to time as the occasion demands.

Road Accident Reporting

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will report the results of the review of the road accident reporting system (STATS 19).

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report of the review is now complete and is being released as a statistical bulletin. A copy is in the Library.

The main findings are as follows:

(i) The present STATS 19 system (revised in 1979) should be retained. Modern database systems should be used as far as possible in order that any future changes can be more readily implemented.

(ii) A new return should be introduced, which would record the registration number of vehicles involved in personal injury accidents. These vehicle registration numbers would be matched with vehicle records held at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre (DVLC) and relevant information about the vehicle would be copied to the STATS 19 files. Information from the enhanced database would be used to assess the safety of different types of vehicle in various circumstances, including the effects on occupants and pedestrians.

(iii) Details of the new return and the date for its implementation should be determined as a result of discussions with the police and local authorities at the Standing Committee on Road Accident Statistics.

(iv) Following recommendation (ii), consideration should be given to dropping those data items on the STATS 19 form, which will be obtainable from the vehicle records at DVLC.

Following these recommendations—discussions are in progress with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the local authority associations — our objective is to ensure that we are fully equipped with the right statistics to support our efforts to cut road casualties.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for each year commencing with the year preceding that in which the breathalyser test was first in force, the number of persons killed in road accidents when in charge of a motor vehicle, classified according to appropriate levels of their blood alcohol count.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Sample data available from coroners (England and Wales) and procurators fiscal (Scotland) are given in the table:

Blood alcohol levels of drivers and riders over 16 who died within 12 hours England and Wales: 1967-77

per cent./number

	Percentage exceeding BAC levels (in mg/100ml)						
Year	*9*	*50*	*80*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*Sample size*
1967	36	29	25	22	14	7	1,064
1968	30	20	17	15	10	4	747
1969	32	26	22	19	12	5	830
1970	31	24	21	17	12	6	818
1971	38	31	26	24	13	6	828
1972	39	31	26	24	16	9	620
1973	43	36	30	26	15	7	597
1974	46	39	33	28	19	10	827
1985	48	39	35	31	20	11	1,003
1976	48	38	33	30	20	11	932
1977	42	34	29	36	17	10	837

Great Britain; 1978-85

per cent./number

Year	Percentage exceeding BAC levels (in mg/100ml) 9	50	80	100	150	200	Sample size
1978	43	36	31	31	20	21	1,043
1979	44	36	32	30	21	12	1,161
1980	45	35	31	30	21	12	1,148
1981	43	34	30	29	21	12	1,260
1982	44	33	23	29	24	14	1,474
1983	40	32	29	28	21	12	1,174
1984	37	30	26	25	16	8	1,227
1985	37	29	26	24	17	10	1,166

Air Safety

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer given in the *Official Report* on 8 December, at column 65, on the Manchester airport tragedy, if he will outline the recommendations made between September and December 1985 inclusive by the air accident investigation branch concerning the safety of passengers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following safety recommendations have been made by the inspector of accidents conducting the investigation into the Boeing 737 accident at Manchester airport which occurred in August 1985:

1. On 19 September 1985. Recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) urgently review the approval of the cabin configuration as it existed on G-BGJL, assuming that it conformed to a CAA format. In particular, it is strongly recommended that you consider the removal of all row 10 seats to afford reasonable identification of, and unrestricted access to, the overwing exits. Further, if access to the overwing exits on other types is similarly impaired, we recommend that those types be included in the above review.

2. On 14 October 1985. It is recommended that consideration be given to revising the evacuation drill and — or providing an alternative tailored to the Manchester type of incident. It is further recommended that the drills of other 737 operators and where appropriate the drills on other types be reviewed in the light of the Manchester experience.

3. On 4 December 1985. Recommended that the CAA reconsider the approval of the public address (PA) system which allows a single engine failure to dramatically reduce its usefulness and to review other aircraft types with a view to discovering if any other PA system would suffer in a similar way due to any single failure.

Further it is recommended that consideration be given to a requirement that the high gain setting be manually selectable so that it would be available for an emergency situation whatever the engine aircraft system conditions.

4. On 23 December 1985. It is strongly recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority urgently give serious consideration to the early formulation of a smoke hood — mask requirement such that an effective level of protection is afforded to passengers under such conditions. It is additionally recommended that the Civil Aviation Authority endeavour to convince the Federal Aviation Administration of the continuing pressing need for such a requirement, which that body had the foresight to recognise in their associated notice of proposed rule making in 1969.

Pedestrian Crossing (Milton Ernest)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to place a pedestrian crossing over the A6 at Milton Ernest, in view of the speed and volume of traffic passing through the village.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no present proposals for a crossing.

Driving Test

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to have completed consultations with driving instructors' organisations so as to be in a position to announce his decision on the review of the driving test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have asked for considered views by February. We shall decide how to proceed after that.

Merchant Navy Reserve

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether Her Majesty's Government's plans for establishing a Merchant Navy reserve include the appointment of a director general to head the reserve; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Powers to establish the Merchant Navy reserve are contained in the Merchant Shipping Bill at present in the other place. My noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping, outlined the main features of the reserve at Second Reading. Arrangements for its administration are under consideration.

British Rail (Season Ticket Holders)

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the level and quality of services for British Rail annual season ticket holders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I receive on average about 3,000 representations a year from MPs, their constituents, and directly from members of the travelling public, about the quality of BR's service to commuters.

Severe Weather (Communications)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available to him about the equipment held by local authorities to enable them to keep lines of communication open during severe weather.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department provides all the vehicles and equipment for the winter maintenance of motorways in England. It has a fleet of 258 purpose-built Foden snowplough-spreader vehicles and 21 Rolba snowblowers. In emergencies these vehicles can be hired by local authorities for use on other roads provided they are not needed on the motorways.

Winter maintenance of all-purpose trunk roads is carried out by local highway authorities acting as our agents. They are also responsible for dealing with local roads. The Department does not keep records of all the

equipment held by them for these purposes, although a code of practice lays down the standards to be met in maintaining trunk roads in accordance with agency agreements.

Ice Warnings

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his procedures for relaying ice warnings to local authorities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Local authorities obtain forecasts of road weather conditions from their local meteorological weather centre. The Meteorological Office has introduced an "open road" service for local authorities which incorporates ice prediction and thermal mapping techniques which the Department has been promoting. This service is tailored to suit the need of individual authorities and includes a 24-hour forecast, a two-to-five day forecast, weather charts of key trends, ice prediction, a 24-hour consultancy, and regular updates. The Department shares the cost of the service with local authorities acting as its motorway-trunk road agents.

The Department encourages local authorities to install their own ice prediction systems and to have their roads thermally mapped. It has issued advice notices on these and will pay a share of the costs to cover motorways and other trunk roads. The Department has also drawn up a specification for a national ice prediction network. Ice prediction systems serve as a source of extra information to aid local meteorological offices in making more accurae forecasts of road conditions.

Road Salting

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring is carried out by his Department to ensure that local authorities have adequate supplies of salt, and the necessary equipment to assess the amount of salt already on the roads, and to carry out salting operations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department lays down standards of salting for trunk roads. We do not monitor the salt supplies held by local authorities for use on these or local roads. Their normal practice is to order salt supplies in the spring-summer sufficient to cover a normal winter. They will order extra supplies during the winter if their stocks run low in the event of an unusually severe winter. ICI hold a large stockpile at their Cheshire mines as a reserve supply and for this winter are putting more emergency stockpiles at strategic points around the country to avoid any possible transport problems.

The Department expects local authorities to have sufficient equipment to carry out salting operations on all-purpose trunk roads and local roads. For motorways, the Department has a fleet of 258 purpose-built snowplough-spreader vehicles which are garaged at 98 motorway compounds strategically placed along the motorway network. The salt for motorway use is stored at these compounds, usually in salt barns, and all the necessary equipment for loading the salt into the vehicles is provided there as well. Equipment is available which measures residual salinity on roads, but its accuracy is questionable. The Department does not use this equipment on its roads.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities have adequate financial resources to carry out the necessary salting of roads in severe weather.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department provides funding to local authorities acting as its motorway-trunk road agents for the winter maintenance of these roads. For this winter, the Department has made a provision of £15 million. In the event of a severe winter, the Department will make extra funding available to its agents who incur extra costs in carrying out the winter maintenance of these roads.

Local authority expenditure on winter maintenance of the roads for which they are responsible is supported by block grant, which is apportioned to grant-related expenditure. There is a GRE component for winter maintenance which is based on the average number of days of air frost and snow coverage for an authority, multiplied by road lengths.

Vehicle Excise Tax Evasion

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluations he has made of the recent campaign against vehicle excise tax evasion in south Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The campaign covered the whole of Wales. A total of 1,568 cases of evasion of vehicle excise duty are being investigated and 1,177 have so far been referred for prosecution.

The cost-effectiveness of this campaign cannot be calculated until the full results are available. In previous campaigns income from fines, back duty and costs, plus the extra licences bought as a result of campaign publicity has, on average, been over 20 times greater than the Department's costs. I will write to the hon. Member early in the new year with further details for the south Wales area.

Road Traffic Law Review

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the names of the members of the Road Traffic Law Review and their terms of reference.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The members are:

Dr. Peter North (Chairman)—Principal, Jesus College, Oxford

Professor Richard Alsop — Professor of Transport Studies, University College, London

G. L. Angel—Home Office

S. Davidson—Home Office

D. M. Smith—Department of Transport

T. W. Hall—Lately Department of Transport.

Their terms of reference are:

To consider what improvements might be made to the following aspects of road traffic law, particularly in respect of simplification, effectiveness and acceptability, taking account of their relationship with other aspects of road traffic law:

(a) the structure of and penalties for the offences in sections 1-3 of the Road Traffic Act 1972: causing death by reckless driving; reckless driving, and careless driving;

(b) whether the present penalty points system needs any amendment and, in particular, whether offences which are endorsable with penalty points can be divided into "points" and "no points" offences;

(c) the structure of and penalties for offences relating to:

(i) driver licensing,

(ii) construction and use and
(iii) failure to comply with traffic signs;

(d) whether new types of penalty for traffic offences would be appropriate in place of or in addition to existing types of penalty, in particular the possible wider application of statutory driving tests for certain types of offences or in certain circumstances.

In August 1986 the terms of reference were extended to include consideration of:

(e) whether vehicle removal, impounding and wheel clamping would be appropriate, effective and acceptable means of dealing with a wider range of offences involving vehicles.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 18 December 1987

DEFENCE

Effluent Treatment (Cardiff)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the levels of *(a)* beryllium and *(b)* natural or depleted uranium in the effluent discharges from Atomic Weapons Establishment Cardiff, formerly Royal Ordnance Factory, in the years between 1962 and 1987; and if he will publish an estimate of the likely discharge levels of these materials following the commissioning of the new effluent treatment plant.

Mr. Sainsbury: I shall write to the Hon. member.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the reasons for installing an improved effluent treatment plant at the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Llanishen, Cardiff; when he expects the new plant to be commissioned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The existing effluent treatment plant at the atomic weapons establishment, Cardiff, reduces the beryllium waste content to a consistently low level. It continues to operate effectively and there is no reason for its immediate replacement. Like most items of plant, however, the costs of maintenance increase with time and there are therefore plans to reduce the existing effluent treatment plant in due course by plant of at least equal efficacy.

Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment Vessel

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to arrange a decision on the placing of an order for AOR 2; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I am pleased to be able to announce that agreement has been reached with Swan Hunter Shipbuilders on a contract for the second auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel. This follows the preferential opportunity given to the company to bid for this order as announced by my right hon. Friend in the House on 24 April 1986 at column 434. Construction is expected to begin next year.

AWRE Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the contracting-out of processing and handling work at AWRE Aldermaston.

Mr. Sainsbury: There has been no contracting-out of any part of the manufacturing process at the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston. Contractors are, however, involved in the provision of services and construction of facilities at the establishment.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has of the annual cost of *(a)* paying and *(b)* equipping the forces stationed in the Falkland Islands; what estimate he has of annual transport costs; and what estimate he has of the cost in the current financial year of (i) new building and equipment, (ii) maintenance and (ii) staffing on Ascension Island.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The additional cost to the Defence budget of maintaining a garrison in the Falkland Islands in 1987-88 is £141 million. This includes all extra costs relating to the Falklands garrison, whether the costs are incurred on the islands themselves or elsewhere, such as Ascension. It excludes those personnel, equipment and other costs which would be incurred in the absence of the Falklands commitment; these are not identifiable without disproportionate cost and effort.

RAF Bases (Alert States)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions *(a)* RAF Molesworth, *(b)* RAF Greenham common and *(c)* all RAF bases have been in each of the categories of alert over the past year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: For security reasons, it is not our normal practice to give details of alert states.

French Defence Minister

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of his recent discussion with the French Defence Minister, with particular reference to the possible joint development or purchase of an air-launched stand-off nuclear missile to replace free-fall bombs.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend met his French colleague, M. Giraud, in London on 14 December as part of the normal series of exchanges between the two countries. They discussed a wide range of defence issues. Their talks included consideration of each country's requirements for an air-launched stand off missile. It was agreed that further studies should be undertaken to identify where the British and French requirements were similar and assess what merit there might be in collaboration.

The procurement of a replacement for Britain's current theatre nuclear weapon, the free-fall bomb, is a long-term undertaking. A number of options are open to us and no decisions have yet been taken.

Surplus Firearms

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why pistols sold to QED by his Department and shown in the appropriation accounts for 1982-83 as being the subject of a £450,000 settlement, were not subject to the nationally agreed policy referred to in the reply of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *346*, relating to the disposal of surplus firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The contract for the sale of pistols to QED (Design and Development) Ltd. pre-dated the current policy. The settlement arose from the cancellation of the contract in the light of the change of policy.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Strangers Gallery

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will bring forward proposals to allow note-taking in the Strangers Gallery by members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. Visitors attend the Strangers' Gallery in order to listen and observe proceedings of the House. In accordance with the resolution of the Services Committee, 21 January 1981, I do not believe that it would be appropriate to allow note-taking when records of our proceedings are widely available, both in *Hansard* and in the national press.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how Her Majesty's Government will respond to the request by the Government of Vietnam for humanitarian assistance for the victims of Typhoon Mary No. 6.

Mr. Chris Patten: We shall not be making a bilateral contribution in response to the request. The European Community would, however, be prepared to consider providing humanitarian assistance through non-governmental organisations.

Ethiopia

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the recent $22 million Ethiopian emergency appeal made by UNICEF.

Mr. Chris Patten: We shall consider the UNICEF appeal against other emergency needs in Ethiopia.

Famine Relief

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken to ensure that the recent £2 million contribution to the Disasters Emergency Committee will be spent on famine relief to benefit starving people, especially women and children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Her Majesty's Government's contribution to this appeal is being used to respond to specific requests from the charities represented on the committee: the British Red Cross Society, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, and the Save the Children Fund. In considering such requests we are concerned to ensure that the aid provided will benefit those most in need, half of whom are children.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to release grain and other surplus food from European Community intervention stores for dispatch to Ethiopia to alleviate the famine there.

Mr. Chris Patten: European surpluses are being used to help meet famine needs in Ethiopia. This year the European Community has pledged 154,000 tonnes of cereals, mostly from within Europe, for this purpose. In addition, from our own bilateral food aid programme, Britain is providing 37,000 tonnes of cereals, of which 30,500 tonnes are being purchased within Europe.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the likely effect of the recent efficiency unit proposals on his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The efficiency unit's report on improving management in Government is still being considered by Ministers.

Rural Postal Services

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Post Office to discuss rural postal services.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster meets the chairman of the Post Office from time to time to discuss matters of current interest but has no specific plans to discuss rural postal services.

Kingrosia Park, Clydach

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will now reply to the letter sent to him by the hon. Member for Gower relating to the problems experienced by the residents of Kingrosia park, Clydach, following a company going into liquidation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I greatly regret that the letter which the hon. Member for Gower sent in May has been lost. It was not clear at that time which Department should answer and the letter appears to have been lost in transit. If the hon. Member writes to me again, I shall ensure that he receives a prompt reply from the right Department.

Northumberland (Rural Post Offices)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will discuss with him the consequences of the proposed downgrading of Northumberland's rural post offices to community offices.

Mr. Butcher: The introduction of community offices in Northumberland is an operational matter for the Post Office Board, and I am asking the chairman to write to my hon. Friend about this.

ERG Group (Takeover)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer the proposed takeover by Granada of the ERG Group, including Servicescope, to the Monopolies and Merger Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The proposed acquisition by Granada of the ERG Group is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. and noble Friend will make his decision whether to refer the proposal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the light of the director general's advice.

Racal-Vodaphone

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he proposes to reclaim for the purposes of reallocation the 40 GSM channels granted on a temporary basis to Racal-Vodaphone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: All the channels in question have now been released by Racal-Vodafone.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to include in any legislation for the privatisation of the British Steel Corporation a provision precluding the purchase of the corporation by foreign buyers; what consideration he has given to the position of the corporation's subsidiary Universe Engineers Steels in this regard; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We shall consider whether there is a case for restricting ownership in relation to BSC, but no decisions have yet been taken. The ownership of private sector firms in which BSC has holdings is a matter for the shareholders.

National Girobank

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he intends to offer National Girobank for sale as a share issue open to the general public; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he expects to raise any money from the sale of Girobank in any of the next three financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 14 December at column *335*.

Inner-city Initiative

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the estimated outturn expenditure figures for 1987-88 for each of the inner-city initiatives announced by he Government since 1983.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department's budget provides finance for the special budgets of the city action teams and for the top-up funds of the inner-city task forces. Provision for the special budgets of the CATs is £5 million in 1987-88. I expect this to be fully committed to projects in the city areas they cover. The top-up budget of the inner-city initiative is £14 million this year, and I expect a substantial proportion of it to be spent on or committed to projects in the 16 task force areas. It is too soon to estimate the outturn of expenditure but I expect that not all available top-up funds will actually be spent in 1987-88 because half of the task forces have only started work during 1987 and we need to be sure that the money is committed to projects addressing the employment and enterprise aims of the initiative. The flow of programmes and approval is now speeding up rapidly and we are entering into substantial future commitments. The hon. Member may wish to ask similar questions of my colleagues with urban policy responsibilities about the budgets for their Department's programmes.

British Steel

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the amount spent by British Steel in advertising in 1986-87 and the projected spend in 1987-88, and what plans he has to use public money to advertise British Steel in the current or in the next financial year.

Mr. Atkins: Expenditure on advertising by the British Steel Corporation about its products or activities is a matter for the board. No decisions have yet been taken on the funding of advertising relating to the corporation's privatisation.

Postal Services

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the Post Office about the future of postal services.

Mr. Butcher: I have had discussions in recent weeks with the chairman of the Post Office about various matters concerning the future of postal services.

Patent Office

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will consider Sheffield for the relocation of the Patent Office.

Mr. Butcher: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to the hon. Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on 10 December 1987 at column *239*.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Registered Homes Tribunal

Ms. Harman: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give the names of the chairs of the Registered Homes Tribunal.

The Attorney-General: The chairmen of the Registered Homes Tribunal are:

His Honour B. H. Gerrard
W. Morris Jones
J. C. R. Fieldsend
G. F. Harwood
R. H.Christie
Mrs. M. Rutherford

Mr. Jeremy Warner

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received from the International Press Institute about the Law Lords' decision that Jeremy Warner, business correspondent of *The Independent*, must disclose confidential sources of information.

The Attorney-General: I have received a letter from the director of the International Press Institute about the recent House of Lords decision which concerned Mr. Warner. In that letter he protested over what he said was governmental interference with the free press. Such an allegation is unfounded. Mr. Warner was asked, by independent inspectors appointed under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 to carry out investigations

into possible offences under the insider dealing legislation, to identify his source of information for two articles which he had published. His refusal to answer those questions was referred by the inspectors to the court for the court to inquire into the refusal under section 178 of that Act. The court is empowered to punish someone who so refuses as if he were in contempt of court unless he has a reasonable excuse. The House of Lords held that Mr. Warner did not have a reasonable excuse in this case, essentially on the ground that the information which the inspectors required from him was necessary for the prevention of crime.

Kimberley Carlile

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Attorney-General what action the Director of Public Prosecutions is taking concerning a recommendation of the report of the commission of inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Kimberley Carlile that an inquiry should be set up as to why the prosecution of Mr. Hall and Mrs. Carlile was so long delayed.

The Attorney-General: Notwithstanding the recommendation in its report, the commission did not itself inquire into the reasons for the delay which it alleged. The Crown prosecution service was not represented at the inquiry; it was given no notice that this matter was in issue, nor was it afforded any opportunity to comment on any of the conclusions or recommendations in the report before it was published.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has inquired into the sequence of events, which was as follows. The defendants were charged with murder on 10 June 1986, two days after Kimberley's death. Mrs. Carlile's legal advisers did not agree to a formal committal for trial, but exercised their right to make legal submissions on 15 September 1986 when both defendants were committed for trial to the Central Criminal Court. In November 1986 the court itself fixed 5 May 1987 for the start of the trial. In the meantime, the London borough of Greenwich had begun wardship proceedings, and the question arose whether those proceedings should be heard before or after the trial; Mr. Justice Wood later ruled that they should be heard after the trial. It was plainly desirable that the trial should take place as soon as possible. Accordingly, on 26 January 1987 prosecuting councel instructed by the Crown prosecution service applied to the Common Serjeant to bring the date of trial forward. This application was refused on the grounds that a vital prosecution witness was unavailable to give evidence in parts of March and April and no court could be found for the trial at any other time before 5 May. The trial did begin on 5 May and concluded on 15 May 1987.

The director is satisfied that in all the circumstances the Crown prosecution service was in no way to blame for the lapse of time between the charging of the defendants and their trial.

ENERGY

Electricity Requirement

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the projected electricity requirement in 1977 for the 10-year period 1977-1987; and what have been the actual usage figures during the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Electricity Council. I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Domestic Fuel Charges

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has been made in equalising the burden of domestic electricity charges as between different regions; if he will tabulate information available to him on the changes in prices in each board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Electricity Council and I shall ask the chairman to reply to the hon. Member.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Parkinson: My Departmental advisory bodies are:

The Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power;
The Offshore Energy Technology Board;
The Offshore Industry Liaison Committee;
The Offshore Safety and Technology Board; and
The Renewable Energy Advisory Committee.

These bodies may generally be expected to have access to official information: where relevant, their members therefore either have their attention drawn to the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, or are asked to make an appropriate declaration.

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how many people work in the generation development and construction division of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and at what locations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the Central Electricity Generating Board, and I shall ask the chairman to reply to the hon. Member.

Electricity Supply

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has made any studies or employed any external consultants, or has any plans to do so, to assess the economic and technical feasibility of linking the United Kingdom national electricity distribution grid to Iceland via cables, for the import of electricity generated in Iceland for use in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The supply of electricity in bulk is the responsibility of the electricity generating boards. I understand that, at present, the Central Electricity Generating Board has no plans to commission any feasibility studies.

Mr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to meet the general manager of the Icelandic Power Company, Mr. Halloor Jonatansson, to

discuss the prospects of a power cable link-up between Iceland and the national grid, for the import of power generated in Iceland to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The supply of electricity in bulk is the responsibility of the electricity generating boards. I understand that representatives of the Icelandic Power Company have had informal discussions with the Central Electricity Generating Board. The board is keeping the possibility of a cable link under review.

Electricity Supply Industry (Revenue Collection)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has received the third response by the electricity supply industry to the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the revenue collection systems of four area boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have now received from the Electricity Council, on behalf of all area boards, its third response to the report of the MMC published in January 1985 on the revenue collection systems of the East Midlands, South Eastern, North Eastern and South Western area electricity boards (Cmnd. 9427). I am placing copies of the response in the Library of the House.

This final response notes the progress made and the conclusions reached in reviewing the MMC's recommendations since my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) announced receipt of the second response on 29 July 1986, at columns 361-62. In particular,

—each area board has now set itself targets for reducing meter reading, billing and collection costs. Progress in achieving the targets is monitored regularly as is performance between boards;

—a detailed study indentifying 'best practices' in revenue collection procedures has been completed and all boards are responding positively to its conclusions;

—detailed methods of allocating revenue collection costs based on national accounting guidelines are operated for the purposes of both management cost control and inter-board comparisons. All boards have reviewed their allocation practices to ensure that they comply with these guidelines.

The industry is continuing to keep revenue collection practices under review and the response concludes by noting that privatisation may bring about further changes in these.

The MMC's report and the response of the industry to its recommendations have been a valuable contribution to improving efficiency.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will announce the level of student grants for the year 1988-89.

Mr. Jackson: Subject to Parliament's approval of the necessary regulations, the main rates of student grant will be increased by 4 per cent. in the 1988-89 academic year. In England and Wales the new rates will be as follows (rates for 1987-88 are show in brackets):

	Undergraduate (£)	*Postgraduate (£)*
Hall or lodgings		
(i) London	2,425 (2,330)	3,630 (3,492)
(ii) Elsewhere	2,050 (1,972)	2,975 (2,859)
Parental home	1,630 (1,567)	2,160 (2,070)

The threshold for parental contributions, and the points on the contribution scale at which the rate of contribution changes, will be uprated on average by about 6·5 per cent. Parents whose residual income is below £9,900 will not be assessed for a contribution. The minimum contribution will be increased from £40 to £50 and the maximum, which in general applies only to parents with more than one child in receipt of grant, will rise from £4,600 to £4,900.

The full parental contribution scale for 1988-89 will be as follows:

Residual income £	*Contribution £*
9,900	50
10,000	64
11,000	207
12,000	350
12,600	435
12,700	455
12,800	475
12,900	495
13,000	515
14,000	715
15,000	915
16,000	1,115
17,000	1,315
18,000	1,515
18,400	1,595
18,500	1,620
19,000	1,745
20,000	1,995
21,000	2,245
22,000	2,495
23,000	2,745
24,000	2,995
25,000	3,245
26,000	3,495
27,000	3,745
28,000	3,995
29,000	4,245
30,000	4,495
31,000	4,745
31,620	[1]4,900

[1] Maximum.

Notes:

1. For 1988-89 the level of contribution will be assessed at £1 in £7 for residual incomes from £9,900 to £12,600; then £1 in £5 to £18,400; and £1 in £4 thereafter. (In 1987-88 it is assessed at £1 in £7 for residual incomes from £9,300 to £11,800; then £1 in £5 to £17,300; and £1 in £4 thereafter.

2. The contribution payable may be less than the amounts shown on the scale, particularly at its top end and where the contribution is in respect of one award-holder only. This will depend on the amount of grant against which the contribution has to be set and whether any of the assessed contribution is offset by alowances for other dependent children.

Primary Schools

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to respond to the Third Report on the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts on achievement in primary schools, Session 1985-86, H.C. 40-I.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 16 December at column *517*.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the number of primary schools in England and Wales, and *(b)* the number of children of primary school age in England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: The number of maintained primary schools in England in January 1987 was 19,432 and the number of children of primary school age was 3,389,261.

The corresponding figures for Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average number of computers in primary schools in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: There are, on average, two microcomputers in each primary school in England and Wales.

Science Teachers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many additional science teachers are estimated to be required, if his plans for city technical colleges and the core curriculum go ahead in their present form.

Mrs. Rumbold: The establishment of city technology colleges will lead to a small increase in demand for teachers of science, mathematics and CDT. But once established their success may well attract back into the profession science teachers who have left, while also stimulating new entrants. It is too early to give a precise estimate of the demand for additional science teachers generated by our proposals for the national curriculum. We are already planning for the national curriculum to be introduced within an overall pupil to teacher ratio at its lowest ever level of 17:1 by 1989. Within that context, schools and local authorities must ensure that they make the best use of the skills and specialisms of the existing teacher force. For our part, the Department will be monitoring likely demands closely so as to arrange future intitial teacher training allocations on the basis of satisfying the needs of the national curriculum.

Student Statistics

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are in the final year of a science degree in the current year; what proportion that figure is of the total number of students in their final year; and what is his best estimate of the total number of students over the next three years.

Mr. Jackson: In 1986-87 it is estimated that there were 24,200 final year full-time and sandwich students in Great Britain on science first-degree courses, 21 per cent. of all final year first-degree students.

Projections of fiscal year students are not available. The total number of science graduates, including those from part-time courses, in Great Britain in 1985-86 was 24,800, 21 per cent. of all first-degree graduates, and is projected to increase to 25,800, 26,800 and 26,100 in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 respectively.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money he has allocated for investment in city technology colleges in accordance with clause 80 of the Education Reform Bill; and what is the maximum percentage of the capital and current expenditure that his Department is prepared to pay.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's plans allow for public expenditure on the CTC programme, both current and capital, of £4 million in 1987-88 rising to £33 million in 1989-90. My right hon. Friend expects a substantial proportion of capital costs to be met by th private sector. He will provide an annual per capita grant to each CTC in line with costs in an LEA maintained school in similar circumstances.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the estimated outturn expenditure on city technology colleges for 1987-88, and what was the outturn for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: There was no expenditure provision for city technology colleges in 1986-87. For 1987-88 provision has been set at £4 million, including running costs within the Department. Final outturn will be within this figure but will depend on progress with building work in the first two CTCs and it is too early to make any estimate.

Epilepsy

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of the progress to date of the recommendations relevant to his Department contained within the report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy.

Mr. Dunn: A joint circular was published by DES and DHSS in July 1986 which drew the attention of education, health and social services authorities to this report. The recommendations on educational matters are directed not at my right hon. Friend, but at local education authorities. It is for individal LEAs to consider the recommendations of the report.

Consultative Documents (Responses)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the names of local authorities and representative bodies concerned with education and other institutions from whom he has received representations in response to his consultative documets entitled *(a)* "Admission of Pupils to Maintained Schools", *(b)* "Financial Delegation to Schools", *(c)* "Collective Worship in Schools", *(d)* "Academic Tenure and Related Matters", *(e)* "The National Curriculum 5-16", *(f)* "Maintained Further Education: Financing, Governance and Law", *(g)* "The Organisation of Education in Inner London", *(h)* "Regulations on the Keeping and Disclosure of Pupil Records", *(i)* "Accounting and Auditing in Higher Education" and *(j)* "Grant Maintained Schools".

Mr. Kenneth Baker: We have had some 20,000 responses to the main consultation papers. These include responses from 82 local education authorities and from a very wide range of representative bodies, including all the main teachers' associations, the National Confederation

of Parent-Teacher Associations, the National Association of Governors and Managers and Church bodies. We have also received responses from some 400 school governing bodies and in relation to some of the consultation papers from more than this number. To list all these responses in the form requested by the hon. Member could be done only at disproportionate cost. My Department has, however, placed in the Libraries of the House copies of all responses to the consultation papers other than those from individuals.

Capital Programmes

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decisions he has now made in respect of the capital programmes of local education authorities for 1987-88; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 19 November at column *611*.

Local Education Authorities

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each local education authority in England (i) the pupil to teacher ratios, (ii) per capita expenditure and (iii) O and A-level pass rates, for each of the years 1974 to the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following bodies act as advisory committees to the Secretary of State for Education and Science:

Advisory Board for the Research Councils (ABRC)
Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils
Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
Interim Advisory Committee on Teachers Pay
National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education
Open University Visiting Committee
University Grants Committee
Visiting Committee for Cranfield Institute of Technology
Visiting Committee for the Royal College of Art
Voluntary Sector Consultative Council
Schools Curriculum Working Groups (Science, English, Maths)
National Advisory Council for the Youth Service.

Of these bodies, only the ABRC requires members to sign a declaration that their attention has been drawn to the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was *(a)* Government and *(b)* local authority spending on education, including higher education, expressed per household for 1979 and for 1986-87 at (i) current prices, (ii) 1979 prices and (iii) 1987 prices.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure (£) per household[1]

	Cash terms	*1978-79 prices*[2]	*1986-87 prices*[2]
1978-79 expenditure			
—by Central Government[3]	53	53	103
—by Local Authorities[4]	391	391	761
1986-87 expenditure			
—by Central Government[3]	104	54	104
—by Local Authorities[4]	754	388	754

During this period the relevant number of households increased from 16·8 million to 17·9 million.
[1] Estimated mid-year count of households in England.
[2] Cash terms have been converted into 1978-79 and 1986-87 prices using the Gross Domestic Product (Market Prices) Deflators.
[3] Total Department of Education and Science central government spending excluding research councils (from Public Expenditure White Paper).
[4] Total Department of Education and Science local authority current and capital spending (from Public Expenditure White Paper).

Sir David Phillips

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek to obtain a transcript of the speech to the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee by Sir David Phillips FRS, relating to the funding of university research.

Mr. Jackson: Sir David Phillips has sent my right hon. Friend the text of his speech, and I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

University Research

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he hopes to make a statement on the funding of university research.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend announced on 3 December the Government's revised expenditure plans for universities and the science budget. He is currently considering advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the allocation of the science budget and he will make a statement on that as soon as possible.

The Government are also considering the recommendations in the ABRC's discussion document "A Strategy for the Science Base" and the many comments on them received during the recently concluded consultative exercise. My right hon. Friend will announce the Government's conclusions on policy for the science base in 1988.

Co-ordinating Committee on Marine Science and Technology

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will now set out the composition and terms of reference of the Co-ordinating Committee on Marine Science and Technology, announced in Cmnd. 9861.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The new Co-ordinating Committee on Marine Science and Technology will include

representatives of relevant Government Departments, research councils and independent members reflecting the broad range of activities the committee will address.

The chairman will be Sir John Mason, CB, Dsc, FRS.

Other members from outside Government will be:

Admiral Sir Lindsay Bryson, FRSE, FEng. — Chairman, Marine Technology Directorate Ltd.

Dr. D. L. Georgala, CBE — Industrial Consultant, Laboratory of the Government Chemist.

Mr. D. E. Lennard — Managing Director, Ocean Thermal Conversion Systems Ltd.

Prof. Tom Patten, CBE, FEng, FI Mech E, FRSE— Chairman, Seaboard Lloyd Ltd.

Prof. Ernest Naylor DSc., FIBiol — Lloyd Roberts Professor of Zoology, University College of North Wales, Bangor.

Sir David Smith, FRS — Vice Chancellor of Edinburgh University.

One further member, from an industrial background, is to be appointed later.

Departmental members will be drawn from the Department of Trade and Industry, Energy, Environment, Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, Transport; and the Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, and of Defence.

The committee will have assessors from the Department of Education and Science, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Cabinet Office.

The committee's terms of reference will be:

To co-ordinate Government-funded and related activities in marine science and technology, advising and reporting to the Government through the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and in particular to:

i. develop a national strategic framework, having regard to available resources and taking full account of the responsibility of Departments, research councils and industry in developing their own strategies;

ii. draw attention to areas, or potential areas, of duplication, overlap or omission;

iii. identify and consider the relative priority of fields of major scientific, technological or economic promise;

iv. promote the role of the United Kingdom in the European Community and other international collaboration; and

v. monitor progress within the national strategic framework.

The Committee is expected to meet for the first time in January 1988.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Curry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the amount available for capital expenditure on schools and further education establishments in 1988-89, including the voluntary aided sector.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Local education authorities have today been informed of their allocations of prescribed expenditure for 1988-89, and of the allocations for capital spending by the governors of voluntary aided and special agreement schools in their area. The allocations, which include an element of £55 million for new school improvement projects, are as follows:

Education captial expenditure 1988-89
Allocations for each local education authority

LEA	*Capital expenditure at county and controlled schools and further education establishments* £000s	*Capital expenditure by the governors of aided and special agreement schools* £000s
Greater London		
Barking	1,639	15
Barnet	2,000	1,109
Bexley	1,234	617
Brent	2,532	467
Bromley	403	30
Croydon	1,595	40
Ealing	1,174	971
Enfield	1,318	383
Haringey	2,330	50
Harrow	1,643	25
Havering	692	70
Hillingdon	918	350
Hounslow	1,242	26
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,695	—
Merton	1,023	—
Newham	3,061	4
Redbridge	3,719	60
Richmond-upon-Thames	277	—
Sutton	627	—
Waltham Forest	5,498	11
Inner London	17,767	1,641
Metropolitan Districts		
West Midlands		
Birmingham	4,407	1,847
Coventry	6,155	53
Dudley	1,555	535
Sandwell	767	5
Solihull	700	638
Walsall	907	36
Wolverhampton	1,849	27
Merseyside		
Knowsley	1,136	720
Liverpool	2,323	652
St. Helens	1,211	2,823
Sefton	1,450	293
Wirral	2,330	290
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	1,212	3,432
Bury	467	1,052
Manchester	9,269	2,585
Oldham	2,822	2,218
Rochdale	1,440	1,762
Salford	3,430	745
Stockport	2,878	50
Tameside	716	90
Trafford	471	5
Wigan	3,508	385
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	342	12
Doncaster	421	50
Rotherham	699	48
Sheffield	7,189	518
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	10,457	86
Calderdale	3,619	—
Kirklees	1,486	45
Leeds	4,626	—
Wakefield	3,573	70
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	1,933	884
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	3,917	105

LEA	Capital expenditure at county and controlled schools and further education establishments £000s	Capital expenditure by the governors of aided and special agreement schools £000s
North Tyneside	2,129	329
South Tyneside	2,527	106
Sunderland	4,583	224
Non-Metropolitan Counties		
Isles of Scilly	39	—
Avon	4,277	436
Bedfordshire	1,630	—
Berkshire	5,567	492
Buckinghamshire	6,152	1,932
Cambridgeshire	4,314	345
Cheshire	4,829	515
Cleveland	3,673	170
Cornwall	6,413	145
Cumbria	4,858	429
Derbyshire	10,777	4,155
Devon	6,262	619
Dorset	4,052	1,421
Durham	1,415	150
East Sussex	9,815	2,091
Essex	20,317	831
Gloucestershire	5,302	536
Hampshire	16,550	288
Hereford and Worcester	2,892	61
Hertfordshire	5,525	467
Humberside	7,077	1,315
Isle of Wight	1,663	839
Kent	7,134	386
Lancashire	12,809	3,298
Leicestershire	7,419	1,036
Lincolnshire	3,897	125
Norfolk	4,021	253
North Yorkshire	3,937	100
Northamptonshire	3,190	132
Northumberland	955	178
Nottinghamshire	2,461	203
Oxfordshire	4,673	682
Shropshire	4,465	265
Somerset	2,764	559
Staffordshire	7,469	955
Suffolk	7,014	246
Surrey	4,859	1,660
Warwickshire	1,375	715
West Sussex	3,053	1,644
Wiltshire	3,215	35
England	369,000	55,298

Voluntary aided and special agreement schools
Major projects to start in 1988-89[1]

Local Education Authority	Name of School	Expenditure (£ thousands) 1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Enfield	St. Matthew CE	183	63	—
Enfield	St. George RC	150	400	15
Havering	Sacred Heart of Mary	70	650	50
Redbridge	St. Anthonys	50	500	20
ILEA	St. Johns CE	136	356	46
ILEA	St. Thomas RC	127	35	—
ILEA	Sacred Heart RC	770	676	37
Dudley	Oldswinford Hospital	420	660	170
Liverpool	King David Phase 1	150	26	6
St. Helens	Newton St. Marys RC	60	60	—
Sefton	St. Johns CE Primary	90	455	122
Wirral	Plessington RC Phase 3	200	1,100	1,100
Bolton	St. Josephs RC, Horwich	38	133	19
Bury	Ramsbottom St. Joseph RC	46	161	23
Manchester	St. Andrews CE	29	156	6
Manchester	Didsbury CE Primary	31	168	8
Rochdale	St. Vincent de Paul	42	147	21
Rochdale	RC Secondary Reorganisation	540	849	75
Salford	Christ The King RC	75	75	—
Wigan	St. Ambrose Barlow RC	150	160	—
Sheffield	Notre Dame Phase 2	318	220	—
Sheffield	All Saints	200	170	—
Bradford	Bingley Grammar	17	165	38
Newcastle upon Tyne	St. Cuthberts RC Comprehensive	40	434	237
North Tyneside	St. Anselms	188	434	228
South Tyneside	St. Bedes, Jarrow	100	200	33
Berkshire	Newbury, St. Nicholas CE	250	250	—
Buckinghamshire	High Wycombe, St. Augustine	163	—	—
Cambridgeshire	Shelford CE	100	75	—

Local Education Authority	Name of School	Expenditure (£ thousands) 1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Cambridgeshire	Elton CE	200	30	—
Cheshire	Bishop Bluecoat	35	485	139
Cheshire	St. Benedict RC	150	310	49
Cornwall	St. Unys CE	100	50	—
Cumbria	Preston, Endmoor CE	30	320	130
Devon	Torquay, Cuthbert Mayne	137	—	—
Dorset	Poole, St. Aldhelms CE	200	600	250
East Sussex	Hastings, Sacred Heart RC	250	50	—
Essex	Shenfield, St. Marys CE	109	120	5
Gloucestershire	St. Gregory RC	141	226	28
Gloucestershire	Pates Grammar Phase 2	154	104	—
Hampshire	Gosport, St. Johns	100	75	—
Hertfordshire	Bishop Stortford, St. Mary RC	120	225	15
Humberside	Beverley Grammar	180	114	—
Lancashire	Penwortham, St. Mary Magdalen	40	80	—
Lancashire	Preston RC Secondary Reorganisation	300	1,000	250
Lancashire	Preston RC Primary Reorganisation	220	20	—
Leicestershire	Wigston, All Saints CE	283	31	—
Northumberland	Morpeth, St. Roberts RC	118	326	50
Nottinghamshire	St. Edmund Campion RC	21	191	11
Shropshire	Bitterly CE	265	91	—
Somerset	Taunton, Holy Trinity CE	150	220	28
Suffolk	Bury, St. Edmunds, St. Louis	85	105	70
Warwickshire	Kineton CE	200	65	—
West Sussex	East Grinstead, St. Peters RC	170	440	30

[1] Expenditure for 1988-89 is included in the Governors column of the main list.

Capital Allocation (Calderdale)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decision he has reached now that he has received Calderdale's bid for capital allocation for 1988-89, concerning the £1·2 million needed to implement the Commission for Racial Equality's proposals.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry).

Calderdale's allocation for 1988-89 is 92 per cent. higher than its original allocation for 1987-88.

Alllocations in respect of prescribed expenditure are unhypothecated and it is up to Calderdale local education authority to decide how to use the resources available.

Higher Education

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce his decisions on provision for polytechnics and colleges in 1987-88 and on the distribution of the advanced further education pool and voluntary sector quantum for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today written to the chairman of the committee of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education (NAB) in response to the committee's advice on the disposition of student numbers in polytechnics and colleges in 1988-89, and on the basis for distributing the advanced further education quantum of £781 million and the voluntary sector quantum of £56·7 million which I announced in the House on 3 November and the direct grant agricultural colleges quantum of £3·87 million. I have accepted that advice in full.

Following my announcement that the resources available for polytechnics and colleges in 1988-89 would be 9 per cent. up on the current year, NAB recommends that student access should be further expanded. The plans for 1988-89 provide for over 7,000 more places and an increase in recruitment of over 3 per cent. compared to the targets set in 1987-88. That is fully adequate to meet known demand. Within the total, the targets allow for further increases in enrolments in the priority areas of science, engineering, technology and design.

As in previous years, the greater parts of the advanced further education quantum and of the voluntary sector and direct grant agricultural colleges quantums are being allocated in relation to target student numbers. The allocations make allowance for the differential costs of provision between subjects. They supplement the level of funding per student in respect of those institutions where higher education exceeds a quarter of total provision. This is in recognition of the greater costs associated with a concentration of higher education.

The allocations announced today include just under £25 million for a range of selective initiatives in areas of high priority and institutions of recognised strength. This expenditure supports the following purposes:

—£1·91 million to meet the recurrent costs of the continuing participation by eight polytechnics in phase 2 of the engineering and technology programme;

—£9·81 million to fund applied research of relevance to industry;

—£1·05 million to support the launch of new courses in manufacturing systems engineering;

—£4·89 million to continue the funding of new courses in science and engineering, particularly conversion courses which will equip those with non-science backgrounds to enter advanced courses in the

technologies, and for the development of new courses of teacher training in shortage subjects for non-traditional students;

—£2·27 million to provide for an increase in technicians in support of high technology courses;

—£4·17 million to maintain the expansion of continuing education and professional updating (PICKUP);

—£560,000 to provide continuing support for research in the biotechnology field;

—£250,000 to support course development in selected centres of hotel and catering work.

£300,000 is also being allocated to support selective work in the voluntary colleges in the teacher training field and £50,000 is being allocated to the direct grant agricultural colleges to support PICKUP.

Letters are today being sent to local education authorities with copies for their institutions notifying them of my decisions. Copies of my letter to the NAB committee chairman, and of a note explaining the method by which the three quantums for 1987-88 are being distributed, together with full details of the allocations, have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what decision he has taken on the application from the Inner London education authority for re-determination of the expenditure level for 1988-89 which he set in July; and what maximum he proposes to prescribe for the Inner London education authority's precept in that year.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Having considered the Inner London education authority's application, I have decided to re-determine the expenditure level for 1988-89 at £970 million, £15 million higher than the level I set in July. The addition is specifically to assist the authority to meet the one-off costs of making the substantial reduction in its spending which is urgently needed. I have therefore, following consultation with the authority, imposed a requirement that the additional £15 million should be used only for the purpose of meeting obligations to staff who leave the authority by reason of redundancy or in the effective discharge or efficient exercise of the authority's functions. I have today notified the authority of these decisions. I have also notified it of my proposal to prescribe a maximum precept for 1988-89 of 80·56p, which would on the latest information available enable the authority to raise £970 million. The proposed precept maximum is 0·8p more than the current year's precept, an increase of 1 per cent. I have given the authority until 12 January to inform me whether it accepts the proposal.

Teachers (Training)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what support he will provide for the in-service training of teachers in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced on 7 August my intention of making available grant of £119 million in 1988-89 to support local education authorities' expenditure in-service training for teachers and certain other groups in the education service. Authorities have responded with proposals for expenditure of £290 million, compared to £265 million this year; a 9 per cent. increase. They have also made proposals for further developing their arrangements for managing training, so that training can be increasingly accurately matched to staff development needs.

I have decided to confirm the grant to be made available at the levels provisionally indicated to local education authorities in August, with some minor adjustments in the light of later indications of authorities' intentions for certain categories. I have taken no decision, however, in respect of one authority, Tameside, which has yet to submit full proposals. In two cases, Haringey and Liverpool, I am not satisfied with progress with the development of arrangements for managing training, and I am therefore attaching specific conditions to their grant.

Teachers (Pensions)

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to make any changes to the arrangements whereby teachers can cover for pension purposes periods when they are on strike.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: At present teachers who go on strike can safeguard their pensions using arrangements designed to protect teachers whose pensionable employment is interrupted for other reasons. They can elect under what are known as "current added years" arrangements to maintain pension cover during their absence by paying the employer's and employee's contributions which would have been paid if pensionable employment had continued — at present 15·45 per cent. of salary. The cost of pensions increase (index-linking) is borne by the Exchequer. I have come to the conclusion that teachers who decide to withdraw their services by striking should no longer be able to take advantage of these arrangements. Under amendment regulations which I have today issued for consultation to representatives of the local authorities, and teachers, I propose to restrict the opportunities that teachers who go on strike will in future have for covering their absences for pension purposes.

The effect of the amendments I am introducing will not prevent teachers altogether from covering these absences. To do so, however, they will need to meet the full cost (including pensions increase) under what are known as "past added years" arrangements. The regulations specify a minimum period of 30 days which may be covered in this way, except at the point of retirement when teachers will be able to cover any period by deduction of contributions from their lump sums.

Governors

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take in preparing to select governors for the polytechnics and other colleges of higher education to be transferred from local authority control under part II of the Education Reform Bill.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to the successful passage of the Education Reform Bill, I would wish to appoint the new boards of governors as soon as possible after Royal Assent, so that they have time to make preparations before assuming full responsibility for the conduct of their institutions. I shall look to a number of sources for

suggestions for the independent lay members; other members will be nominated by the bodies identified in the Bill. The director or principal is also to be a member.

It is in the general interest that the transfer is as smooth as possible. Preparations are needed on a contingency basis before the Bill is passed. I am therefore taking steps to establish a small, informal group for each institution to help with identification of possible governors and to offer advice to the institution as it prepares for incorporation. Each group might have about five to six members, plus the director or principal. It would be desirable to include some members of the existing governing bodies. We are writing to chairman of the present governing bodies, and to the directors or principals of the institutions concerned, seeking their help in identifying suitable people.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from the high commissioner regarding the actions of Greek Cypriot women who recently crossed into the Turkish occupied area of Cyprus to express their opposition to the division still existing in the island of Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The High Commission has sent a full report on the demonstration that took place on 22 November. We understand that about 150 women, and some men, crossed the United Nations' buffer zone and reached the Turkish-Cypriot controlled area of Cyprus where they sat down and spent some hours, before being persuaded to return voluntarily by members of the United Nations' Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now reply to the letter sent to him on 5 October by the hon. Member for Gower, regarding problems relating to a constituent residing in Langland, Swansea.

Mr. Eggar: A reply was despatched on 13 November. A copy will be sent to the hon. Member.

Middle East

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Israeli Government about the implications for the peace process in the middle east and observance of human rights of the recent disturbances on the West Bank and in Gaza, and the temporary closure of Bethlehem university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We take every appropriate opportunity to stress to the Israelis the importance of respecting human rights in the occupied territories.

Food (Radiation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent European Community agreement on radiation levels in food in an emergency.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer) on 16 December, at column 575.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to receive all members of representive delegations from Hong Kong on future visits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The reception of a delegation by ministerial colleagues is a matter for consideration on a case by case basis in the light of the composition of the delegation and its purpose.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what discussions he has had with the Hong Kong Government concerning direct elections in 1988; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the principle of direct elections in Hong Kong commencing in 1988;

(3) if he will make a statement on the progress of political reform in Hong Kong.

Mr. Eggar: Development in representative government in Hong Kong, including the question of the possible introduction of direct elections to the Legislative Council, is at present under review by the Hong Kong Government on the basis of an extensive survey of local opinion. The outcome of the review will be recorded in a Hong Kong Government White Paper following consultation between ourselves and the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will meet a delegation from Hong Kong in 1988 to discuss direct elections and political reform; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the results of recent opinion polls conducted in Hong Kong on the Sino-British agreement to return Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.

Mr. Eggar: A recent opinion poll in Hong Kong on attitudes to the joint declaration recorded that 28 per cent. of respondents considered it very good or quite good for the people of Hong Kong, while 45 per cent. considered it good in some ways and not so good in others.

Uranium (Pakistan)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he possesses on the capability of Pakistan to produce weapons-grade enriched uranium at Golra.

Mr. Mellor: We have seen a press report on this subject and remain concerned at claims that Pakistan can produce weapons-grade enriched uranium at any site in Pakistan. However, we lack the evidence to be able to confirm or deny such reports. The Government of Pakistan have repeatedly assured us that their nuclear programme is purely for peaceful purposes. We have consistently urged Pakistan in turn to sign the NPT.

Mr. Mordecai Vanunu (Trial)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if there has been any request by defence or prosecuting counsel for any official

representations to be deposited on behalf of Her Majesty's Government in relation to, and if any member of the British embassy staff in Israel has been present at, the trial of Mordecai Vanunu.

Mr. Mellor: We have received no such request, nor has any member of Her Majesty's embassy in Tel-Aviv attended Mr. Vanunu's trial.

TRANSPORT

Passenger Transport Authorities

Mr. Kirkhope: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the final expenditure levels and the proposed maximum precepts for the joint board passenger transport authorities for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I am today formally notifying the passenger transport authorities (PTAs) of the maximum precept levels I propose to prescribe in 1988-89, and of my decisions on applications for redetermination of expenditure levels where these were submitted.

Following my determination of expenditure levels (ELs) for each PTA on 23 July, five of the six authorities, the exception being South Yorkshire, submitted applications for redetermination under section 3(4) of the Rates Act 1984. My decisions on redetermination have been in the light of those applications and of further information provided by the PTAs.

I have decided not to increase the expenditure levels for the Greater Manchester and the Tyne and Wear PTAs, but that the expenditure levels of the Merseyside, West Midlands and West Yorkshire PTAs should be redetermined at a greater amount. In the case of Merseyside, the figure also takes account of my decision that the current power to capitalise interest charges on the Mersey tunnel debt, which expires on 31 March 1988, should be extended for only six months to 30 September 1988. The expenditure levels as now determined and the maximum precept limits which I propose for each authority are:

	Expenditure level £ million	*Proposed precept limit Pence*
Greater Manchester	80·0	15·58
Merseyside	64·1	26·50
South Yorkshire	41·5	30·35
Tyne and Wear	53·5	9·58
West Midlands	65·0	10·74
West Yorkshire	59·1	24·82

I have asked the authorities to inform me by 15 January 1988 whether they accept the proposed maximum precept levels.

London Stations (Escalators)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why prohibition notices were posted by the Railways Inspectorate on 10 escalators at four London stations in the first week of December.

Mr. David Mitchell: A delayed prohibition notice was served on London Underground Ltd. on 10 December in respect of escalator machine rooms at four stations. This was because work requested by an inspector had not been completed to the inspector's satisfaction.

Notting Hill Gate (Fire)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the management of London Regional Transport as to why no member of the London Underground staff alerted the fire brigade to a fire at Notting Hill Gate station on 10 December.

Mr. David Mitchell: Two incidents occurred at Notting Hill Gate station on 10 December 1987, neither of which was reportable to the Department. In the first a train arrived at the station with a dragging brake. The passengers were detrained and the train departed empty. A member of the public had meanwhile telephoned the fire brigade, which arrived but was not required. In the second a passenger reported smoke at the station but nothing was found and the brigade was not called.

King's Cross (Fire)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the full terms of reference of the King's Cross inquiry.

Mr. David Mitchell: The investigation is being held under section 7 of the Regulation of Railways Act 1871 which sets out its terms of reference.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Channon: The advisory committees for which I am responsible are:

Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites
Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee
Landscape Advisory Committee
Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk road Assessment

The members of the standing advisory committee on the carriage of dangerous goods in ships are required to sign a declaration under the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Motor Cyclists (Leg Protection)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for how long his Department has been carrying out research into leg protection for riders and passengers of two-wheel vehicles; what is the amount of time expended on such research in man hours; and what is the cumulative cost so far of this research.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimated cost of leg injuries from motor cycle accidents is some £186 million per year.

The Transport and Road Research Laboratory carried out the first accident studies relating to motor cycles in 1970. These showed the need for leg protectors and a prototype design of protectors was exhibited as part of the first experimental safety motor cycle in 1979. The present in-depth study of leg protection began in 1982. Some of the work has been contracted out to Brunel university and to industry.

The research time spent specifically on leg protection has been 8½ man years (13,000 man hrs) at TRRL and 3½

man years (5,000 man hrs) at Brunel. The engineering support for this research has been considerable and the cumulative cost of all the work is about £1·25 million at 1987 prices.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to initiate the process of raising tolls on the Severn bridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have not taken any decisions about increasing the tolls.

M1 (Repairs)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total expenditure at constant prices on repairs to the M1 motorway for each year from 1970.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available for years before 1979. Figures for expenditure, at constant prices, on structural repairs to the M1 from 1979 onwards are as follows:

Financial Year	*Expenditure £ million (GDP at 1985/86 prices)*
1979-80	10·9
1980-81	14·7
1981-82	21·6
1982-83	32·4
1983-84	31·4
1984-85	29·0
1985-86	20·4

Final figures for 1986-87 are not yet available.

National Bus Company

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish full details of each National Bus Company subsidiary disposed of to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Fifty five National Bus Company subsidiaries have been sold since sales began in July 1986, 31 to their own managements or employees. The details are as follows:

Management/employee buy-outs
Badgerline Ltd.
Brighton and Hove Bus and Coach Company Ltd.
Cambus Ltd.
Cheltenham and Gloucester Omnibus Company Ltd.
The City of Oxford Motor Services Ltd.
Devon General Ltd.
Eastern Counties Omnibus Ltd.
East Kent Road Car Company Ltd.
The Eastern National Omnibus Company Ltd.
East Yorkshire Motor Services Ltd.
Hastings and Districts Transport Ltd.
Luton and District Transport Ltd.
The Maidstone and District Motor Services Ltd.
Midland Fox Ltd.
Midland Red Coaches Ltd.
Midland Red West Ltd.
Milton Keynes City Bus Ltd.
National Welsh Omnibus Services Ltd.
The Northern General Transport Company Ltd.
Northumbria Motor Services Ltd.
Potteries Motor Traction Company Ltd.
Provincial Bus Company Ltd.
The Southern Vectis Omnibus Company Ltd.
Southdown Motor Services Ltd.
South Midland Ltd.
The South Wales Transport Company Ltd.
Trent Motor Traction Company Ltd.
Wessex National Ltd.
West Riding Automobile Company Ltd.
Wilts and Dorset Bus Company Ltd.
The Yorkshire Traction Company Ltd.

Third Party Purchases
Alder Valley South Ltd.
Ambassador Travel (Eastern Counties) Ltd.
Alder Valley Engineering Ltd.
The Berks Bucks Bus Company Ltd.
Bristol Engineering Ltd.
Bristol Omnibus Company Ltd.
Carlyle Works Ltd.
Cumberland Motor Services Ltd.
Eastern National Engineering Ltd.
H & D Distribution Ltd.
Hampshire Bus Company Ltd.
Kent Engineering (NBC) Ltd.
Midland Red South Ltd.
National Holidays Ltd.
NTE Coaches Ltd.
Pilgrim Coaches Ltd.
Shamrock and Rambler Coaches Ltd.
Southdown Engineering Services Ltd.
United Automobile Services Ltd.
United Counties Engineering Ltd.
United Counties Omnibus Company Ltd.
Voyage National SA
West Yorkshire Road Car Company
Western National Ltd.

The National Bus Company in its annual report and accounts published on 27 October forecast that sale of all 72 subsidiaries will be completed before the statutory deadline and that total proceeds will exceed the book value of assets. A report will be made to the House in due course on the aggregate proceeds of sale.

London Underground (Fires)

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fires occurred on London Transport Underground which had some effect on passenger service in each of the years 1957 to 1975; and if he will give details of where and when these occurred.

Mr. David Mitchell: Details of all serious fires on London Underground during the period quoted are given in published reports, copies of which are in the Library. Lists of minor fires, in the detail requested, are being compiled and will be made available to the formal investigation into the King's Cross fire. It will be the responsibility of the investigation to establish the cause of the accident and the circumstances surrounding it.

Airports (Rateable Values)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on *(a)* the rateable values and *(b)* the rates payable of airports within the British Airports Authority and Manchester airport in each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The full information requested is not held systematically by the Department of Transport. In particular no data are available on rateable values of the airports concerned. However, the prospectus for the offer for sale of BAA plc stated that rents and rates paid in respect of BAA airports for the years 1983-87 were as shown, and that rates accounted for about 95 per cent. of these sums.

Year ended 31 March

	£ million
1983	17
1984	19
1985	20
1986	22
1987	23

Figures in respect of rates paid by Manchester international airport are available only for the years ended 31 March 1984 and 31 March 1985: £2,538,000 and £2,836,000 respectively.

I suggest that the hon. Member contacts the airports concerned direct for the remaining information he has sought.

Air Transport (Smoke Hoods)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Civil Aviation Authority has now announced the results of its consideration about the provision of passenger smoke hoods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) chairman announced on 16 December that the authority has decided that it should not at present make smoke hoods a mandatory requirement for British airlines and that the issue will be kept under active review. Civil aviation safety regulation is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority.

A19

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the continuing high accident rate on the A19 in the Easington district council area, he will bring forward his plans to install crash barriers so that such work can begin immediately.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Two contracts for the provision of central reserve safety fencing on the A19 in Easington district have been let. Work is expected to commence in January 1988.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received asking for the dismissal of the chairman of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, apart from the hon. Gentleman's.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will dismiss the chairman of London Regional Transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Certainly not.

Secondhand Cars

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to combat the sale of unroadworthy secondhand cars; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Together with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for corporate and consumer affairs, I had a useful discussion on 15 December with the Director General of Fair Trading and a range of local authority, motor trade and consumer organisations about this problem.

We agreed the desirability of amending section 60 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 to make it easier for trading standards officers to deal with sellers of unroadworthy vehicles. We are also exploring further the possible extension of trading standards officers' powers to inspect cars on garage forecourts.

Buyers of second-hand cars would be well advised to arrange a pre-sale inspection. An up-to-date MOT certificate is a guide to the condition of the main safety features such as brakes, steering and lighting.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the external financing limit for the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The external financing limit for the CAA for 1987-88 has been reduced from £15·3 million to £1 million. This reduction is made possible by extra receipts accruing on en route navigation charges mainly due to higher traffic levels than forecast.

Direction Signs

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the report on the review of direction signs will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The report on the review of direction signs is being published today and I have placed a copy in the Library, together with a copy of a letter which is being sent to those who commented. The report concludes that our present system of directional traffic signs is basically sound and still applicable to today's traffic conditions. However, it considers that there is scope for improving the application of current principles to ensure that signs are properly sited and there is continuity and consistency of information on them. We accept these conclusions of the report, and have already begun revising the traffic signs manual and related advice. In addition, arrangements are being made for a demonstration project at Guildford. I consider that good, clear signing is essential for road safety as well as making journeys easier for travellers.

The report makes a number of recommendations for change. Those for a system of tourist attractions are already being implemented and I am pleased with the progress being made. In addition, it recommends elimination of the confusing distinction between signs on non-primary routes and those on local routes by using only signs with black borders in both cases. These and other changes will be considered in the context of current revision of the traffic signs regulations.

The report also recommends development of standards for variable traffic signs so that the potential of these can be fully exploited in today's conditions. We accept this recommendation.

I would like to make it clear that the report does not recommend the replacement of traditional fingerpost signs on minor rural roads where traffic is light and speeds are low. These and other similar historic signs can be a valuable enhancement of the local environment where they are compatible with modern traffic conditions.

We consider that the improvements and changes needed can be implemented without imposing an undue burden on local authorities if phased in with other expenditure which will be needed anyway to establish and renew signs. The report envisages a 10-year programme of implementation involving about £1 million a year extra expenditure by local authorities but at this stage we consider it premature to specify a timetable for completion of the action arising.

We will be happy to consider any comments which anyone may have on the outstanding recommendations of the report and the views of the local authority associations on cost implications will be particularly welcome. It would be helpful if these could be submitted by Monday 29 February 1988.

PRIME MINISTER

Lawyers (Civil Service)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what steps she is taking to ensure that Government lawyers are included in key policy-making decisions.

The Prime Minister: It is for Ministers to seek legal advice from within the Government legal service on these matters.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister how many vacancies for qualified lawyers have arisen in the Civil Service over the past year; how many have been filled; and what information she has on the reasons for the shortfall.

The Prime Minister: In the period 1 January 1987 to 30 November 1987, 104 vacancies for lawyers arose in the Government legal service and appointments were offered to 49 applicants.

The position in the Crown prosecution service is more complex, as the total complement of lawyers was increased during the relevant period. On 1 December 1986 there were 363 vacancies. In the period ending 30 November 1987 a further 306 vacancies arose, of which 178 were newly created posts and 128 resulted from retirements, resignations and deaths. In the same period, 180 vacant posts were filled, leaving 489 vacant on 30 November 1987.

Increasing demand for the services of lawyers has stimulated competition for lawyers of the quality required by the Government legal service and the Crown prosecution service.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment she has made of the effects on the work of Government Departments of unfilled vacancies among lawyers in Government service.

The Prime Minister: Unfilled vacancies result in increased work loads for members of the Government legal service, and it is the Government's policy to fill these vacancies as soon as possible.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what representations she received from the recent delegation from Hong Kong concerning direct elections and the joint declaration; what response she has made; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a letter from the recent delegation from Hong Kong and a reply will be sent in due course.

Civil Servants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment she has made of the extent of the loss of confidence and self-respect amongst civil servants, referred to in the speech by Sir Robert Armstrong at the recent seminar organised by the Royal Institute of Public Administration; to what factors she attributes this lack of confidence and self-respect; what steps are being taken to alleviate the problem; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Sir Robert Armstrong's remarks were made in a talk in which his main concern was to describe all that has been achieved in terms of improvements of management and efficiency in the Civil Service, and to praise the dedication and loyalty with which these changes have been carried through. As he said, there is and always will be more to do, as needs change and systems develop. But I warmly endorse his statement that we have in this country a Civil Service which is second to none in professionalism and integrity, and which, by virtue of accepting and giving effect to these changes, is entitled to the recognition that it is also a Civil Service second to none in efficiency and effectiveness.

Earl of Leven

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will advise Her Majesty The Queen to terminate the appointment of the Earl of Leven as Lord Lieutenant of Nairnshire.

The Prime Minister: The nature of the communication between the Prime Minister and the Sovereign on such matters is confidential and is never disclosed.

ENVIRONMENT

Construction Industry

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the state of the construction industry in the first nine months of 1987.

Mr. Trippier: Output and new order figures for the first three quarters of 1987 indicate a healthy trend of strong growth, spearheaded by the private industrial and commercial sectors. For the third quarter of 1987, output figures of £6,321 million, 9 per cent. up on the same period in 1986, were the highest for 10 years. Total new orders, in the third quarter of 1987, stood at £5,574 million, 47 per cent. higher than the same quarter in 1986. Evidence of skills training and material shortages indicates that the industry is still adjusting to the higher levels of demand.

Bruntlandt Commission

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what response Her Majesty's Government are making to the World Commission on Environment and Development report "Our Common Future," chaired by Mrs. Bruntlandt.

Mr. Moynihan: When the report, "Our Common Future", was launched in London in April, the Government immediately praised its forthright message that there would have to be a new era of economic growth if the world's environment was to be safeguarded. The Government's positive response to the report was summarised in greater detail by our permanent representative to the United Nations during a general assembly debate in October. I am arranging for copies of this speech to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rating Reform

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received regarding the liability of full-time volunteers for the community charge; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy that full-time volunteers, such as community service volunteers, who have only a subsistence income and are not entitled to supplementary benefit, will not have to pay the full community charge.

Mr. Howard: I have received a number of representations about the liability of full-time volunteers for the community charge. Full-time volunteers will be eligible to apply for rebates of up to 80 per cent. of their community charge. Those with incomes equal to or below the level of income support will receive the maximum rebate.

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for every London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district, the proportion of income which would be taken by the community charge in 1987-88 consistent with his figures of 17 November for community charges with no safety net, *Official Report*, column *484*, single person with a gross income of *(a)* £3,000, *(b)* £4,000, *(c)* £5,000, *(d)* £7,500, *(e)* £10,000, *(f)* £15,000, *(g)* £20,000, *(h)* £30,000, *(i)* £50,000, and *(j)* £100,000, on the assumption in each case that the individual was not entitled to any social security support.

Mr. Howard: The proportion of gross income which would be taken, in each case, would be the community charge divided by gross income.

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish, for every London borough, metropolitan district and non-metropolitan district, the proportion of income which would be taken by community charge in 1987-88 consistent with his figures of 17 November for community charges with no safety net, *Official Report*, column *454*, for a married couple whose joint gross income was *(a)* £4,000, *(b)* £5,000, *(c)* £7,500, *(d)* £10,000, *(e)* £15,000, *(f)* £20,000, *(g)* £30,000, *(h)* £50,000, and *(i)* £100,000, on the assumption in each case that the couple were not entitled to any social security support.

Mr. Howard: The proportion of gross income which would be taken, in each case, would be two times the community charge divided by joint gross income.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the effect of a banded community charge for people with moderate incomes, as compared with a local income tax and Her Majesty's Government's proposal for a flat-rate community charge.

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the pay, the banded charge bill, and the range of the Government's community charge for a third-year student nurse, a newly qualified nurse, a teacher with five years' experience, and an experienced police constable, with 15 years' experience respectively, in Cambridgeshire.

Mr. Howard: In moving Second Reading of the Local Government Finance Bill, my right hon. Friend set out the drawbacks we see in a banded community charge — including the likely effect on those on moderate incomes.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his proposals to replace the commercial rate with a unified business rate will affect payments from the landlords of holiday flatlets.

Mr. Howard: Holiday flatlets are likely to be regarded as domestic property under clause 50 of the Local Government Finance Bill, which provides that property is domestic if it is used wholly for the purposes of living accommodation. They would not therefore be rated. Instead it is likely that the standard community charge would be payable under clause 3 of the Bill.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the recent letter from the Data Protection Registrar concerning the community charge, and his response.

Mr. Howard: I have today placed in the Library copies of the Registrar's letter of 17 November and my response of 4 December.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what advice he will be giving to prisoners just before their release as to their responsibility to pay the community charge from their first day of freedom;

(2) what advice he will be giving to homeless persons which describes their responsibility to pay the community charge.

Mr. Howard: There will be widespread publicity about the responsibility of every adult to register and pay for the community charge. We shall be considering with the local authority associations what advice needs to be given to specific groups of people about their liability.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he is having with leaders of London borough councils to reduce the number of people from their area who are at present living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: It is for local authorities to decide how to meet their duties under part III of the Housing Act 1985. Additional resources of £13·6 million were recently allocated to London authorities to help them reduce their recourse to bed and breakfast.

Housing Revenue Accounts

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list in rank order the deficits or balances for the housing revenue account of each English local authority for each of the last five years for which figures are available, together with the percentage of each council's housing revenue account which these figures represent;

(2) if he will list the total rent arrears accruing to the housing revenue account of each English local authority in each of the past five years for which figures are available, together with the percentage of the total rent bill which these figures represent, and the council's position in rank order of all English authorities.

Mrs. Roe: I regret that the information is not available in the form required. I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of homes owned by each English district council which have been empty for *(a)* up to two months, *(b)* two to four months, *(c)* four to six months, *(d)* six to nine months, *(e)* nine months to one year, *(f)* one year to two years and *(g)* two years or more, in each of the last five years for which figures are available, and the percentage of each council's housing stock these figures represent.

Mrs. Roe: Local authorities report the numbers of their empty council dwellings in their annual housing investment programme returns. These figures appear in the columns listed below of the "HIP1 All items prints", which are available in the Library.

I shall write to my hon. Friend providing the corresponding percentages of the authorities' stock as soon as possible.

Vacant local authority dwellings[1] at 1 April: England

	Vacant for more than:				
	All vacant	*6 months*	*1 year*	*2 years*	*Total LA stock*
1983	A89	n.a.	A99	n.a.	All
1984	A89	n.a.	A99	n.a.	All
[2]1985	A19	n.a.	A29	A39	All
1986	A99	n.a.	A109	A119	All
[3]1987	A98	A108	A118	A128	All+A16

Notes:
n.a. Information not collected.
[1] Vacant includes dwellings closed and those acquired for demolition.
2. "HIP4 All items print" in 1985.
3. 1987 figures included any dwellings owned by an authority outside its own area; in previous returns these were not included.

Homelessness

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the special £25 million allocation for homelessness has been given to Waltham Forest; how many homeless people there are in Waltham Forest; what criteria were used in the distribution of this money; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The extra resources were targeted to reduce homelessness and in particular recourse to bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In the third quarter of 1987 Waltham Forest LBC accommodated 190 homeless households. At the end of that quarter it had no one in bed and breakfast. None of the extra resources were allocated to Waltham Forest LBC.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the numbers of people who will be homeless during the fortnight of 18 December to 1 January.

Mr. Waldegrave: No estimate is made of future homelessness acceptances by local authorities under the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the number of persons in board-and-lodging accommodation.

Mr. Waldegrave: At 30 September 1987 there were an estimated 11,240 households temporarily accommodated in bed and breakfast by English local authorities under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest available figures for the number of people who are homeless.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the third quarter of 1987 local authorities in England accommodated an estimated 28,700 households under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985.

LDDC (Arts Centre)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the details of the consultancy remit from the London Docklands development corporation to Mr. Jeremy Wallington concerning a potential arts centre in the royal docks, together with a copy of his report and a statement of the cost to the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC appointed Mr. Jeremy Wallington as a consultant on 1 May 1987 to explore the possible development of the K-S warehouses in the royal docks including their use for leisure, community and cultural purposes. The warehouses are owned by the corporation. The consultancy contract cost £13,000 plus the usual expenses. The consultant's report to the corporation contains commercially confidential information provided by the private sector and it would therefore be inappropriate to place the report in the Library.

Inner Cities

Mr. Chapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that the inner-city initiatives Her Majesty's Government undertake reflect fully the potential for involving the construction industry in the manufacture, distribution and installation of energy-efficient equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 27 November 1987 at column *357*. The Government's inner-cities initiatives provides the construction industry with a range of new opportunities.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Ridley: The following are described as advisory bodies to my Department in the HMSO annual publication "Public Bodies 1987".

Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel
Building Regulations Advisory Committee
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission
New Towns Staff Commission
Property Advisory Group
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee
Regional Councils for Sport and Recreation
Royal Fine Art Commission

Members of the Property Advisory Group have the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act drawn to their attention.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the housing subsidy figures for urban programme areas in England for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mrs. Roe: Payments of housing subsidy to urban programme authorities in respect of 1985-86 and 1986-87 are as follows:

	Housing subsidy 1985-86 £	*Housing subsidy 1986-87* £
Manchester	0	0
Salford	4,283,388	4,180,553
Liverpool	15,223,441	15,923,419
Gateshead	0	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2,657,475	686,823
Birmingham	0	0
Bolton	0	0
Oldham	2,297,924	2,303,841
Rochdale	1,062,349	772,441
Knowsley	42,177	0
Wirral	0	0
Sheffield	0	0
North Tyneside	0	0
South Tyneside	0	0
Sunderland	2,612,410	7,793,528
Coventry	0	0
Sandwell	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	0
Bradford	0	0
Leeds	0	0
Hackney	31,120,440	32,413,686
Islington	38,646,050	38,741,371
Lambeth	46,060,190	44,421,555
Hammersmith and Fulham	11,914,655	10,559,741
Tower Hamlets	19,070,008	19,515,310
Wandsworth	13,567,113	14,251,305
Brent	20,367,975	27,423,525
Middlesbrough	2,111,611	1,901,435
Kingston-upon-Hull	0	0
Blackburn	2,415,024	1,740,882
Leicester	0	0
Nottingham	0	0

Block Grant

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated outturn block grant figures for 1987-88.

Mr. Chope: I will write to the hon. Member.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the estimated outturn figures for urban development corporation spending for 1987-88.

Mr. Trippier: The estimated outturn public expenditure by English urban development corporations for 1987-88 is £133·4 million.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of enterprise zones; and if he will show separately his estimate of the cost of *(a)* rate relief and *(b)* other tax reliefs.

Mr. Trippier: The latest estimate of the cost of enterprise zones will be available shortly with the publication of both the report by consultants and also the annual monitoring report.

Council Houses

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total number of local authority dwellings *(a)* which were vacant and available for letting, *(b)* which come into management through new buildings, *(c)* which come into management through acquisition or following modernisation or conversion and *(d)* which

became available for letting for other reasons (i) in Greater London, (ii) in metropolitan areas outside London, (iii) in non-metropolitan areas in the south-east, (iv) in English non-metropolitan areas and (v) in English local authority areas, for each year from 1 April 1981.

Mrs. Roe: Following are estimates derived from local authorities' annual housing investment programme returns:

Thousands

	1981-82[1]	*1982-83*[1]	*1983-84*[1]	*1984-85*[1]	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
(a) Dwellings vacant and available for letting at the beginning of the year[2]						
Greater London	9·0	8·3	7·4	6·7	5·7	5·4
Other metropolitan	13·2	16·4	10·6	12·2	10·8	11·5
Non-metropolitan in the South East[3]	4·2	4·8	4·8	4·3	5·0	4·6
Non-metropolitan (all)	12·8	14·4	15·2	14·5	14·6	12·9
England	35·0	39·1	36·2	33·4	31·1	29·8
(b) Newly built dwellings coming into management during the year						
Greater London	12·1	5·8	4·5	3·1	2·9	1·7
Other metropolitan	9·1	4·4	4·9	5·2	4·1	2·5
Non-metropolitan in the South East[3]	7·0	5·6	6·9	7·4	6·0	6·1
Non-metropolitan (all)	18·4	16·5	18·3	18·0	14·5	13·6
England	39·6	26·6	27·7	26·7	21·5	17·8
(c) Dwellings coming into management during the year following acquisition, modernisation or conversion						
Greater London	4·3	3·5	3·3	3·5	3·5	3·2
Other metropolitan	4·4	3·5	5·2	5·1	4·6	5·2
Non-metropolitan in the South East[3]	1·0	1·5	1·3	1·5	1·8	1·6
Non-metropolitan (all)	4·0	4·5	5·3	6·5	6·1	6·8
England	12·7	11·5	13·8	15·1	14·3	15·2
(d) Other dwellings becoming available during the year (including dwellings vacated by existing tenants)						
Greater London	70·1	64·2	65·1	62·0	60·6	57·1
Other metropolitan	132·6	145·0	140·8	146·0	156·0	156·3
Non-metropolitan in the South East[3]	54·9	62·2	59·6	60·6	63·1	68·6
Non-metropolitan (all)	181·9	211·1	200·4	204·4	209·1	206·9
England	384·6	420·2	406·3	412·4	425·7	420·3

Notes:

[1] Includes information reported by the Greater London Council.

[2] As reported in the relets section of the HIP returns.

[3] The standard region comprising the non-metropolitan districts in the Department of the Environment administrative Eastern (excluding East Anglia) and South Eastern regions.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the building of new local authority dwellings for rent.

Mrs. Roe: There should no longer be a presumption that local authorities themselves should take direct action to meet new or increasing demands for housing. The future role of local authorities will essentially be a strategic one identifying housing needs and demands, encouraging innovative methods of provision by other bodies to meet such needs, maximising the use of private finance, and encouraging interest in the revival of the independent rented sector.

Housing (Homeless Persons) Act

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to repeal the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act.

Mrs. Roe: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Derbyshire County Council

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the numbers employed by Derbyshire county council in each year from 1979, up to the present year.

Mr. Chope: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Planning

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to require every planning applicant to advertise at his cost the planning proposal on site.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Apart from statutory requirements for notification and publicity, I believe that it is best left to local planning authorities to decide the extent of local publicity which is desirable in the individual case.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes that he, his planning inspectorate and local planning authorities, when assessing the impact of proposed retail developments, should take account of effects on a significant part, although not all, of a city centre, in the context of his recently circulated draft guidance which refers to assessing impact on town or city centres as a whole.

Mr. Waldegrave: New retail development can influence patterns of shopping and other activities throughout a city or town centre; it would be of doubtful utility to attempt to assess the possible effects on one area within such a centre.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what data and criteria considering planning applications and planning appeals use, where the impact of major retail development proposals on existing

shopping centres has to be taken into account; and what action he is taking to ensure that up-to-date and suitable data are available.

Mr. Waldegrave: The relevant considerations are set out in a statement by the then Secretary of State on 5 July 1985, at columns 277-8, and quoted in the consultation paper on major retail development that I issued on 17 September. I understand that local authority representatives are preparing a paper for this Department on the need for further data on retailing.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he will give and what action he will take to deal with competing speculative proposals for major retail developments in an area which artificially raises site values, so preventing their redevelopment for other uses which do not command the same land values.

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not intend to interfere with the ability of developers and others to acquire land on such terms as they consider satisfactory.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to ensure consistency in the treatment of all major retail developments proposals, so that they follow planning guidance, whether they are located in an enterprise zone, simplified planning zone or an area covered by a normal planning regime.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is inherent in the concepts of enterprise zones (EZ) and simplified planning zones (SPZ) that they are subject to different planning regimes from that which applies elsewhere. Whether a particular EZ or SPZ scheme grants permission for major retail development depends on the precise terms in which the scheme is framed.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he takes of the knowledge and advice of such bodies as Age Concern, the Disability Alliance and the National Consumer Council, in determining the needs of the less mobile so as to ensure that these are adequately represented and safeguarded in his planning guidance on major retail developments to local authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave: The draft planning guidance that we issued on 17 September drew attention to the needs of less mobile people for access to shopping facilities. Sections 29A and 29B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 impose a duty on local planning authorities to draw applicants' attention to their responsibilities under legislation relating to disabled persons when granting permission for retail and other types of development.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to ensure that his planning guidance to local authorities on major retail developments is sufficiently up to date; and what steps he will be taking to ensure that that guidance is updated to take account of changing circumstances and retail pressures.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 17 September we issued a consultation paper seeking comments on a proposed new statement of planning policy on major retail development. We are now considering the comments received, with a view to publishing the final version shortly. Planning guidance is revised as necessary.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to change the present systems of control over imported hazardous wastes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: The present system, which requires pre-notification of the movement of special wastes to be sent to the appropriate waste disposal authority, will be extended as part of the implication of EC directive 84/631 on the transfrontier shipment of hazardous waste. We intend to implement the directive as soon as possible.

Easington

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Easington of 11 November regarding grant-related expenditure allocations and safety nets relating to Easington district council.

Mr. Chope: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make the allocations to local authorities for their housing investment programme in 1988-89.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend announced on 3 November 1987 that gross provision for capital expenditure by local authorities on housing in 1988-89 will be £3,048 million—£313 million higher than previous plans. This increase, which will enable local authorities to spend more on renovating their existing stock, has been made possible by the continuing success of the right to buy which has provided local authorities with a growing source of spending power to supplement their capital borrowing.

The gross expenditure provision allows for a total housing investment programmes (HIP) allocation of £1,150 million. This represents new borrowing consents for local authorities. Each housing authority is today being informed of its initial HIP allocation for 1988-89. Copies of the letters to local authorities and the schedule of initial allocations have been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

The local authority associations have been consulted about the distribution of HIP allocations. After considering their comments, and bearing in mind his obligation to make allocations in relation to need, my right hon. Friend has decided to make the distribution on the following basis:

— £1,118·5 million is available for main HIP allocations. Every authority will receive at least 75 per cent. of its corresponding allocation for the current year.

— £11·5 million is available for the homes insulation scheme of which £8 million will be distributed with the main HIP allocations. £2·5 million will be reserved for further allocations under the scheme in accordance with demand and the remaining £1 million will be used to defray local authorities' administrative costs.

— £20 million is being reserved for additional allocations at a later date to authorities which face particular difficulties in meeting their obligations under the housing defects legislation.

Special provision has also been made, within the gross expenditure total, for additional allocations totalling £140 million under the estate action scheme. This represents an

increase of 87 per cent. over provision for the current year, and reflects the early successes of estate action in assisting authorities to bring new life to run-down estates.

Only the initial allocations are being made today. The letters being sent to local housing authorities describe the procedure under which they can apply for additional allocations.

Housing Costs

Mr. Neillist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures showing the total United Kingdom costs of Government support for housing costs, at 1987 prices, in each year since 1979, distinguishing between (i) assistance to supplementary benefit recipients, (ii) rent rebates and allowances, (iii) rate rebates, (iv) mortgage interest relief, (v) improvement and thermal insulation grants, (vi) central Government subsidies to local authority and new town housing, and (vii) rate fund contributions to local authority housing; and what is the total charge since the financial year 1979-80 in real terms.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 14 December 1987]:* The available estimates of central Government support for housing costs in the United Kingdom for the years 1979-80 to 1986-87 (at 1986-87 prices), including items (i) to (vi), are set out in the table. Revenue transfers between the general rate fund and housing revenue accounts (rate fund contributions) are at the discretion of the local authorities concerned. In England and Wales such transfers are taken into account in the calculation of block grant, which is paid on authorities' revenue spending generally and is not hypothecated individual items of expenditure. In Scotland transfers are similarly taken into account in the determination of housing support grat for each authority. There are no rate fund contributions in Northern Ireland.

There was an increase in real terms of just under 70 per cent. in the total of Government support for housing costs between 1979-80 and 1986-87 (excluding items for which no information is available in the relevant years—see table and notes as follows).

Central Government Support for Housing Costs in the United Kingdom

£ million (1986-87 prices)[1]

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
(i) Supplementary benefits[3]	1,532	1,742	2,515	1,480	452	511	663	[2]n/a
(ii) Rent rebates and allowances[4]	455	499	742	1,136	2,736	3,041	3,197	3,644
(iii) Rate rebates[4, 5]	350	407	524	593	1,316	1,451	1,522	1,607
(iv) Mortgage interest tax relief (including option mortgage scheme)[6]	2,722	3,065	2,946	2,740	3,078	3,827	4,636	4,500
(v) Improvement and thermal insulation grants[7]	268	244	275	331	483	620	663	714
(vi) Subsidies to local authorities, new towns and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive[7]	2,430	2,509	1,630	980	656	717	737	831
Other central government voted housing expenditure[7, 8]	1,012	900	793	1,175	1,545	1,468	1,326	1,154
Total[9]	8,769	9,366	9,429	8,437	10,267	11,636	12,744	12,451

Notes:

[1] Using GDP deflator.

[2] n/a = information not available for that year.

[3] Includes figures for housing requirements in supplementary benefit, housing benefit supplement and water charges paid with housing benefit. Data for housing requirements in supplementary benefit are derived from SB assessments (which may be higher than amounts paid). Figures for this element are annualised from caseload samples in a particular week. Figures for other elements are from local authority claims data. Figures for supplementary benefit are not yet available for 1986-87, so this element has been excluded from the overall change figure given in the answer.

[4] Prior to 1982-83 help with rent and rates for supplementary benefit claimants was included in their benefit assessment.

[5] Information on the level of rate rebates in Northern Ireland is not available for the years 1979-80 to 1982-83. This element has been excluded from the overall change figure given in the answer.

[6] Option mortgage subsidy absorbed into mortgage interest tax relief (MIRAS) from April 1983. Does not include the cost of interest relief for landlords.

[7] Figures are outturn as published in appropriation accounts. Excludes voted expenditure in Scotland prior to 1982-83 because estimates and appropriation accounts were in a different format and comparable figures cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost. Figures for voted expenditure in Scotland have been excluded from the overall change figure given in the answer. Outturn in 1986-87 is net of appropriations in aid (£43 million to the vote in England). There were no appropriations in aid in earlier years.

[8] Excludes the small amount of voted expenditure on housing schemes under the urban programme.

[9] Figures in the table may not sum due to rounding.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89;

(2) what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The latest estimate of expenditure for paid publicity and the associated staff costs, for my Department, including PSA, for 1987-88 is £4·6 million. Figures giving a breakdown between advertising and promotional material are no longer kept separately. Provision for 1988-89 has not yet been set.

Acid Rain

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's latest assessment of the effect of acid rain on Britain's trees.

Mr. Moynihan *[pursuant to his reply, 7 December 1987, c. 16]:* My Department is considering closely the results of the Forestry Commission's 1987 survey of United Kingdom tree health. The survey alone does not provide direct evidence for a role for acid deposition in tree health. However, the reported reduction in crown density of coniferous species and the condition of deciduous species underlines the continued need for studies aimed at identifying possible damage mechanisms as well as continuing the surveys to improve understanding of the trends in tree health. The Forestry Commission will be carrying out further analyses early next year. My Department is consulting scientists, including those engaged in the Department's research programme, and my noble Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Water will be chairing a meeting to discuss the 1987 survey with a number of interested organisations in January.

THE ARTS

Mansfield Society of Artists

Mr. Meale: To ask the Minister for the Arts if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Mansfield Society of Artists to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Luce: I understand that, under under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 21 to 25 March 1988.

Yorkshire Watercolour Society

Sir Marcus Fox: To ask the Minister for the Arts if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Yorkshire Watercolour Society to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 1 to 5 February 1988.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Wind Power

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what experiments in wind power have been carried out in Northern Ireland; and to what factors he attributes the absence of wind power generating units in the Province.

Mr. Viggers: Northern Ireland Electricity is presently undertaking a study of the benefits of wind-powered electricity generation but there have been no practical experiments.

The Industrial Development Board has provided a research and development grant to a Northern Ireland company to manufacture a wind turbine for installation elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The absence of wind-power generating units is largely attributable to the need to be satisfied on the long term reliability and economics of such installations.

Southern Education and Library Board

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish the names of the Southern education and library board's select list of contractors;

(2) how many building contractors have been added to the Southern education and library board's select list; and how many have been removed in each of the years from 1980 to 1987; and if he will name them;

(3) how often the select list of contractors has been reviewed by the Southern education and library board's selective tendering panel in each of the years from 1980 to 1987;

(4) if he will publish the names of the Southern education and library board's selective tendering panel;

(5) if he will publish the names and qualifications of the consultants who have advised the Southern education and library board's selective tendering panel in the last five years;

(6) if the Southern education and library board's selective tendering panel will, in future, advise contractors why they have been excluded from the select list;

(7) if he will publish the names of the firms of architects and designers employed by the Southern education and library board in the last five years;

(8) what criteria are used by the Southern education and library board's selective tendering procedure in *(a)* selecting contractors and *(b)* excluding contractors from the select list.

Dr. Mawhinney: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Joint Consultative Committee for Building

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who are the members of the Joint Consultative Committee for Building (NI).

Mr. Needham: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Belfast Area Plan

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will meet alliance party councillors to discuss the Belfast area plan; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if, in the light of the failure of some councils to agree their conclusions within the time limits, he will accept submissions from individual parties on the Belfast area plan;

(3) if he will postpone the deadline for council submissions on the Belfast area plan, in the light of delays caused by the Enniskillen bombing incident and the Christmas holiday.

Mr. Needham: I will write to the hon. Member.

Education Maintenance Allowances

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the numbers in receipt of education maintenance allowances in each education and library board area in each year since 1980.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is as follows:

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	[1]*1987*
Belfast	167	235	271	244	221	229	230	200
North-Eastern	248	360	397	432	491	206	218	209
Southern	693	920	1,002	924	717	482	389	370
South-Eastern	208	247	291	238	190	155	140	130
Western	887	1,024	1,083	1,036	750	630	568	580

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information is available to indicate the value of education maintenance allowances in each year since 1980;

(2) what information is available to indicate the assessment thresholds for education maintenance allowance in each year since 1980;

(3) what figures are available to indicate the real value of education maintenance allowance in each year since 1980 as a percentage of its value in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1987;

(4) if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in relation to education maintenance allowance.

Dr. Mawhinney: The maximum payable by way of educational maintenance was £510 per annum in 1980, increasing to £570 in 1981 and to £595 in 1982.

In 1983 the maximum level was changed to £494 in recognition of the fact that supplementary benefit payments were automatically reduced by a sum equal to the amount by which educational maintenance exceeded that figure. The maximum level remains at £494.

The assessment threshold for education maintenance was £3,470 in 1980, rising to £3,970 in 1981 to £4,325 in 1982 and to £4,645 in 1983 at which level it remains.

The following are the comparative values of the years since 1980, expressed in percentage terms, with a value of 100 given to 1980, 1983 and 1987 respectively:

	1980 *Per cent.*	*1983* *Per cent.*	*1987* *Per cent.*
1980	100	103	103
1981	94	115	116
1982	90	121	121
1983	70	100	100
1984	67	96	100
1985	64	92	100
1986	60	86	100
1987	58	84	100

The future of the scheme in Northern Ireland is under review and I will make a statement when this has been completed.

Single Payments

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the time taken to process claims for different categories of single payments in each of the social security offices in Northern Ireland at present.

Mr. Needham: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Staffing and Overtime Payments (Social Security Offices)

Mr Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration he is giving to making extra staff or overtime available to social security offices where pressure of work is adding delays to the processing of cases.

Mr. Needham: The position on workloads generally, including those in the social security offices, is monitored on a continuous basis and resources are deployed accordingly. Consideration is being given as to what extra resources may be needed to deal with the most recent increase in single payment claims in the social security offices.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the number of people receiving invalid care allowance in Northern Ireland, the number of married women in Northern Ireland now receiving the allowance, the number of those who have received payments for arrears of benefit and the number of claims still to be processed.

Mr. Needham: At 15 December 1987 the number of people receiving invalid care allowance was 3,297, of whom 2,598 were married. Some 1,307 claims had still to be processed at that date. Information about the number of married woman who received arrears of benefit is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what staffing arrangements were made to accommodate invalid care allowance claims from married women; and whether such arrangements have any effect on the processing of attendance allowance claims.

Mr. Needham: Attendance allowance and invalid care allowance (ICA) are independent benefits and are administered together by the attendance allowance branch of DHSS. Since August 1986, the staff complement of the branch has been increaed by 34 staff, of which 22 were allocated to deal with the influx of claims for ICA from married women and 12 to cope with the continuing increase in attendance allowance claims. The substantial increase in the volume of claims together with the

inexperience of additional staff had an adverse effect initially on the time taken to process attendance allowance cases. While the position has now shown a marked improvement the provision of additional resources is being considered in order to ensure the further improvement of clearance times for both benefits.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what figures are available to indicate the number of claimants, by benefit, who have deductions made from their benefit in respect of their spouse's receipt of invalid care allowance;

(2) what figures are available to indicate the number of married women claiming invalid care allowance who received no actual payments, or reduced payments, in respect of arrears for invalid care allowance claims due to their husband's receipt of other benefits over the period for which arrears would otherwise have been paid.

Mr. Needham: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Allowances (Claims)

wMr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the length of time taken to process claims for *(a)* attendance allowance, including cases which go to appeal and *(b)* invalid care allowance in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The average times taken to process attendance allowance and invalid care allowance claims are at present 14·4 weeks and 10·5 weeks respectively.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if, in any negotiations with leaders of political parties in Northern Ireland, he will make it his policy to consider proposals for a demonstrably better and more widely acceptable arrangement for ordering the structures of government in Northern Ireland and relationships with the Republic of Ireland, in place of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: The Government remain committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement. At the same time, I have made clear that we are very ready to consider constructive proposals which can command widespread support. Our policy is to seek an agreed basis on which greater responsibility can be devolved to elected representatives in Northern Ireland.

Police Forces (Army Uniforms)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the answer of 15 December, if he will specify, in relation to the purchase by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland of British-style military uniforms *(a)* the number of invoices, *(b)* the date of each invoice, *(c)* the means by which each was paid and *(d)* the means and in whose property the items were transported to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I will write to the hon. Member.

Arterial Drainage Schemes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Her Majesty's Government will extend to the drainage division of the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, the policy adopted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in 1985 of publishing details of the methodology for the cost-benefit appraisal of arterial land drainage schemes, and the requirement for arterial drainage authorities to make available summary details of cost-benefit appraisals of arterial drainage schemes to the public on request.

Mr. Viggers: Details of the methodology now used for the cost benefit appraisal of arterial drainage schemes will be published by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland early in 1988. The methodology is broadly similar to that already published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and deposited in the House of Commons Library on 9 July 1985. Summary details of cost benefit appraisals of future arterial drainage schemes will be made available to the public on request.

Mr. Chan Hok Chun

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when Mr. Chan Hok Chun was deported from the United Kingdom; how many times he was interviewed by police officers in relation to allegations made against Royal Ulster Constabulary officers and others in Belfast; and if Mr. Chan Hok Chun has been asked to supply any further information since he was deported.

Mr. Stanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the investigations or allegations against the Royal Ulster Constabulary, about which he last wrote to the hon. Member for Bradford, West on 23 June, to be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I will write to the hon. Member.

Remand and Bail Statistics

***Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average number of days on remand for both scheduled and non-scheduled offences together and the total number of persons remanded in custody before trial for both scheduled and non-scheduled offences together; and what was number of bail applications refused for *(a)* scheduled offences, *(b)* non-scheduled offences and *(c)* both together in the first half of 1987.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* In the first six months of 1987, 874 persons were remanded in custody, 235 bail applications were refused in respect of persons charged with scheduled offences, and 110 in respect of persons charged with non-scheduled offences. The average length of time spent on custodial remand for those who were tried in the period and who were in custody at the date of the trial was 122 days.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were remanded in custody before trial for *(a)* scheduled offences, *(b)* non-scheduled offences and *(c)* both together in the first half of 1987.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 11 December 1987]:* Eight hundred and seventy-four persons were remanded in custody during the period, 501 of whom were charged with scheduled offences and 373 with non-scheduled offences.

Firearms (Deaths)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many persons in Northern Ireland have been killed by firearms in each of the last five years to the current year at the latest available date; of these, how many were killed by (i) legally held weapons, (ii) illegally held weapons and (iii) legally held weapons stolen from their owners; and for each year and category of weapons, how many persons died as a result of action taken by *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Ulster Defence Regiment, *(c)* the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its reserves, *(d)* the Irish National Liberation Army, *(e)* the Provisional Irish Republican Army, *(f)* the Official Irish Republican Army, *(g)* the Ulster Volunteer Force, *(h)* the Ulster Defence Association, *(i)* other Republican terrorist organisations and *(j)* other Loyalist terrorist or paramilitary organisations.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Firearms Certificates

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show how many firearms certificates have been *(a)* renewed, *(b)* refused on application for renewal, *(c)* new applications refused and *(d)* new applications granted in each of the last five years in Northern Ireland; and in each case and year what types of firearms were listed on the applications for firearms certificates.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* The information is as follows:

	1883	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987 (to end November*
Renewals granted	17,016	30,066	22,463	17,933	25,814
Renewals refused	79	88	61	43	47
New applications refused	336	313	326	308	263
New applications granted	3,714	4,011	4,222	3,895	3,211

Information as to the type of firearm requested on each application is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Royal Ulster Constabulary officers and of what ranks and at what annual costs for *(a)* salary, *(b)* overtime and *(c)* other costs attributable to their duties are engaged at Royal Ulster Constabulary headquarters on the processing of firearms certificates at the present time; and what were the comparable numbers and costs five years ago.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* Five Royal Ulster Constabulary officers are engaged at RUC headquarters on processing firearms certificates. Their ranks are superintendent, chief inspector, inspector, sergeant and constable. The same number and ranks of officers were engaged in this work five years ago. The total annual cost for salaries, including allowances and overtime, in 1986-87, was £115,700. Additional costs for superannuation, accommodation and allied services were £41,900. The corresponding costs in 1981-82 were £84,800 and £20,500.

Students (Republic of Ireland)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by how much the allocation of funds to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund has increased as a result of the obligation to meet the costs of educating students from the Republic of Ireland; and under what subhead these funds are listed in the Northern Ireland Estimates.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from the Republic of Ireland are at present attending degree granting courses in Northern Ireland; how many of these have the costs of their education course met in whole or in part from United Kingdom funds; and what assessment he has made of the impact of this influx on the number of *(a)* Northern Ireland and *(b)* other United Kingdom students attending such courses.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 15 December 1987]:* I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Publicity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest figure for the number of staff presently employed in the press and public relations office of his Department; and what is the number planned to be employed at this point in 1988.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The number of staff currently employed in the information service is as follows:

	Northern Ireland Office (London)	*Northern Ireland Office (Belfast) and Northern Ireland Departments*
Information Officer Grades	3	16
Clerical and Secretarial Support Staff	3	15

There are no plans at present for change in staff levels.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest figure for the estimated spending in 1987-88 by his Department on *(a)* television

advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* newspaper advertising and *(d)* other promotional material; and what are the estimated expenditures in each area for 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The total figures for all forms of advertising in the Northern Ireland Departments in 1987-88 is estimated at £3,373,848. For 1988-89 estimated spending, detailed decisions on expenditure by media have not yet been taken but we expect the overall publicity figure to be £3,616,000.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest figure for the estimated expenditure by his Department on press and public relations for *(a)* 1987-88 and *(b)* 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* I shall write to the hon. Member.

Rating Reform

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show for Northern Ireland as a whole the level of community charge which would raise sums equal to that raised by rates in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" proposals do not apply to Northern Ireland. We have decided to monitor the development of the proposals in England and Wales before deciding whether or to what extent they should be applied in Northern Ireland. The monitoring exercise has not involved the calculation of the equivalent community charges and thus the figures requested are not available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Council Districts (Valuations)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show the net annual valuation of each of the council districts in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Ratepayers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table to show how many ratepayers there are in each council district in Northern Ireland and how many electors there were in each such district in each of the last five years;

(2) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* to show sums raised from *(a)* local rates and *(b)* regional rates in each of the council districts in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Battery Hens

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the changes from current regulations which will arise as a result of the application of the statutory rule 1987 No. 425 Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987; and if he will indicate the consultations that have taken place with the industry concerned before their introduction and what effect the application of these regulations will have on the number of battery hens kept in Northern Ireland at the present time and on the profitability of battery hens.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The principal change is the setting of minimum space requirements for battery hens effective for new cage installations from 1 January 1988 and for existing cage installations from 1 January 1995. All other requirements set by the regulations were already the subject of welfare codes and the Welfare of Livestock (Intensive Units) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1978 SR No. 360.

The industry was consulted at various stages of the basic European Community draft legislation and subsequently on the preparation of the Northern Ireland subordinate legislation.

The immediate impact on numbers and profitability of battery hens is negligible. As the standards required apply to the entire community there should not be any adverse effect peculiar to Northern Ireland.

Explosive Devices

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) on how many occasions anti-terrorist officer teams from the Republic of Ireland have dealt with explosive devices in Northern Ireland in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987 to date;

(2) on how many occasions anti-terrorist officer teams from the United Kingdom have dealt with explosive devices in the Republic of Ireland in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987 to date.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Procedures exist whereby in the course of clearing suspected or actual explosive devices on or near the border ammunition technical officers from the British and Irish armies may by invitation cross the border to facilitate their duties. These procedures have been highly useful and have been operated, but it would not be in the interests of security to give further details of incidents.

WALES

History Curriculum

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whom he intends to consult outside his Department in the preparation of a history curriculum for schools in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We expect to consult widely. The Education Reform Bill proposes that we should be required to consult the new Curriculum Council for Wales and any other person with whom consultation appears to me to be desirable.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consideration he has given to the document submitted by the English Historical Association on 2 February containing a proposed history curriculum for Britain; and what representations he has received about this document.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Historical Association's proposals were addressed to my right hon. Friend the

Secretary of State for Education and Science, but I understand they were subsequently withdrawn in view of the national curriculum provisions of the Education Reform Bill.

Nevertheless, we have received one representation about the Historical Association's document from the Association of History Teachers in Wales.

Urban Aid

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schemes within the Dyfed county council area which have been granted urban aid in each of the past five years and in 1988-89.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and will place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Patent Office

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had regarding the possible transfer of the Patent Office to Swansea.

Mr. Peter Walker: None. I have, however, offered all assistance to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who is seeking suitable accommodation for the Patent Office in or near Cardiff.

Agriculture (Assistance)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has as to the amount of Government, European Community and other sources of finance and assistance made available for agriculture in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Dyfed, in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Walker: Agricultural grants and subsidies paid in Wales in each of the past three financial years are estimated as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	103·9
1985-86	109·7
1986-87	121·3

Note: These figures exclude some items of expenditure which benefit farmers, such as expenditures on animal disease, research, advice and education.

Corresponding figures are not readily available for Dyfed.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in rank order the deficits or balances for the housing revenue account of each Welsh district for each of the last five years for which figures are available, together with the percentage of each council's housing revenue account which these figures represent.

Mr. Grist: Local authorities are prevented from recording a deficit on the housing revenue account (HRA) by schedule 14, part IV (paragraph 4) of the Housing Act 1985. However, contributions are made from the rate fund (RFC) to the HRA, primarily to prevent a shortfall between income and expenditure on the HRA. Details of these contributions are as follows:

	1982-83		
	RFC to HRA	*Total Expenditure*	*Balance as percentage of total Expenditure*
Torfaen	1,298,196	9,647,727	13·5
Rhymney Valley	1,279,005	12,088,235	10·6
Rhondda	1,206,571	6,158,308	19·6
Cynon Valley	961,455	5,967,705	16·1
Blaenau Gwent	827,697	14,535,959	5·7
Taff Ely	778,656	8,754,414	8·9
Wrexham Maelor	777,799	10,378,168	7·5
Cardiff	759,511	26,536,315	2·9
Merthyr Tydfil	538,985	7,474,736	7·2
Ogwr	431,000	11,851,972	3·6
Ynys Mon	368,114	5,217,937	7·1
Islwyn	291,488	7,755,640	3·8
Swansea	262,300	15,220,263	1·7
South Pembroke	253,775	3,273,486	7·8
Brecknock	212,141	3,253,733	6·5
Vale of Glamorgan	194,940	8,311,688	2·3
Carmarthen	147,484	4,100,876	3·6
Neath	125,925	6,088,843	2·1
Ceredigion	125,000	4,374,924	2·9
Colwyn	100,000	2,641,777	3·8
Monmouth	57,068	5,947,551	1·0
Dinefwr	38,985	2,128,935	1·8
Alyn and Deeside	27,897	4,071,276	·7
Arfon	25,000	4,570,790	·5
Meirionnydd	13,506	2,110,984	·6
Preseli Pembs	1,676	5,801,482	·0
Port Talbot	240	6,172,440	·0

	1983-84		
	RFC to HRA	*Total Expenditure*	*Balance as percentage of total Expenditure*
Rhondda	1,286,326	6,323,223	20·3
Wrexham Maelor	913,982	11,163,469	8·2
Swansea	780,200	16,331,653	4·8
Cardiff	750,000	26,395,110	2·8
Merthyr Tydfil	624,079	7,432,180	8·4
Torfaen	435,485	9,838,861	4·4
Cynon Valley	331,427	5,240,753	6·3
Ynys Mon	324,337	5,349,926	6·1
Taff Ely	301,557	9,039,293	3·3
Islwyn	275,000	7,537,601	3·6
Ceredigion	200,000	4,701,510	4·3
Newport	182,000	18,896,416	1·0
Vale of Glamorgan	177,668	8,582,170	2·1
Carmarthen	148,122	4,357,749	3·4
Blaenau Gwent	139,093	15,466,512	·9
Brecknock	124,128	3,281,084	3·8
Meirionnydd	83,317	2,258,274	3·7
Monmouth	61,348	6,439,246	1·0
Montgomeryshire	60,036	3,468,764	1·7
Neath	59,820	6,297,237	·9
Glyndwr	39,682	2,906,142	1·4
Arfon	25,000	4,888,135	·5
Alyn and Deeside	11,845	4,435,207	·3
Preseli Pembs	1,517	6,091,256	·0
Port Talbot	240	7,442,660	·0

	1984-85		
	RFC to HRA	*Total Expenditure*	*Balance as percentage of total Expenditure*
Rhondda	1,243,202	6,569,290	18·9
Wrexham Maelor	576,162	11,856,567	4·9

	RFC to HRA	1984-85 Total Expenditure	Balance as percentage of total Expenditure
Swansea	550,300	17,863,485	3·1
Torfaen	438,083	10,285,627	4·3
Rhymney Valley	335,657	12,013,840	2·8
Monmouth	301,317	6,309,947	4·8
Taff Ely	299,857	9,273,141	3·2
Vale of Glamorgan	200,398	9,974,374	2·0
Cynon Valley	159,495	5,506,175	2·9
Carmarthen	152,362	4,699,672	3·2
Merthyr Tydfil	139,756	7,516,305	1·9
Ynys Mon	100,684	5,372,225	1·9
Brecknock	76,577	3,344,241	2·3
Neath	59,820	6,496,239	0·9
Blaenau Gwent	53,327	14,439,193	0·4
Meirionnydd	34,513	2,299,377	1·5
Alyn and Deeside	19,529	4,685,771	0·4
Arfon	11,000	4,984,024	0·2
Dinefwr	6,252	2,432,883	0·3
Preseli Pembs	1,564	6,225,912	0·0
Port Talbot	240	6,842,560	0·0

	RFC to HRA	1985-86 Total Expenditure	Balance as percentage of total Expenditure
Rhondda	1,401,655	7,130,406	19·7
Delyn	445,659	5,669,612	7·9
Merthyr Tydfil	289,640	8,194,456	3·5
Wrexham Maelor	272,040	13,085,185	2·1
Cynon Valley	256,268	5,989,515	4·3
Torfaen	185,648	10,196,725	1·8
Brecknock	155,528	3,505,319	4·4
Carmarthen	152,880	5,181,979	3·0
Swansea	105,100	18,519,632	0·6
Vale of Glamorgan	87,436	11,566,657	0·8
Islwyn	75,227	8,280,268	0·9
Arfon	29,000	5,233,773	0·6
Alyn and Deeside	25,181	4,861,553	0·5
Dinefwr	12,166	2,570,371	0·5
Preseli Pembs	1,635	6,746,141	0·0
Port Talbot	240	7,837,817	0·0

	RFC to HRA	1986-87 (provisional) Total Expenditure	Balance as percentage of total Expenditure
Rhondda	927,711	6,878,214	13·5
Delyn	524,363	5,819,289	9·0
Wrexham Maelor	342,119	12,651,623	2·7
Torfaen	231,356	18,485,541	1·3
Ynys Mon	215,000	5,763,404	3·7
Swansea	181,144	19,209,883	0·9
Carmarthen	152,669	5,192,181	2·9
Brecknock	122,985	3,499,793	3·5
Islwyn	91,820	8,624,947	1·1
Lliw Valley	89,283	6,880,619	1·3
Meirionnydd	59,277	2,911,710	2·0
Arfon	30,000	5,418,167	0·6
Alyn and Deeside	21,548	5,032,379	0·4
Cynon Valley	6,681	6,106,841	0·1
Preseli Pembs	1,452	6,937,540	0·0
Port Talbot	240	8,592,725	0·0

Empty Houses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of housing properties owned by each Welsh district council which have been empty for *(a)* two months, *(b)* four months, *(c)* six months, *(d)* nine months, *(e)* one year and *(f)* two years or more in each of the last five years for which figures are available and the percentage of each council's housing stock these figures represent.

Mr. Grist: The information is only available for dwellings vacant for six months or more. The figures are given in the tables.

Number of local authority dwellings vacant for more than 6 months (as at 1 April)

Welsh Districts	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Aberconwy	16	27	18	10	—
Alyn and Deeside	6	14	28	10	9
Arfon	6	5	9	—	10
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	3	10	3
Brecknock	—	—	—	—	—
Cardiff	106	80	42	42	40
Carmarthen	—	—	—	17	10
Ceredigion	—	5	2	—	—
Colwyn	—	3	6	1	—
Cynon Valley	36	41	1	18	70
Delyn	10	7	14	14	7
Dinefwr	—	2	2	—	—
Dwyfor	—	—	—	—	—
Glyndwr	13	30	26	—	—
Islwyn	20	20	16	—	—
Llanelli	—	—	26	—	38
Lliw Valley	2	12	14	—	—
Meirionnydd	7	9	3	8	13
Merthyr Tydfil	9	11	14	9	21
Monmouth	—	8	—	2	3
Montgomeryshire	11	29	20	5	—
Neath	26	112	41	—	—
Newport	31	8	2	20	75
Ogwr	10	21	28	—	—
Port Talbot/Afan	32	55	9	26	12
Preseli	18	20	12	10	3
Radnor	—	—	—	—	1
Rhondda	15	16	3	—	—
Rhuddlan	2	1	2	—	—
Rhymney Valley	—	3	6	6	1
South Pembrokeshire	—	1	1	1	5
Swansea	16	—	—	10	—
Taff-Ely	—	4	—	—	—
Torfaen	—	41	10	13	19
Vale of Glamorgan	21	33	11	15	17
Wrexham Maelor	113	139	224	77	61
Ynys Môn	—	8	8	5	9
Wales	526	765	601	329	427

Sources: Housing investment programme returns 1983, 1984 and 1985.
Relets enquiry statistical returns 1986 and 1987.
—Nil or negligible.

Percentage of local authority dwellings vacant for more than 6 months (as at 1 April)

Welsh districts	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Aberconwy	0·5	0·8	0·6	0·3	—
Alyn and Deeside	0·1	0·2	0·5	0·2	0·2
Arfon	0·1	0·1	0·2	—	0·2
Blaenau Gwent	—	—	—	0·1	—
Brecknock	—	—	—	—	—
Cardiff	0·4	0·3	0·2	0·2	0·2
Carmarthen	—	—	—	0·5	0·3
Ceredigion	—	0·1	0·1	—	—
Colwyn	—	0·1	0·2	—	—

Welsh districts	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Cynon Valley	0·6	0·7	—	0·3	1·3
Delyn	0·2	0·1	0·3	0·3	0·1
Dinefwr	—	0·1	0·1	—	—
Dwyfor	—	—	—	—	—
Glyndŵr	0·4	0·9	0·8	—	—
Islwyn	0·3	0·3	0·2	—	—
Llanelli	—	—	0·3	—	0·5
Lliw Valley	—	0·2	0·3	—	—
Meirionnydd	0·3	0·4	0·1	0·4	0·6
Merthyr Tydfil	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·1	0·3
Monmouth	—	0·1	—	—	0·1
Montgomeryshire	0·2	0·6	0·4	0·1	—
Neath	0·4	1·7	0·6	—	—
Newport	0·2	0·1	—	0·1	0·5
Ogwr	0·1	0·2	0·3	—	—
Port Talbot/Afan	0·4	0·7	0·1	0·4	0·2
Preseli	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·2	—
Radnor	—	—	—	—	0·1
Rhondda	0·3	0·3	0·1	—	—
Rhuddlan	0·1	—	0·1	—	—
Rhymney Valley	—	—	0·1	0·1	—
South Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—	0·2
Swansea	0·1	—	—	0·1	—
Taff-Ely	—	—	—	—	—
Torfaen	—	0·3	0·1	0·1	0·1
Vale of Glamorgan	0·3	0·4	0·1	0·2	0·2
Wrexham Maelor	0·7	0·8	1·4	0·5	0·4
Ynys Môn	—	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·1
Wales total (LA)	0·2	0·3	0·2	0·1	0·2

Sources: Housing investment programme returns 1983, 1984 and 1985.
Relets inquiry statistical returns 1986 and 1987.
— Nil or negligible.

Pupil Costs

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much each education authority in Wales spends per pupil per year on *(a)* textbooks, *(b)* materials and supplies, *(d)* computers, *(d)* video recorders, *(e)* video cameras, *(f)* television sets and *(g)* papers and reprographics.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the form requested is not available. However, provisional information on the cost per primary and secondary pupils combined on text and library books together with educational equipment, stationery and material in respect of 1986-87 is as follows:

	At outturn prices £
Clwyd	34·6
Dyfed	31·8
Gwent	37·6
Gwynedd	43·4
Mid Glamorgan	39·2
Powys	40·7
South Glamorgan	38·5
West Glamorgan	44·5

Housing Revenue Accounts

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total rent arrears accruing to the housing revenue account of each Welsh district authority, in each of the last five years for which figures are available, together with the percentage of the total rent bill which these figures represemt and the council's position in rank order of all Welsh authorities.

Mr. Grist: I shall write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Education Authorities

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all local education authorities in Wales in rank order of expenditure per secondary pupil per year, starting with the highest spending authority, together with their position in the table of examination results for school leavers achieving five or more O-levels at grades A to C or CSE grade 1 in the latest year for which both sets of figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information for 1985-86 is as follows:

	Expenditure per pupil[1]	School leavers examination results[2]
West Glamorgan	1,301	25·5
Powys	1,235	25·7
Gwent	1,203	22·9
Clwyd	1,131	27·1
Gwynedd	1,125	25·6
Dyfed	1,124	32·5
Mid Glamorgan	1,120	20·5
South Glamorgan	1,092	28·0

[1] Net institutional recurrent expenditure for secondary schools at outturn prices.
[2] Percentage of all leavers from maintained schools who attained 5 or more O levels (grades A to C) or CSE Grade 1.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy free of charge for cystic fibrosis sufferers in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The majority of cystic fibrosis sufferers are children aged under 16 years who are exempt from prescription charges. Some older patients may qualify for exemption under arrangements set out in the leaflet P11 available from post offices, chemists and DHSS offices. National Health Service prepayment certificates are also available to anyone who is not exempt from charges and these can lead to considerable savings.

Road Safety

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has, following the fatal accident involving a schoolboy at Queensferry, to improve road safety on the A494-A550 dual carriageway Ewloe to Shotwick.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Proposals currently programmed to improve pedestrian safety on the A494-A550 Ewloe to Shotwick trunk road comprise:

(1) Improved pedestrian crossing facilities at Plough lane overbridge and the closure of all gaps in the central reservation between Ewloe and Queensferry.
(2) A new pedestrian crossing facility near Sealand RAF camp.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve road safety at the junction of the A55 expressway, Hawarden bypass, and the A494 following the death of a cyclist in November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The most recent recorded fatal accident involving a cyclist at this location was in April 1987.

Measures to improve safety for cyclists at this busy interchange are currently being considered.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of recent fatal and other accidents on the B5127 Mold Ewloe road, he will review all aspects of safety with a view to reclassifying this road as a trunk road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Clwyd county council has responsibility for all matters relating to the B5127 Mold to Ewloe road. The volume and type of traffic carried would not justify trunk road status.

Land Authority for Wales

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much land is owned by the Land Authority for Wales in each district authority area in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I have asked the chairman of the Land Authority for Wales to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the Land Authority for Wales has owned any land outside Wales at any time since its establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The authority's statutory functions relate only to the acquisition of land in Wales.

Epilepsy

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the progress to date on each of the recommendations relevant to his Department contained within the report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy.

Mr. Grist: The report of the working group was issued in Wales in November 1985 for consultation to health, social services and education authorities and to a wide variety of other bodies. Generally, it is for health and local authorities to consider what scope there may be for taking forward the working group's recommendations, but we are considering whether any further action could usefully be taken at the all-Wales level.

Post-Chernobyl Emergency

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the report he has received from the Welsh branches of the Country Landowners Association on his Department's handling of the post-Chernobyl emergency.

Mr. Peter Walker: No. The publication and distribution of the report is a matter for the Country Landowners Association.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Richard Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of his advisory committees, together with an indication of those whose members are required to sign a declaration under, or who have otherwise had drawn to their attention, the provisions of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Peter Walker: The advisory committees which report to me are:

Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees
Agriculture Advisory Panel for Wales
All Wales Advisory Panel on Development of Services for Mentally Handicapped People
All Wales Committee on Drug Misuse
Ancient Monuments Board for Wales
Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research
Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering
Committee for Under Fives Initiative
Hill Farming Sub Committee for Wales
Historic Buildings Council for Wales
Housing Management Advisory Panel for Wales
Library and Information Services Council (Wales)
Local Government Boundary Commission
Place Names Advisory Committee
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education
Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education
Welsh Committee for Postgraduate Pharmaceutical Education
Welsh Dental Committee
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board
Welsh Medical Committee
Welsh Nursing and Midwifery Committee
Welsh Optical Committee
Welsh Pharmaceutical Committee
Welsh Scientific Advisory Committee.

Of these advisory committees only the members of the Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board are required to sign a declaration under the Official Secrets Act.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in *(a)* Ynys Môn, *(b)* Gwynedd and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: At 12 Novevember 1987, there were 4,254: 13,232 and 145,455 unemployed claimants respectively in Ynys Môn, Gwynedd and Wales.

Weighbridge, Deeside

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessments he has made of the impact upon road safety of the construction of a public weighbridge, off the B5127 Mold-Ewloe road, adjacent to the A494 roundabout at Ewloe, Deeside, and the consequent presence of heavy lorries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

The weighbridge site at Ewloe roundabout is one of the network of sites that the Department is developing on the major road network and at the main ferry ports to enforce the United Kingdom legislation of vehicle weights. Sites are selected in consultation with the local planning and highway authorities and police so that all the relevant considerations such as road safety can be taken into account.

Drug Advisory Committees

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much each of the drug advisory committees received in the last financial year.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Central funding for projects to combat drug misuse is made

available both to district health authorities and voluntary organisations. The sums approved for 1987-88 are as follows:

	£
Clwyd Council for Drug Abuse	3,867
Dyfed Council on Alcoholism and Drugs	8,360
Gwynedd Drugs Council	7,838
Ogwr DASH	5,225
The Children's Society	14,075
SWAPA	30,255
Youth Link Wales	19,400
CWVYS	15,150
Clwyd Health Authority	129,348
East Dyfed Health Authority	73,224
Gwent Health Authority	116,764
Gwynedd Health Authority	78,285
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority	112,342
Powys Health Authority	30,675
South Glamorgan Health Authority	131,901
West Glamorgan Health Authority	51,577
Total	828,286

Drug Advisiory Committees (New Projects)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give extra cash for new projects in Wales as bid for by the drug advisory committees additional to recurrent expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Our officials have these bids under consideration and decisions on applications will be made public early in the new year.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant £60,000 for new anti-drug projects to the Clwyd drug advisory committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Clwyd health authority has bid for £43,600 for new projects and the merit of this bid is being considered along with the others received from district health authorities and voluntary organisations in Wales.

Nursery Schools

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was *(a)* the total public expenditure on local authority day nurseries, local authority playgroups and grants to the voluntary sector for provision for under-fives for each year from 1975 to 1985 and *(b)* the total public expenditure on these services as a percentage of gross domestic product for each of these years.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* I shall write to the hon. Lady and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account he takes of a person's attitude towards the privatisation of the Health Service when considering appointments to the membership of health authorities in Wales; and whether knowledge of a person's attitude to this matter, or their general political attitude, is sought by his Department before it makes such appointments.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* Most members of health authorities are appointed directly by county and district councils or by my right hon. Friend after formal consultation with professional and other organisations connected with the Health Service. Our aim in filling the remaining generalist places is to achieve a balanced membership which will act corporately and responsibly to ensure that an authority's actions will be in the best interests of the people of the district it exists to serve.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what clarification or discussion he has had with Deloitte Haskins and Sells management consultants with regard to paragraph 53 of its final report on the financial position of Gwynedd health authority on the authority's financial position over the past two years and the underfunding of pay awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* The factorss identified in the paragraph referred to have applied to other health authorities in Wales and there is no evidence therefore that the authority has been unfairly treated. Gwynedd health authority has benefited from the second highest rate of revenue growth of all Welsh health authorities—37 per cent. in real terms—since 1978-79, and has thus been better placed than most to meet demographic and inflationary pressures. Authorities must budget for such pressures within available resources and therefore any increases in pay and prices above their expectations must have consequences for the level of patient activity that can be afforded. Authorities participate in the Whitley pay bargaining machinery and cannot be insulated from the effects of pay settlements they have negotiated.

As far as the review body awards are concerned, the Government have in past years contributed to the excess cost of these awards over the allowance for inflation in authorities' allocations. This year, Gwynedd benefited from a contribution of £1·3 million towards the cost of these awards which, together with the allowance for inflation in the authority's allocation means that 96·7 per cent. of the cost of the awards has been met from specific funding.

Welsh Language (Ministerial Broadcast)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the interview broadcast by BBC Radio Cymru with the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts) on Sunday 13 December at 1 pm, on the subject of a new Welsh Language Act, represented Government policy.

Mr. Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 17 December 1987]:* My comments simply sought to amplify the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) on 10 December, at column 215.

SCOTLAND

Post Mortems

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cost in *(a)* fees to consultants and *(b)* payments to health boards for post mortems done under fiscal licence in National Health Service hospitals for each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that the information is not available.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the items of personal data that a community charge officer will need to hold in order to compile the community charges register.

Mr. Lang: The community charges register in Scotland will contain the names, addresses and dates of birth of people liable to pay the community charges, the dates from which they are liable, the names and addresses of responsible persons in terms of section 17(6) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, and certain further details relating to students. In addition, the community charges registration officer will need to make inquiries about residents who will shortly attain the age of 18, and about people who may be exempt from personal community charge liability, though these details will not appear on the register.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he will decide on eligibility for home improvement grants when, with the abolition of domestic rates, there will be no rateable valuations of domestic properties.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 provides for the construction, from 1 April 1989, of references in enactments to the rateable value of domestic subjects. For the longer term, the improvement and repairs grant system in Scotland will be reformed as outlined in the White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland" (Cm. 242), published on 11 November 1987. Under that reform, the present eligibility test based on rateable value will be replaced by a straightforward test of household resources.

Free Food

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland have received during the last 12 months free food distributed from surpluses which the Council of Ministers approved for such release.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not available, but some 2,000 tonnes of butter and a similar quantity of cheese, 96 tonnes of beef, 1·4 million litres of milk and a small quantity of concentrated butter was distributed to needy people in Scotland under the previous EC scheme.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) which organisations in Scotland are in charge of future free food distribution following the permanent scheme for food surpluses recently approved in the European Community by the Council of Ministers;

(2) how many people in Scotland he estimates will receive free food in 1988, according to the recently approved permanent scheme for food surpluses in the European Economic Community.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The implications of the scheme recently adopted by the Council of Ministers are being carefully considered by the Government in consultation with the main charitable organisations. A financial ceiling of £69 million for the Community as a whole in 1988 will limit the quantities distributed and hence the numbers of recipients.

Bus Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received since deregulation was introduced about the quality of bus services in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Glasgow; and how many of them referred to (i) the frequency of the service for any specific line, (ii) the frequency of the service in general, (iii) price increases and (iv) the problems of elderly people in rural areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following table shows the number of representations received by the Scottish Development Department since deregulation day 26 October 1986 about the quality of bus services generally and by category.

Representations about the quality of bus services	*Number*
All Scotland	135
Glasgow	20
Representations referring to:	
i. frequency of the service for any specific line (including withdrawals)	64
ii. frequency of the service in general (including withdrawals)	23
iii. price increases	6
iv. problems of elderly people in rural areas	2

Four petitions about specific routes and about the effects of deregulation in general have also been received.

Epilepsy

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to take any action in relation to services for people with epilepsy, in the light of the report of the working group on services for people with epilepsy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The working group's report was prepared for DHSS and the Welsh Office in 1984 and related to services in England and Wales only. Services in Scotland for people with epilepsy are provided by health boards and social work and education authorities as appropriate.

Anaesthetists

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the shortage of anaesthetists and the availability of epidural anaesthetics.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision of anaesthetic services is a matter for health boards taking into account local needs and priorities. The number of consultant anaesthetists in Scotland has risen from 216 in 1979 to 270 in 1986, an increase of 25 per cent. I am not aware of difficulties in the recruitment of anaesthetists.

Advice on the provision of epidural analgesia was contained in a report by the National Medical Consultative Committee on Obstetric Anaesthesia and Analgesia in Scotland which was issued to health boards in 1985.

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